

The Workings behind the Commemorative Motive in Czech Urban Names

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Abstract

The paper focuses on a complex quantitative analysis of the commemorative motive in Czech urban space. The studied corpus contains nearly 17,000 street names from 101 Czech cities. The findings reveal that the commemorative names account for, on average, 45% of a city's urbanonymy, with values ranging from 13% to 82%. Despite regional differences, the overall distribution follows a normal curve; the study thus introduces a classification of cities based on z-scores. Furthermore, the research shows that there are no significant differences in the amount of commemoration among historical lands of Czechia (Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia). Nevertheless, regarding the EU-introduced cohesion regions, the Northwest exhibits a higher proportion of commemorative names, possibly due to the local population shifts and industrial heritage linked to Communism. The city sizes and pre-WWII German populations show no correlation with the commemoration levels, indicating that frequent renaming does not necessarily lead to higher commemoration rates. Political milestones, such as WWII, undoubtedly influence naming practices, but local residents and municipal authorities play a critical role, particularly in smaller towns, where diverse and grassroots approaches prevail. This research may serve as a methodological springboard for comparative studies on commemoration trends across different regions and countries.

Keywords: city, commemorative motive, Czechia, quantitative methods, street name, toponyms

1 Introduction

Commemoration in European street began to take shape in the second half of the 18th century (Azaryahu 1996). In Czechia, the phenomenon has been attested since the second half of the 19th century (David 2011b). It is now seen in many urban areas around the world¹. In European cities, names commemorating significant personalities, events, or places have become a common/standard part of the local street name system—i.e., urbanonymy (Buchstaller et al. 2024 for Poznań, Poland, and Leipzig, Germany; Rusu 2022 for Sibiu, Romania; Ursini & Long 2020 for Italian cities; Neethling 2016 for South African cities; Karimi 2016 for Kabul, Afghanistan; Bucher et al. 2013 for Slovak cities; Stiperski et al. 2011 for Central European cities; Palonen 2008 for Budapest, Hungary; Light 2004 for Bucharest, Romania; and many others) (see also Rose-Redwood, Alderman & Azaryahu 2018).² Despite their popularity, commemorative street names do not always reflect the reality of the city. It is not unusual for them to reflect open or covert expressions of political/ideological powers.

Although some works (e.g., Bitusikova 2022; Odaloš 1996) indicate that commemorative names are on the decline—and the development of urbanonymy in post-Socialist countries since 1960 and more since the 1980s has suggested such a trend—testing of this hypothesis on a robust set of data has yet to be carried out. Moreover, contemporary studies point out that commemoration is still a lively and popular naming type (Buchstaller et al. 2024; Ptáčníková 2021, 178; David 2011b).³

Research on street names is pursued not only by onomasticians, but also by historians, geographers, anthropologists, sociologists, and enthusiastic amateurs. Urbanonyms are thus analyzed from various perspectives and the subject of both synchronic and diachronic research. Recently, attention has been shifting from large cities to smaller towns or even rural areas (Procházková 2016; Klemensová 2019; Mokwena 2020; Mácha 2023). In the Czech Republic alone, dozens of cities have been processed in this way (see the list of sources). However, most of these studies are limited to a small number of locations, usually covering only a handful of cities (see the list of sources). In addition, there are not many comprehensive or comparative papers on the topic. Yet, the most significant obstacle for synthetic research is the inconsistencies in defining urbanonyms and commemorative itself.

The present paper attempts to reverse this trend by elaborating a set of analyses conducted using a large dataset of city names from the Czech Republic. We believe that the results will provide researchers with useful insight into the Czech commemorative practices and serve as inspiration for other onomastic studies on the subject. The paper is organized as follows. In part 2, we present the process followed for

collecting and refining the data. In part 3, we present the descriptive statistics of the dataset and offer a commemoration-based classification of the cities. In part 4, we compare the amounts of commemoration in Czech historical lands (Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesian) and local regions. In part 5, we examine the amount of commemoration against (a) the size of the city; and (b) the proportion of the local pre-WWII German minority. Part 6 is reserved for giving concluding remarks and suggesting pathways for future research.

