

Topical Issues of Namegiving in New Moscow

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Abstract

The subject of our research is toponyms (names of rivers, forests, towns, villages, hamlets, farms, as well as hodonyms and the proper names of housing estates) in New Moscow – the territory, which was connected to Old Moscow in 2012. The study of the data (more than 600 units) made it possible to examine the proper names from the point of view of their structure and the principles and the patterns underlying their naming.

The first issue lies in the fact that the new area was incorporated only nominally. In fact there are two different Moscovs, Old and New, with different toponymic systems.

The second issue is the existence of identical hodonyms and their elimination without violating the rights of local residents.

Another problem is connected with the active construction of new territories. The demand for names for new streets has sharply increased, which should, according to the Law of Moscow, fit into the historically established system of names.

The article contains the main principles of creating the new urban names in Moscow.

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Introduction

In 2012 the territory of Moscow increased more than twofold. And now the capital of Russia consists of the so called Old Moscow and New Moscow which includes settlements: towns, villages, hamlets, farms, forests, greenland, grassland. The system of Moscow urbanonyms is on the turn now.

The aim of our study is to determine alternatives of name giving in New Moscow. The material for this research has been taken from a variety of sources: among them, Proceedings of the Session of the Municipal Inter-Departmental Committee for the Naming of Territorial Units, Streets, Metro Stations, Organizations and other Urban Features of the City of Moscow (of which the author has been a standing member since 1998), as well as from official websites of the Moscow Administration, mass media, e.g. the newspaper ‘Novyje Rayony’ (‘The New District’), and different forums, among others, local residents’ fora.¹

We have collected the data using the method of continuous sampling (Superanskaya 2007). The principal features of the study are: all-round selection of material, synchronic and diachronic approach (including, wherever possible, etymological analysis), all seen from a sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic perspective.

The collected names show a mixture of languages. Names in the Russian language predominate; the article does not contain their original spelling in Cyrillic, but only their

¹ For a full list of websites consulted, see ‘Websites consulted’ below.

transliteration into Latin and translations are given, e.g.: *Severnaya* ('Northern') street; English and French names are given in the original form in which they are used in the names of the Russian housing estates, for example: *Grand-Park*, *La Promenade*.

New Moscow Vs Old Moscow

The System of Old Moscow Urbanonyms

The first issue is that new land area was incorporated only nominally. In fact, there are two different Moscow – Old and New. It is a sort of opposition. New Moscow used to be a village for a weekend rest. Now it is a part of capital city with a different onomastic system.

The system of Old Moscow's urbanonyms has been evolving through centuries (since the 12th to the 21st centuries). The names of streets, lanes, parks and rivers, railway and metro stations and other urban objects are peculiar monuments of different historic periods in the creation and development of Moscow, of Russia, and reflect different periods in the development of the Russian language (Sokolova 2013), its contacts with Finno-Ugric, Baltic, Turkic and other languages. Thus, the river *Sara* originates from the Finnish *sara* 'sedge' (Ageeva *et al.* 2007: 460); the river *Setun* originates from the Baltic *siets* 'deep end' (Ageeva *et al.* 2007: 473); *Arbat street* from the Arabic word *rabat/ribat* 'caravan-saray' (Ageeva *et al.* 2007: 36); *Balchug street* from the Turkic *balchek* 'slush, marsh' (Ageeva *et al.* 2007: 45).

Since 1922 the Committee for the Naming of Moscow streets has been working hard to normalize urbanonyms. The *Toponymic Dictionary: The Names of Moscow Streets* (Ageeva *et al.* 2007) reflects the results of that work. On the one hand this book follows in the footsteps of works dealing with Moscow toponymy, on the other hand it is an innovative dictionary, representing different urbanonyms as a system. Despite the fact that the dictionary is titled 'The Names of Moscow Streets', it includes the names not only of streets, avenues, squares, but also the names of rivers, lakes, hills and other feature names, the names of administrative and historical districts, the names of bridges, railway stations, underground railway stations, landing places etc., thereby our dictionary contains 5,778 dictionary entries. Every article contains topographic and culturological information, the history of and reasons for naming and renaming of any object, as well as its cognitive and scientific value. Thus, the toponymy of Old Moscow is multilingual, various by origin, considering its chronology. It is rich in the principles of naming and diverse in the ways of creation.

Conversely, the toponymy and urbanonymy of New Moscow have not been under study or under discussion yet.

The Principles of Old Moscow Naming

Old Moscow has a ring and radial structure. The *Kremlin* is the oldest part of Moscow and the place all Moscow roads lead to. The first wooden Kremlin was erected by Prince Yuri Dolgoruky in 1156. By the 13th century it had become the centre of the Moscow principality. In the 15th century, at the order of the Tsar Ivan III, the Kremlin was surrounded with a new red-brick wall. Each side of the Kremlin was guarded by towers which have generally preserved their form from ancient days.

