Street renaming as a means of re-ordering the symbolic cityscape in the time of shifting borders

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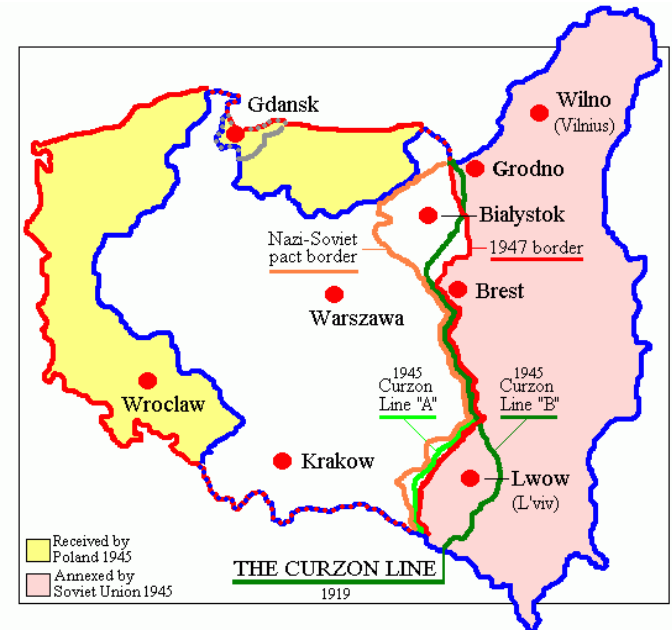
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Shifting borders: timeline

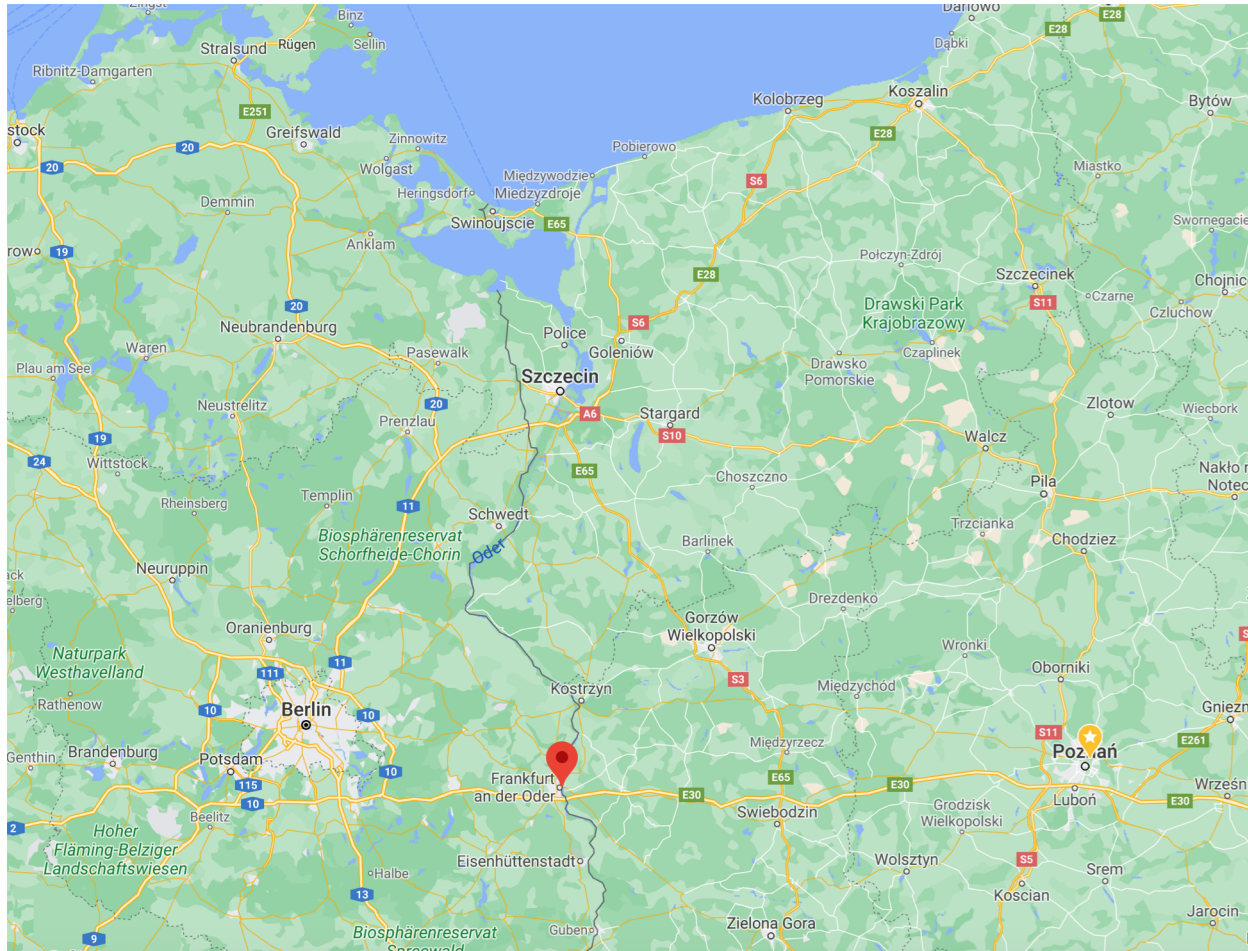
1919: Treaty of Versailles

1945: Potsdam Agreement

1919 — 1939 — 1945

Sites of interest: Poznań and Słubice

Poznań

in 2018
- population: 0.5 mill
- streets: 2700

Słubice
(till 1945 Dammvorstadt / Franfurt(O))