2 Data and Methodology

We utilized urbanonyms from 101 Czech cities (with populations of up to 200,000 in 2023) as our data. We used these criteria to minimize the influence of large Czech cities and their specific commemoration practices. The towns were chosen based on whether their urbanonym had already been studied in previous works. These investigations included professional or popular monographs, as well as student theses. The entire list of publications is available in the sources at the end of the article. Our main research aim was to amass the largest and most accurate data set possible. In total, we gathered 17,039 street names. The raw data is stored at https://github.com/KCJFFOU/index_c

If we were uncertain about the motivation behind a name (i.e., whether or not it was commemorative), we respected the findings of previously published authors who were often regional experts with invaluable local insights. Still, the quality of the sources varied, with some containing verifiable errors. In cases where it was not possible to satisfactorily determine naming motivation, we excluded the names from the analysis. Each name and its motivation were therefore verified before being included in the final data set, sometimes in collaboration with local authorities and chroniclers. Out of the total 17,039 names, we worked with a total of 16,892 names in the final analysis. The exact wordings of the urbanonyms were obtained using the *RÚIAN – Registr územní identifikace, adres a nemovitostí* [Register of Territorial Identification, Addresses, and Real Estates], a public administration database for the years 2022 and 2023. This database includes the names of streets and squares, but excludes the names of parks, gardens, bridges, buildings, housing estates, and city districts.

Before our actual analysis could begin, we had to define exactly what we would consider a “commemorative name”. We interpreted “commemoration” broadly and considered commemorative names to be those celebrating or honoring real or fictional individuals, groups of people, places, events, days, objects, or values (David 2017). This definition covered names motivated ideologically or politically, including the urbanonym systems connected to residential blocks. An example is the residential block of Sítňá in Kladno. The streets there are named after major Czech cities, such as *Ústecká*, *Plzeňská*, *Brněnská*, *Děčínská*, and *Ostravská*. The function of these urbanonyms is clearly not locative. We, therefore, classified them as “commemorative”. We also included peculiar instances like *Krakonošova* ‘Krkonoš Street’ which was named after *Krkonoš*, a legendary spirit and guardian of the Krkonoše Mountains; *Hurvínkova* ‘Hurvínek Street’ which was named after *Hurvínek*, a Czech puppet fairy-tale character; and *Bajzova* ‘Bajza Street’ that was named to honor *Bajza*, a local mayor’s dog.

It was not always easy to determine whether or not a name was truly commemorative, however. Sometimes, the lines were rather blurred. Problematic names that were difficult to classify included those celebrating groups of people, like *Dělnická* ‘Workers’ Street’ and *Studentská* ‘Students’ Street’. These names reflected the circumstances of the street creation or its character, but sometimes, particularly after 1945 when the Communist Party gained more power in the state, they originated as a way to celebrate specific groups of people (e.g., workers, brigadiers, legionnaires, the youth). It was thus important to approach each name individually. For instance, the street *Česká* ‘Czech Street’ may or may not be commemorative, since it could refer either to the original local population that resided in the town of Louny; or it could have been created as an expression of nationalism. For example, this took place in Havířov which was founded in the mid-1950s as a completely Czech city. Another problematic example was the name *Šumavská* ‘Šumava Mountains Street’. In South Bohemian cities, like *České Budějovice* or *Vodňany*, this name is used to indicate that the street runs toward the Šumava Mountains or is affiliated with the Šumava region. However, in West Bohemian area of Aš or in the North Moravian area of Šumperk, *Šumavská* is commemorative because it pays homage to either the Czech mountain range or the Šumava region.

When dealing with street names related to villages that were no longer inhabited, we followed this approach. If the street was simply located in the area of a village, it was considered non-commemorative; but if the street made reference to the vanished village, it was classified as commemorative. Using the same logic, street names derived from historically or ideologically loaded appellatives that honored brigade members were classified as commemorative names. We acknowledge, however, that these cases are somewhat borderline as the motivation behind the naming was not always clear-cut. As these cases show, the decision-making was not always easy. As Vaculík (2014) states, to do so consistently, it is important to consider multiple variables.

3 Basic Results and Classification

Commemoration of a settlement was quantified using a measure called “C index”. This factor captured the ratio of commemorative names in a given settlement unit related to all street names. It ranged from zero (indicating the complete absence of the commemorative strategy in the settlement) to one (indicating a settlement with exclusively commemorative street names).