All Moscow rings and radial roads arise from the Kremlin. The first of Moscow rings is a semicircle round the north of the Kremlin. Then, the *Boulevard Ring* follows. The third is the *Garden Ring*. The largest is *Moscow's outer ring road* formed the city borders. But in the 1990s Moscow outstepped these borders (Sokolova 2015: 7-9).

Moscow's main radial roads spear across these rings like spokes of a wheel. More than 40 arterial highways cross Moscow's outer ring road: *Tverskaya ulitsa* ('street') (appeared as a road to Tver town), *Leningradsky prospect* (it is the beginning of the road leading to St Petersburg, in 1924-1992 Leningrad, the city of *Lenin*), *Yaroslavskoye shosse* ('highway'), *Varshavskoye shosse*, *Minskoye shosse* etc. Such system of street layout produced a traffic standstill in the 21st century. That is why New Moscow developed only one direction – south-west.

The Geographic and thematic principles of naming are connected with the ring and radial city structure, e.g. there is a set of 'Northern' names in the north of Old Moscow: *Severnaya* ('Northern') street, *Snyerznaya* ('Snow') street, *Polyarnaya* ('North-polar') street, *Studyonaya* ('Cold') street, *Kolskaya* street (from Kola Peninsula), and the names given in honor of polar explorers, *Amundsen street*, *Nansen street*, *Sedov street*, etc. Everybody knows that *Chernomorskiy* ('Black Sea') boulevard is in the south of Old Moscow, but *Karpatiskiye streets* ('Carpathians') are south-west.

However, in the settlements of new areas of Moscow its own, local orientation system existed, under which North and South, West and East Street were named, when included in the settlement, and, what is more, in the common urban space such names turn out to be misleading. In the south-west of the city there are now more than 20 North Streets.

As it has turned out it was impossible to adhere to all the principles of Old Moscow naming for new districts.

The Problem of Identical Hodonyms

In general, a lot of identical hodonyms appeared in New Moscow. Almost every residential place has names which are connected with natural surroundings, e.g. there are forty names given after water object: *Rechnaya* ('river') street, *Ozernaya* ('lake'), *Rodnikovaya* ('spring-well'); there are a lot of streets named after plants: forty streets *Lesnaya* ('forest'), thirty streets *Sadovaya* ('garden'), eighteen streets *Beryozovaya* ('birch'), twelve streets *Sosnovaya* ('pine'), fifteen streets *Ryabinovaya* ('rowan').

There are a lot of fruit, berry and flower names: sixteen *Vishnyovaya* ('cherry') streets, seventeen *Sirenevaya* ('lilac'); fourteen *Tsvetochnaya* ('flower'). And, of course, there is *Tsentralnaya* ('central') street in every settlement (Sokolova 2015: 46-48).

There are a lot of street names with positive semantics: *Svetlaya* ('light', 'bright') street, *Solnechnaya* ('sun') street, *Vesyolaya* ('lively'), *Radurznaya* ('rainbow').

Each separate hodonym was a well-known landmark within the limits of a small settlement, but lost this function within the limits of Moscow (Sokolova 2015: 46).

How to eliminate the identical place names, without violating the rights of local residents? The Municipal Inter-Departmental Committee for the Naming of Territorial Units, Streets, Metro Stations, Organizations and other Urban Features of the City of Moscow made a decision not to rename existing identical street names and to keep the names of settlements

as guides in large Moscow, for example, *Moscow, settlement Voronovo, Lesnaya Street; Moscow, settlement Klyonovo, Lesnaya Street; Moscow, settlement Ptichnoye, Lesnaya Street.*

Namegiving of New Streets

Another problem is connected with the active construction of new territories. The demand for new street names has increased sharply, which should, according to the Law of Moscow, fit into the historically established system of names.

There are some principles of the new urban names creation (Sokolova 2015). The main principle of name giving is the following: the names of new city facilities must keep the disappearing ancient names of rivers, lakes, villages, churches. It is of particular interest to note that the name of the river *Khapilovka* originates from the anthroponym *Khapilo*, the nickname of the owner of the local dam with a water mill, derived from the verb *khapat*, i.e. ‘snatch, grab’ in Russian. Town *Shcherbinka* was built on the territory of an old village, first recorded in the 14th century and retains the pre-Christian, Old Russian anthroponym *Shcherbina* ‘a man with a chipped spot, a missing tooth in the mouth’. Village *Shchapovo* derived from the non-canonical nick-name *Shchapa* ‘dandy, fop’. *Salaryevo* village, one of the first Italian names in the Moscow region was given to the village in the 14th century after its owner, a merchant of the Solari family. And the metro station *Salaryevo* will keep the previous name (Sokolova 2014b: 356-358).