in 2018
- population: 16 644
- streets: 135

Population size and mobility

	Poznań		Słubice
1910	156,696 civilian inhabitants (census data; 57% Poles), plus 6,200 soldiers in the garrison (rising to 10,000 by 1913)		
1931	246,698 inhabitants (census data at December 9); 236,200 Poles, 6,400 Germans, 1,100 Jews)	1939	15,600
1944	323,747 inhabitants (71% Poles; 28% Germans; 1% others)	1945	40% of the population form 1939 remained
1946	268,000 inhabitants Almost exclusively Polish	1950	German population replaced with Polish (22% of 1939)

Street renaming:
re-ordering the symbolic cityscape

Street renaming can function as a powerful mechanism to obliterate "the memory of the former regime. [The elimination of] the discredited past [regime] from the public sphere demonstrate[s] the end of [one] … and the beginning of a new era." (Azaryahu 2012:387).

Poznań: 3 waves of street renamings

1919-1921
change from
Prussian to Polish
street names

1921-1939
city expands
new streets are
added

1939-1944
Nazi occupation
change from Polish
to German street
names
expansion of the
city – new streets
are added

1945-1946
change from Nazi
German to Polish
street names

Prussian	Polish	Nazi German	Communist Polish
	Polish	Nazi German	Communist Polish
		Nazi German	Communist Polish

Continuation …

Bahnhofstrasse → ul. Dworcowa "Railway Station Street" (landmark)

Bach Strasse → ul. Strumykowa "Stream Street" (topological/nature)

Typically, landmark and topological street names are most stable.
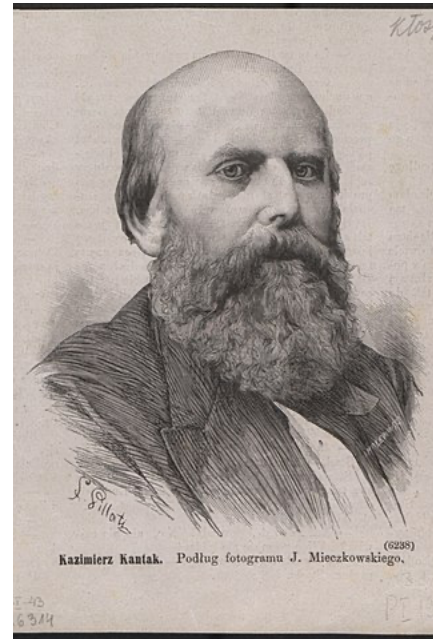
… and change in street names

Bismarckstrasse → ul. Kantaka

1815-1898, Chancellor of unified Germany; responsible for the expulsions and Germanisation of the Polish population of the Wielkopolska region

1824-1886, Political activist, took part in conspiracy, member of the Prussian parliament for Provinz Posen, born and died in Poznan

Kazimierz Kantak. Podług fotogramu J. Mieczkowskiego.

Street names based on personal names and geographical names are most prone to change

Berliner Strasse > ul. 27 Grudnia "Berlin Street → December 27th Street

Poznań: change and continuation - 2

	%	
1919-1921 Prussian to Polish	52%	Polish historical figures and Polish place names replaced German
1919 Prussian to 1939 Nazi German	40%	Teutonic Knights, heroes of medieval legends, WWI; Nazi ideology martyrs and heroes; place names lost after the Treaty of Versaille
1939 Polish to Nazi German	77%	", names of medieval Gmc tribes, Gmc first names
1938 Polish to 1946 communist Polish	11%	Communist organizations and activists (Red Army, Youth Struggle)
1945 Nazi German to 1946 communist Polish	93%	Place names, first names

Poznań: change and continuation - 3

Who changed the smallest numer of street names?

%	
11%	1938 Polish to 1946 communist Polish
40%	1919 Prussian to 1939 Nazi German
52%	1919-1921 Prussian to Polish
77%	1939 Polish to Nazi German
93%	1945 Nazi German to 1946 communist Polish

Reasons:
(1) Social resistance to change
(2) Insecurity of the communist government immediately after the war

Further research: street renaming in the Stalinist era

Słubice: change (and continuation)

	change	Transl/cont	Total	% of change
1948	43	3	46	94%

Change:
Street names based on personal names roze from 5 (in German) to 26 (in Polish) and included key communist figures (Stalin, Dzierżyński), as well as the Red Army and Heroes of Stalingrad

Transl/Continuation
Vorwerksweg > Folwarczna 'Grange Street'
Wasser Str > Wodna 'Water Street'
Dragoner Strasse > Podchorążych 'Cadets Street'

Conclusions

➢ Street name changes were highest when the language of administration/ culture/ dominant community changed

➢ Changes were most ideologically marked in places of total population exchange.

Memory and Ideology in the Linguistic Landscape

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http://mill.wa.amu.edu.pl/beethoven_project