The basic statistical summary of the results is presented in table 1 and figure 1. The median value of index C in the studied sample is 0.45, meaning that 45% of the city names are commemorative. This is in line with the survey conducted by Jaroslav David (2011) on the most frequent street names in Czech municipalities for the analysis. The survey showed that commemoration is on average represented by around 44% names in Czech cities. This investigation also found that the number of commemorative names varied, depending on the type of settlement. In newly established or originally rural areas, the number can reach up to 70% (David 2013). This finding also corresponds to the results of our own investigation, as the values ranged from 0.13 to 0.82. This broad range may reflect large variation in the commemorative onomastic practices in Czech cities.

In this study, we focused on those cities where the urbanonymy showed extreme C index values. The cities with very low levels of commemorative street naming were Hoštka (0.14) and Kaplice (0.13). At the other end of the scale, the towns of Hostomice (0.77), Jiřikov (0.81), and Úpice (0.82) had much higher rates of commemoration in their street name systems. Úpice was considered a statistical outlier in that it significantly deviated from the general trend. The outliers were defined as lying farther than 1.5 *IQR from Q1 or Q3.

Table 1: The statistical summary of the dataset

	Statistic	Value
1	Minimum	0.13
2	Q1	0.36
3	Median	0.45
4	Q3	0.54
5	Maximum	0.82

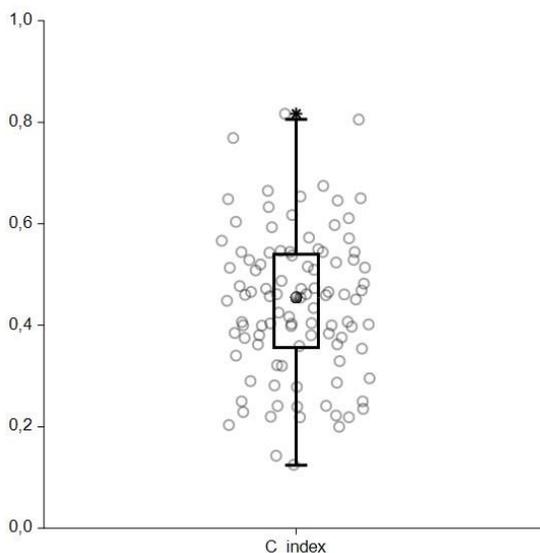


Figure 1: Visualization of the data using a combination of dotplot and boxplot. The greyish dots represent the values of the index C for the studied settlements. The vertical lines (so-called whiskers) represent the data within 1.5 times the interquartile range (IQR, represented by the box). The grey sphere stands for the median. The asterisk represents an outlier (the city of Úpice).

The Shapiro–Wilk test yielded values of $W = 0.986$ and $p = 0.39$. Since the C index values were therefore determined to have a normal distribution, we classified the cities on the basis of their z-scores (see table 2). The z-score has the advantage of converting the values into a $<-1; 1>$ range, which makes them easy to report and interpret. The classes are thus based on the distance of the names from the average (0.44) measured in the counts of the standard deviations (0.14); for each value, the z-score was determined using the following standard formula:

$$z = \frac{x - 0.44}{0.14}$$

The “average” scores were within of one standard deviation from the average, whereas the “low” scores were two standard deviations below the average, etc. For a more comprehensive presentation of the data, with the help of AI, we displayed the cities based on their z-scores in the form of a map with color-coded points (see GitHub: https://github.com/KCJFFOU/index_c).

The extreme values (very high or very low) were found mostly in the towns with the populations up to 7,000. The low C index values may be attributed to the rural character of these locations and the continued presence of the original field names in urbanonymy. Many street names in these areas were in fact found to have been derived from the names of the fields on which streets were later built (Mácha 2023). An example is *Muzikantská stezka* ‘Musicians’ Path’ which earned its name for being a path previously used by musicians. Other names that reflected the rural character of the cities include *Lesní* ‘Forest Street’; *Polní* ‘Field Street’; *Ke Křížku* ‘To the Cross’; *Pod Křížkem* ‘Under the Cross’; *Hřbitovní* ‘Cemetery Street’; and *U Školy* ‘By the School’. In small towns, such descriptive urbanonyms can fully serve their locative or descriptive functions. Moreover, in small towns where there is usually a low population turnover, street naming can also result from residents’ strong attachment to their communities and/or their desire to express their local identity. Accordingly, in these areas, it was not uncommon to find streets named after regional/local figures (Mácha 2023, 98–99). In Hlučín, for example, *Bochenkova* was named after Hlučín-born regional painter Jan Bochenek; the street called *Lelkova* was named after the local writer and priest Cyprián Lelek; and *Pavla Strádala* earned its name from a local high school principal. Conversely, in large cities, there was a tendency for streets to be named after international figures (Bucher et al. 2013, 33–36).