One of the key principles, in our view, should be the thematic one – the creation of systems of names, given according to the geographical and historical realities of space development. For instance, a new residential estate is in the process of construction in Aleshinskaya river-valley near the old village Nikolskoye. So the hodonym *Aleshinskaya Dolina* is a former microtoponym (*dolina* means ‘river valley’), hodonyms *Bukvitsa* and *Tavolga* reflect the characteristics of plants of the valley, *Stolnik Potemkin street* leads to the temple, built by his efforts in the 17th century (*Potemkin* is a famous old noble family, the word *Stolnik* means ‘a courtier rank below the boyar in Russia in 13th-17th centuries’); hodonym *Kolchevskaya* retains the name of an ancient village *Kolchevo*, known since the 15th century. *Kolchevo* originates from the pre-Christian, Old Russian anthroponym *Kolcha*, derived from the nick-name *Kolchenogiy* (‘badger-legged’). The existing old *Central Street* in *Kolchevo* village, where there are only some old houses left, will gradually, in the process of reconstruction, become the continuation of *Stolnik Potemkin Street*. Thus, the coincidence will be eliminated in the future.

On the one hand, such a complex is a local system of street names reflecting the history and landscape features of the ancient village *Kolchevo* and non-recurring in modern Moscow. On the other hand, it complies with the existing urbanonymic system.

However, a new principle of naming should be noted – the names are chosen by the future residents of the apartment complex. Working out the conception of the living estate ‘Pervy Moskovsky Gorod-Park’ (‘First Moscow City-Park’) names the developers held an opinion poll. They proposed three conceptions of street names: ‘nature’: *Yagodnaya ulitsa* (‘Berry-like’ street), *Lesnaya ulitsa* (‘forest’ street), *Lugovaya ulitsa* (‘meadow’ street);

‘positive emotions’: *Yasnaya ulitsa* (‘Bright street’), *Udobnaya ulitsa* (‘Comfortable street’), *Bezoblachnaya ulitsa* (‘Unclouded street’); and the conception ‘Travellers and Discoverers’: *Nevelskoy*, *Arsenyev*, *Potantin* streets. The majority (72%) were for the third one. Such principle is believed to be much in-demand.

The Foreign Names of Cottage Villages

One more issue is connected with the foreign names given to cottage villages in New Moscow. I have examined the names of the housing estates situated in Moscow vicinity (Sokolova 2014a) and have found a lot of foreign place names in the Moscow region, e.g. *Little Scotland*, *Hyde Park*, *Barcelona*, *Little Italy*, *Cote d'Azur*, *Grand-Park*, *La Promenade* etc.

Difficulties stem from the fact that now some of them have become a part of Moscow. But according to the Law of Moscow such foreign names cannot have an official standing. So an advertising name of residential estate *Bristol* is now only an informal one. But the residents want to live in Moscow, and at the same time in England. So they gave the names to the streets of their housing estate: *ulitsa Anny* (‘Anna street’), *Victoria*, *Henry*, *Elisabeth*, *Richard*, *Georg*, *Churchill* streets. They want to live in England. So they chose the royal names. But the Municipal Inter-Departmental Committee for the Naming of Territorial Units, Streets, Metro Stations, Organizations and other Urban Features of the City of Moscow changed these names into *Kipling*, *Dickens*, *Shakespeare* streets. The residents of *Bristol living complex* wanted to have an official address as follows: Moscow, *Bristol*, *Anna street*, 4, and their property was registered this way. However, it violates the Moscow law: according to it, the urbanonym cannot repeat the name of a foreign city, country, on the one hand, and a street cannot be named after the first name only (Anna is a very popular first name for girls in Russia). Thus the official address of *Bristol living complex* is as follows: *Moscow, Lapshinka village...* etc.

The same thing happened with the housing estate *Ostrov Erin* (‘Isle of Erin’, a piece of Ireland in Moscow). *Dublinskaya ulitsa* (‘Dublin street’), *Klevernaya ulitsa* (‘Clover street’) were approved, but *Whisky street* and *Solodovaya ulitsa* (‘Malt street’) were changed into *Jonathan Swift street* and *Bernard Shaw street*.

