

Metonymic inscription of ideology in cityscape

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This presentation integrates Linguistic Landscape and cognitive linguistic approaches to multimodal meaning construction. Linguistic Landscape research views city as text (Rose-Redwood et al 2018, Šakaja – Stanić 2018). On this account, street names in their interaction with the urban space create meanings encoding memory and values of the dominant group.

When we commemorate a person, it is not just a particular individual and their life events that are commemorated, but rather values that the instigators of commemoration ascribe to. Personal names are often used as metonymies for values (Brdar – Brdar-Szabo 2007, Pang 2010). When street names are used for such commemorative purposes, they inscribe the dominant ideologies in the cityscape in order to further legitimize the government in power (Fairclough 2003). The choice of the streets for such commemoration practices is dictated by their spatial features: length and centrality, which are metaphorically understood as important, as well as the name they carried earlier, which is metonymically understood as standing for the values of the past regime.

In this talk we will present an analysis of the waves of renamings in three locations in Poland: Zbąszyń, Ślubice and Poznań over the last 100 years. The choice of locations will allow us to explore the similarities and differences in the symbolic resemiotization of streetscapes in a small town (Zbąszyń, Ślubice) and a regional capital (Poznań). The timespan has been selected, as it witnessed the emergence of the Polish state after the Great War (1920-1939), the Nazi occupation (1939-1945), the communist rule (1945-1989) and the post-transformation democracy (after 1989). These changes in the political regimes have also been reflected in the naming practices. The observed patterns reflect the symbolic importance of space in the urban semiosphere.

Keywords: linguistic landscape, cityscape, metonymy, commemoration, ideology

Selected references

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