In small towns where C index was found to be high, this pattern may be a result of local residents emulating the character of larger towns to enhance the cultural value of the place. Such naming practices may be used by inhabitants to set their communities apart from market towns and rural areas, where the use of commemorative names is relatively low or non-existent (Mácha 2023). In any case, it is apparent that naming practices in small settlements deserve more scholarly attention. Further investigations, ideally diachronic as well as synchronic, could possibly shed more light on these patterns.

Table 2: Classes of the Czech Cities based on Their C Index Values Standardized to z-scores

Group	z-score	Cities
Very high	$z > 2$	Hostomice, Jiříkov, Úpice
High	$z \in (1; 2>$	Žatec, Olomouc, Lanškroun, Jáchymov, Chomutov, Louny, Polička, Kladno, Slaný, Moravské Budějovice, Šumperk, Sokolov
Average	$z \in (-1; 1>$	Moravská Třebová, Šternberk, Sedlčany, Broumov, Frýdlant, Rýmařov, Kamenický Šenov, Beroun, Mnichovo Hradiště, Děčín, Tábor, Kadaň, Sušice, Havířov, Kraslice, Čáslav, Písek, Protivín, Jindřichův Hradec, Vrchlabí, Krnov, Tachov, Luhačovice, Rokycany, Holešov, Žďár nad Sázavou, Opava, Fulnek, Stříbro, Mladá Vožice, Dačice, Česká Lípa, Ostrov, Nejdek, Jirkov, Jihlava, Karlovy Vary, Volyně, Litoměřice, Lipník nad Bečvou, Turnov, České Budějovice, Nový Bor, Vodňany, Nové Město pod Smrkem, Čelákovice, Svitavy, Chodov, Aš, Mariánské Lázně, Kynšperk nad Ohří, Teplice, Nový Jičín, Třešť, Bruntál, Šluknov, Otrokovice, Vlašim, Litovel, Mladá Boleslav, Varnsdorf, Lovosice, Vejprty, Krásná Lípa, Jeseník, Kroměříž
Low	$z \in (-2; -1>$	Vranov nad Dyjí, Trutnov, Týn nad Vltavou, Nová Bystřice, Rumburk, Stráž nad Nežárkou, Plzeň, Smržovka, Kravaře, Prachatice, Jablonec nad Nisou, Mimoň, Lomnice nad Lužnicí, Uherské Hradiště, Mělník, Hlučín, Nymburk, Klášterec nad Ohří
Very low	$z \leq -2$	Kaplice, Hoštka

4 Commemoration from the Geographical Perspective

In the next phase of the research, the C index values of the cities were studied from the viewpoints of Czech historical lands (Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia) and EU-introduced regions (NUTS 2, Markowska 2017; Central Bohemia—CB, Southwest—SW, Northwest—NW, Northeast—NE, Southeast—SE, Central Moravia—CM, Moravian-Silesian Region—MS). The values are visually presented in figures 2 and 3. As all the data are normally distributed, the comparisons were performed using an ANOVA (analysis of variance; Woolson & Clarke 2002).

In case of the historical lands, the results did not show a statistically significant difference between the samples ($F = 0.4$, $p = 0.66$): the amount of commemoration thus does not seem to be dependent upon whether a city is located in Bohemia, Moravia, or Silesia. However, where the EU-introduced regions are concerned, the results of the ANOVA ($F = 2.9$, $p = 0.01$) did show a statistically significant difference.

In the post-hoc analysis, using the Fisher's LSD multiple comparison test (Williams & Abdi 2010), we determined that there were four statistically significant differences to be observed: (1) NW versus SW; (2) NW versus NE; (3) NW versus MS; and (4) SW versus CM. What particularly stood out were the higher values of commemoration in the NW cities. This result may have been a function of the region having been formerly densely populated by Germans. Particularly after the WWII, there may have been a tendency to "Bohemize" the street names via commemoration. More recently, new names, honoring Czech personalities and important events in Czech history have created a new identity for the place (Klemensová 2021; Matúšová 2015). Another factor which may have come into play here is the fact that the NW has traditionally been an industrial area. As a result, the Communist regime may have felt it

necessary to onomastically colonize the area using commemorative urban names. The interpretation of the higher C index numbers in the CM cities may also be due to the underlying heterogeneity of this area. There is the mountainous Sudeten area of Jesenícko, which was settled slowly and with limited success; the more fertile Sudeten region of northern Moravia around the towns of Šumperk and Šternberk; the fertile region of Haná; and the rural eastern region of Moravia—each with different settlement histories.