Commemorative Hodonyms

It is a positive trend to name streets after famous writers rather than political leaders. There are a lot of ideological urban names in Old Moscow (Sokolova 2013: 369-378). After the so-called ‘1917 October revolution’, new, Revolution-themed names mushroomed, immortalizing glorious political and ideological figures and events: *Lenin*, *Marx*, *Engels*, *Clara Zetkin*, *Rosa Luxemburg*, *August Bebel* etc. As a result of artificial name-giving, i.e. a voluntarist decision or an act of servilism on the part of a state official, there emerged in the Moscow Region a number of streets named after leaders of International Communist and Socialist Movement, and Soviet writers. There are a lot of such identical commemorative names in New Moscow: seven *Lenin* streets; four *Engels* streets, five *Marx* streets, two *Dzierzynski* streets, four *Frunze* streets etc.

As a rule, the renaming of a street was triggered by the assassination or tragic death of a pro-Soviet politician or ideologist: thus, *Maurice Torez Embankment*, *Salvador Aliende street*, *Luigi Longo street*, *Josip Broz Tito street*, *Le Zuan Square*, *Ulof Palme street*, to quote only a few (Ageeva *et al.* 2007).

This destructive practice of turning Moscow into a sort of an ‘ideological necropolis’ was reconsidered by State Duma while it was preparing the bill passed in 1997: according to the Act, the name of a prominent Moscow, Russian or foreign citizen can be given to a street only ten years after his or her death. Political reasons, however, prevailed over onomastic and psycholinguistic considerations, and a ten-year period now can be ignored, provided a recommendation is made by President of the Russian Federation or the Mayor of Moscow.

A recent example of such controversial namegiving is *Ulitsa Ugo Chavesa* (*‘Hugo Chavez street’*). The proposal to name a Moscow street after Chavez was put forward and submitted to Moscow authorities by the Communist Party of the RF and President of ROSSNEFT Company Igor Sechin. A session of the Inter-Departmental Committee for the Naming of Moscow Streets was divided on the issue, yet the idea was eventually supported by a majority of votes. New Venezuelan President, Nicolas Maduro, arrived in Moscow to attend the opening ceremony on 2nd July 2013. Comments posted by the forum participants (<http://youtube/qXOMjqUzAWg>) were very conflicting, ranging from wholeheartedly approving to bitterly critical:

- Vivat! South Americans have always supported Russia!
- What we need much less is a Pinochet Street and Kim Chen Ir street, right across the Democracy Avenue!
- Streets should be named after him in his own country, what does he have to do with Russia?
- I have nothing against the man, but why shouldn’t we have streets named after our heroes of recent years instead?
- Hugo Chavez, Bashar Asad, Slobodan Miloshevic, Muammar Qaddafi – these are heroes of my epoch!
- Ugu to Hugo.²
- We need to have a street named after Snowden. And pass a law permitting one to live on a street named after oneself with no passport and no visa
- We’d rather name it Rayskaya ulitsa (*‘Paradise street’*). Just think of an address: Khoroshevski (lit. Good / meaning ‘good’) district, Paradise str., Angel’s lane.

Some extremely biting remarks are unquotable for ethical reasons. A plethora of sarcastic comments was also contributed to by mass media, e.g. ‘Why does Moscow need a Hugo Chavez street?’ (I’ll stroll down the Hugo Chavez street (a paraphrase of and allusion to a popular song): How new street are named in Moscow (www.m24.ru/articles/20628), ‘Moscow authorities will waste about 67 billion rubles to make the Chavez street a nice place to stroll down on’ (<http://dailynewslight.ru/?u=201220132553>) ‘The Chavez street: political toponymy of Moscow’; Boris Mozhayev, a well-known student of local lore and history

² *Ugu* is the Russian slipshod interjection for ‘Yep!’- author’s note.

ironically notes: ‘The Hugo Chavez street will in the course of time become *Ugovka* or something, nobody will really care how it came about. Why should they? Such a nice and old Russian name!’ (<https://centerforpoliticsanalysis.ru/archive/read/id/ulica-chavesa-politicheskaya-toponimika-moskvy>).

What sparks the interest of both toponymists and concerned laymen is the fact that such cases are in no way common practice. In most cases, standard Russian is used for name giving, in full compliance with section 7, article 3 of the Federal Law of the Russian Federation № 53 ‘On the Official Language of the Russian Federation’, which provides that ‘when writing down names of geographical features and prescriptions on road signs’ the official language of the Russian Federation must be used, including the urbanonyms derived from nonstandard anthroponyms.

We believe that the names of New Moscow should not be politicized.

Conclusion

To sum up, there are many problems in the naming of new areas of Moscow and we can solve them only gradually, taking into account the interests of the people of connected settlements, but at the same time preventing the destruction of the existing system of urbanonyms in Old Moscow.

The elimination of toponymic confrontation and the creation of a common urban space in Moscow will be gradual, with the building of new areas, during the reconstruction of the old streets which turned out to have the same names that already exist in Old Moscow.

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