As will be detailed in part 5, the higher degree of commemoration was not found to be directly related to the size of the German minority. However, higher C index scores may be connected to the resettlement of the border regions, which, in northwestern Bohemia and Silesia, brought with it considerable population turnover. These demographic shifts could have led to a lower level of connection between residents and their localities. As a result, local identity might have been replaced by national identity, with the creation of urbanonyms that stressed national or supra-national themes as opposed to local ones.

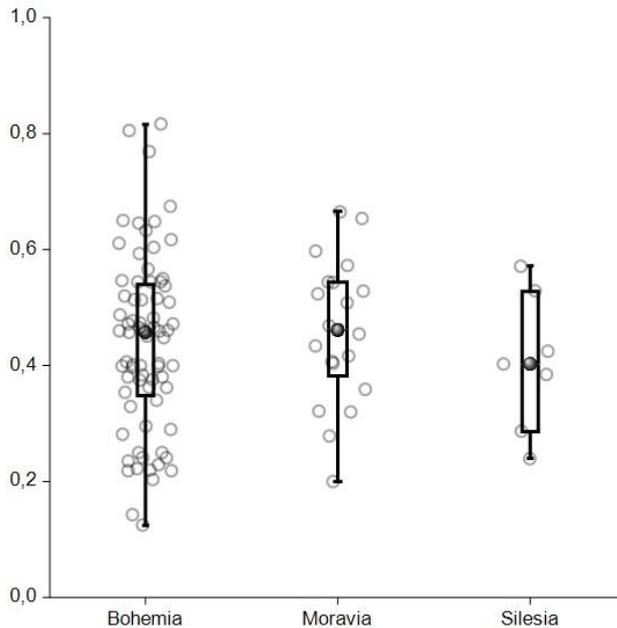


Figure 2: Visualization of the C index values sorted according to the Czech historical lands and using a combination of dotplot and boxplot. For an explanation of the features, see figure 1.

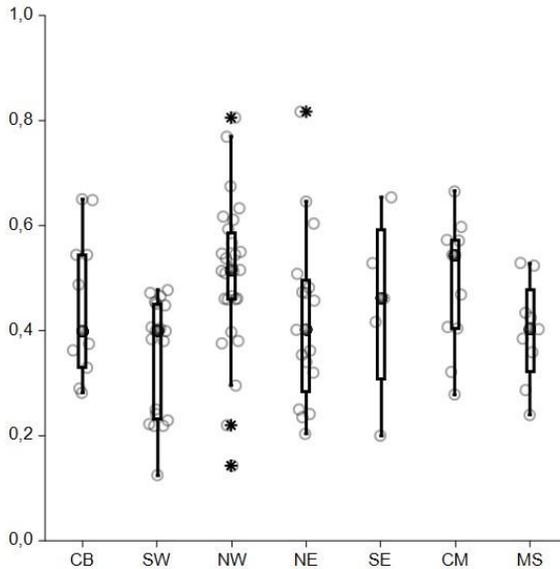


Figure 3: Visualization of the C index values using a combination of dotplot and boxplot and sorted according to the cohesion regions (CB = Central Bohemia, SW = Southwest, NW = Northwest, NE = Northeast, SE = Southeast, CM = Central Moravia, MS = Moravian-Silesian Region). For the explanation of the features, see figure 1.

5 Commemoration from the Viewpoint of City Size and German Population

In the next part of the study, we focused our attention on determining whether any characteristic or variable directly influenced the number of commemorative names and, consequently, the value of C index. We decided to test two hypotheses which were generated from earlier, primarily qualitative research. The first hypothesis involved the relationship between the size of a city (as measured in by its population) and the total of its urban names. More specifically, the first hypothesis theorized that the smaller a settlement unit was, the more the number of urbanonyms will remain stable. This assumption is based on the idea that in larger cities, the stock of non-commemorative names (e.g., based on locations, directions of the street, original place names, residents, etc.) is essentially exhausted, and city officials must therefore resort to making use of commemorative names. In smaller cities, this pressure does not exist (Bitusikova 2022; Laštková et al. 2022; Vaculík 2014; David 2010; Matúšová 1989, 1988). This hypothesis is also challenged by previous research which indicates that commemorative names are also found in rural urbanonymy (Mácha 2023; Czaplicka-Jedlikowska 2016).

According to research by Přemysl Mácha (2023), who focused on small settlements (with a population of up to 5,000 and in the area of Moravia), the number of commemorative names reached 21.3%. A much higher percentage was documented in towns, and a lower percentage was found in market towns and villages. According to Mácha (2023), in small settlements, the proportion of commemorative names also increased with the number of inhabitants. In our sample, however, no such relationship was found. Using both the population and the number of urbanonyms as indicators of the city size, we found

Pearson correlation coefficient values of 0.006 and -0.05. No significant patterns emerged from the scatterplots either (see figures 4 and 5). This outcome may be ascribed to the variable values of the C index in the small settlements, which was mentioned earlier in part 3. It may also have been a result of our rather broad definition of commemoration. Supporting this explanation is the fact that newer research utilizing a narrower definition of commemoration has shown that in cities with higher populations, there are more streets named after famous people (Kloknerová 2024).

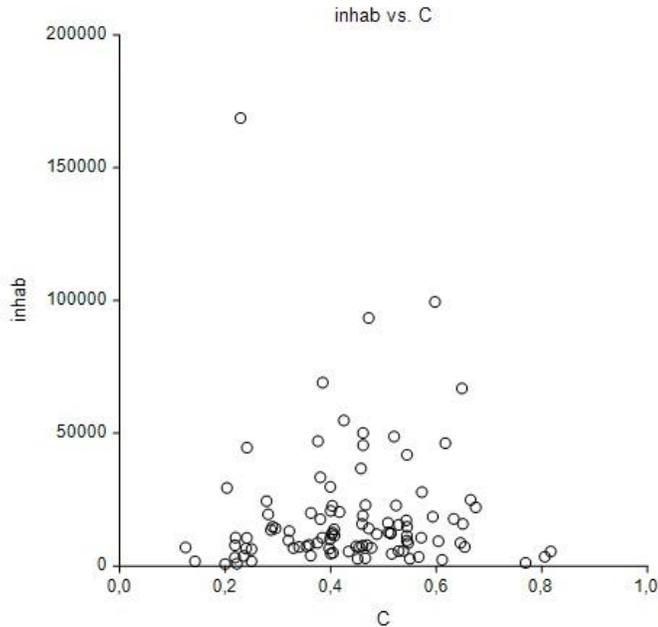


Figure 4: The scatterplot of the C index values (= C) and the city sizes measured in the number of inhabitants (= inhab).

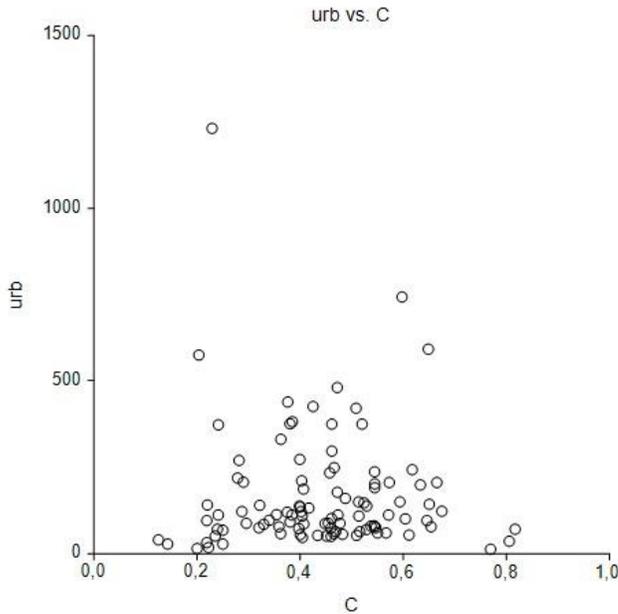


Figure 5: The scatterplot of the C index values (= C) and the city sizes measured in the number of urban names (= urb).

The second hypothesis theorized that there would be a higher prevalence of commemorative names in border towns, particularly in the former Sudetenland.⁴ The reasoning behind this hypothesis lies in the historical and political developments of this area which have been more dynamic in comparison to the inland part of the Republic. It was therefore postulated that in the areas undergoing politically or socially intensified evolutions, the dominant ideology would make a pronounced effort to manifest its power through commemorative names (Azaryahu 1996).

The Czech borderlands—the “Sudetes”—is a largely mountainous area which was settled later than the lowland inland areas. This region was also primarily settled by the German-speaking ethnic group. In some areas, the villages were essentially populated by Germans only, while other settlements were mixed (Czech + German). The composition of the population influenced the language of the local toponyms in that, originally, the urbanonyms were mostly German. This pattern changed after the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918. Based on the new language laws, German names were often Bohemized and/or supplemented with a Czech variant. This particularly occurred in areas where the German speaking ethnic group was in the minority. However, in regions where Germans formed the majority, some names retained their monolingual German forms. This was especially common in small settlements and politically insignificant places (Klemensová 2019; Matúšová 1988).

Another important historical event affecting toponyms in the Sudetes came in the year 1938. After the annexation of the Sudetenland by the Third Reich, Czech name variants were systematically removed and Czech names were Germanized. Additionally, many streets were named after prominent Nazis or Germans. However, probably the most significant change to the Sudeten street systems came in 1945. As part of the de-Germanization, when the German population was removed/expelled (not only) from the borderlands, the Sudetes were resettled mainly by inland or repatriated Czechs and Slovaks (Glassheim 2016). As a result, de-Germanization and Bohemization of geographical names occurred as well. During this time, the street names were most commonly translated or replaced with new names, often lacking a historical connection with the town.

The first waves of renaming were very spontaneous, with commemoration being the primary naming type employed. As part of the effort to rewrite the history of the borderlands and create a new reality reflecting the Socialist direction of Czechoslovakia, many national, Slavic, or Soviet naming strategies

were used.⁵ From the existing (qualitatively conducted) research (Klemensová 2019, 2021; Matúšová 1998), it is evident that the percentage of commemorative names increased in the border towns compared to the pre-war period. Moreover, street names that had not originally been commemorative were often changed using a commemorative strategy. For example, *Nábřežní třída / Uferstrasse* ‘Riverside Street’ became *Gottwaldovo nábřeží*: namesake of the street Klement Gottwald, the future first Czechoslovak Communist President.

Based on these historical factors, the second hypothesis was that border towns with a higher pre-WWII German minority, which underwent turbulent changes and significant renaming during the post-war period, would exhibit a higher degree of commemoration even today. However, the calculations showed that there was no correlation between the number of commemorative urbanonyms and the size of the German minority. The Pearson coefficient was only -0.02 (see the scatterplot on figure 6). The street names in the cities of the former Sudetenland thus did not seem to be different in terms of their rate of commemoration compared to the inland settlements. Although the number of commemorative street names in the border towns may well have been higher after the Second World War—due to for example the large-scale renaming process after the fall of Communism in Czechoslovakia in 1989—these differences, if they existed, seem to have disappeared. However, although this region may not stand out in terms of its number of commemorative names, current research suggests (Kloknerová 2024) that it may be distinguished by the semantic (motivational) type of its street names. Due to the disruption of historical continuity and the social/cultural de-Germanization, local committees may have tended to choose nationally prominent persons and symbols at the expense of regional ones after 1945. These regional figures were perceived as “German” and largely rejected (David & Klemensová 2021). The post-war developments (i.e., the large-scale resettlement, shifting composition of the population, and economic (in)stability) may have yielded distinct naming patterns in each and every Sudetenland town. It seems therefore clear that frequent renaming and political instability do not necessarily lead to a higher percentage of commemorative street names and that local authorities responsible for naming have played a significant role in shaping the network of street names.

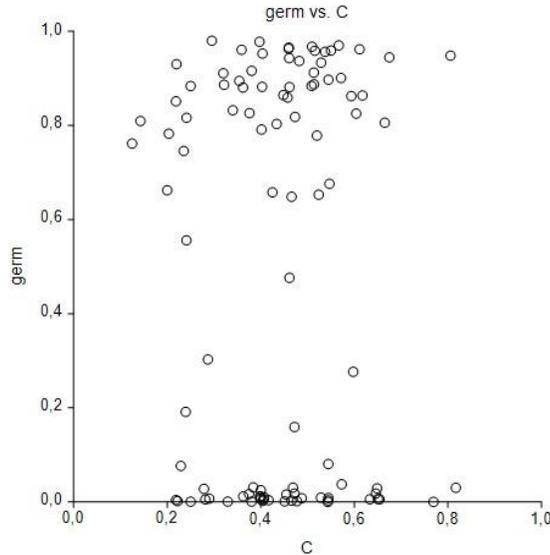


Figure 6: The scatterplot of the C index values (= C) and the proportion of the local pre-WWII German population (= germ).

Conclusions and Discussion

The goal of the study was to provide a comprehensive picture of the onomastic commemoration in Czech cities. This research has found that the commemorative street names form, on average, 45% of the city's urbanonymy. The median (44%) was very close to the average and the data followed a normal distribution curve. Half of the values were found to be within the span of 0.36 to 0.54, but the overall dispersion of the data is quite high (from 0.13 to 0.82). Given that similar large-scale investigations have not yet been conducted in other countries, the question arises whether these numbers are Czechia-specific, or whether they show a general tendency of commemorative street-naming in Slavic countries, or even internationally. The paper can thus serve as a solid foundation for further research. What may also be of use is the classification of the cities that was proposed on the basis of their z-scores.

Another important finding of this research was that affiliation of a city to a historical land did not appear to be a factor influencing the amount of commemoration found in its urban names. However, what did play a role was the EU-designated regions. These divisions may better reflect the current situation than the traditional division of Czechia into Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia. The statistically significant differences between these regions were particularly striking for the Northwest with a higher proportion of the commemorative street names being found there as compared to the Southwest, Northeast, and Moravian-Silesian Region. This finding may be attributable to the Northwest having notable population shifts and Communism-linked industrial heritage. Finally, no correlations were detected between the level of commemoration and the city size: larger cities thus did not have more commemorative names. The cities' pre-WWII German population and the frequent renaming and politically dynamic developments did not lead to a higher degree of commemoration in the street names we investigated, although political and social shifts and milestones such as World War II and the fall of the Berlin Wall (Stiperski et al. 2011) undoubtedly have had a significant impact on the state of street names (Azaryahu 2011).⁶

Nevertheless, it appears that the efforts of the residents themselves and the local authorities have also played a considerable role in shaping the final naming outcomes. Indeed, the current renaming practice in the Czech Republic would seem to reflect the involvement of the wider public and ongoing discussions (David 2021). This appears to be particularly evident in smaller towns (whether suburban or rural), where the street naming systems have been affected by multiple factors. In the case of larger cities (and primarily in the city centers), the state and political interests of the country are likely to have a great influence on the urbanonymy. However, the street names in smaller settlements demonstrate a certain resistance to such top-down forces—either driven by the interest and engagement of local residents or, conversely, by their lack of interest and a passive approach to street naming altogether.

To conclude, as far as the current research is concerned, the reasons behind the lower/higher values of the commemoration index for a city seem mostly individual. This finding appears to correspond with the fact that naming public spaces is a matter decided by local municipal authorities. The selection of street names is therefore influenced by personal preferences of administrative officers, their political stances, pressures from inhabitants, and the amount and “vivacity” of the local unofficial toponymy—the more vigor it has, the more probable it may be that they will (co-)create the official urbanonymy of the city.

Notes

¹ For more information on commemoration, see David 2011a; and Azaryahu 2011, 1996.

² There are cities where commemorative street system is relatively rare. Such is the case with Brasília, the capital of Brazil; Washington, D.C.; and Tokyo, where streets are marked using a combination of numbers and letters to name urban spaces. Nevertheless, even in their street name system, elements of a celebratory motive can be identified. For more, see Rose-Redwood 2018.

³ For more on toponymic commodification, see Rose-Redwood et al. 2019. For a discussion of the de-Russification of names in Ukraine, see Gnatiuk & Melnychuk 2023.

⁴ For previous research, see Klemensová & Místecký 2022.

⁵ Walkowiak (2019) has discussed a similar development in Poland.

⁶ The type of city development may also play a role—whether it is a city center, a later-built housing estate, or an annexed rural village (Rusu 2021; Janečková 2014; Vaculík 2014; David 2011b).

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