

## **(Re)Naming Streets in Contemporary Bucharest: From Power Distribution to Subjective Biography**

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### **Abstract**

*The present study is grounded on the premise that street names represent an embodiment of the socio-political order in the realm of everyday life (Azaryahu 2002, 135-144). It develops on three complementary axes of interest: a descriptive statistical analysis of power distribution among genders and professional categories in the current configuration of street names, a case study of Ion Câmpineanu Street as a 'memorial landscape' (Dwyer and Alderman 2008, 165 – 178) and the street's subjective history as it is recalled by locals in semi-structured interviews.*

*Research's findings sustain the idea that individuals invest personal or contextual significance endorsed with emotional resonance, in street names and rarely reflect upon the personalities naming their streets. The case study outlined Ion Câmpineanu Street as a self-contradictory, vivid landscape, an urban setting where several versions of history vindicate their memory. The analysis of street names in sector one reveals an unequal distribution among genders in favor of men, who are prominent in naming streets.*

*The novelty in the present inquiry emerges from a gender sensitive approach upon the subject of street toponymy and social memory. Street names are understood as an embodied instrument employed in the social construction of gender in urban spaces.*

**Keywords: social memory • memorial landscape • street toponymy • power relations • social construction of gender**

### **Introduction**

The cornerstone of the present research consists of Azaryahu's and Light, Nicolae and Suditu's findings according to which street names are established and modified according to principles which reflect the socio-political order of the moment (Azaryahu 1996). Street names commemorate figures and events which consolidate and legitimate the ideological perspective of the ruling political agencies by integrating it into the everyday life of the citizens. Street toponymy represents a mean for expressing symbolic

authority, therefore, it is my assumption that street names act as embodied instruments for the social construction of gender in urban spaces. In consequence, this paper represents a gender sensitive analysis upon the reconvention of social memory by means of street toponymy developed on three complementary axes of interest: power distribution in the process of naming streets, the street as 'memorial landscape' (Dwyer and Alderman 2008) and its subjective history as it is rendered by locals.

Aiming to analyze power distribution in terms of gender and profession, I have employed descriptive statistical analysis on a data base of streets from sector one realized by Alice Călin<sup>1</sup>. My interest stands for what types of personalities are socially reinforced as being memorable, so then, desirable and remarkable, by means of street denomination. As for my expectations, they consist of finding an unequal division of symbolic investment among different categories, especially among genders. Furthermore, when streets' denomination is modified by local authorities, operations of de-commemoration are performed and personalities, events and symbols no longer congruent with the accepted version of history are replaced.

In order to assure the validity of results, a case study of Ion Câmpineanu Street will focus on how the urban rhetoric of power applies upon a particular situation. This part of the paper is also concerned with determining whether a street's name and its development in time reflects the history of the space it denominates. Additionally, it can also be read as a reflection upon means of reconstructing the history of a place. Semi-structured interviews with individuals who lived on Ion Câmpineanu Street in different periods of time were performed in order to explore the nature of bearings invested in street names by locals, their insight upon street names, upon the process of naming and renaming, and in the purpose of outlining oral histories of the space. Moreover, I will be inquiring into gender particularities in constructing memories of space. The biographies of the place are expected to reflect the semiotic processes operated by the social actors when investing personal meanings into urban space (Azaryahu 2002).

The study could also be given a pragmatic stake, which consists of proposing a model for further deciding on street names according to the principle of promoting equal visibility. For that matter, the present endeavor represents an attunement to international social activist movements such as EVE, a non-profit organization which militates for equal visibility everywhere for women.

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## **Theoretical Approach**

### **Collective memory: A Few Terms of Reference**

Halbwachs (2008, 129 - 144) understands memory in the light of its social nature: a system of storage and retrieval of information operated by human collectivities like groups, communities or nations. The process of memorizing information is structured according to categories and schemas offered by language. Likewise, the information an individual is presented with is also committed to an operation of selection by social institutions like family, school and church. In Halbwachs's perspective, the term of 'social memory' can be understood as a 'memory of society', which makes the attunement of language and transmission of cultural heritage possible (Chelcea 2008, 132). Also, evocation takes place within interaction with other members of the familial, religious or national group of appurtenance. Halbwachs (2008) refers to contexts of communication facilitated by the affiliation to a group, class or collectivity by using the notion of 'social frameworks'. The repository of memory is not the individual, but the group. Collective frames embed both affective and normative implications, operating with notions of order and value (Neculau 1999, 179 - 198). Each memory falls into a temporal and spatial continuity, proposes a precept and endorses a model of behavior. We do not socially inherit only memories, but also linguistic frames, cultural patterns and symbolical associations meant to regulate them and form on the hierarchical system. Hence, the present study is particularly interested in how the discourse concerning women's memory, identity and experiences is constructed by means of street denomination.

The concept of 'gender' touches upon 'social and cultural bearings and regulations prescribed to sexes and used in particular social systems to label individuals as feminine, masculine or androgyne'<sup>1</sup>. By definition, gender is prescribed, normative and represents a social construct. Furthermore, social representations regarding attitudes, behaviors, practices and appearances associated with genders are referred to as 'femininity' and 'masculinity'. It is 'social memory', namely shared accounts of past events, actions and personalities invested with a special significance by a particular social group, that is employed in constructing a common perspective upon its socio-historical background as a basis for a group's present identity (Chelcea 2008). For the

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<sup>1</sup> „acele înțelesuri și norme sociale și culturale atașate/prescrise sexelor în anumite sisteme sociale particulare, prin intermediul cărora oamenii sunt catalogați drept feminini, masculini sau androgini” [Laura Grünberg, 'Gen și societate', in *Sociologie*, coord. Lazăr Vlăsceanu (Iași: Polirom, 2011), 209]

matter of that, a gender sensitive approach in the study of social memory could shed light upon social mechanisms of articulating femininity and masculinity. When treated individually, gender equates to similarity while, socially, gender is rather about disparity (Lorber apud. Grünberg 2010). By this token, urban spaces can be understood in the light of the regulatory function they exert upon the social construction of gender.

According to Candau (Candau apud. Neculau 1999, 120 ), the initial sequence of events is perpetually re-created by being committed to operations of augmenting and retrenchment by the social instances which are responsible for evoking it. Operations of inclusion and exclusion, deciding upon what is held as memorable and what is forgotten make the past 'a selective social and geographic construction' (Alderman, Reuben and Azaryahu 2008, 161). The constructivist approach (Derek and Mercer apud. Chelcea 2008) defines memory as being constructed in social interaction by means of language while rejecting its understanding as a process of coding and stocking information. From this perspective, as from Halbwachs's, language is still central to the structure, interpretation and re-organization of memory (Derek and Mercer apud. Chelcea 2008).

Thus, history is the object of a permanent process of reorganization, in which several social agencies are actively involved. As Giddens points out, a setting actively participates in social interaction (Giddens 1979, 207). Studies like Maurice Halbwachs's *Topographie légendaire des évangiles en terre sainte: étude de mémoire collective* attest to the influence of geographical and constructed spaces in anchoring and embodying social memory in the core of day-to-day life. Hence, history is not only re-written with every new history handbook, but also with the rearrangement of geographical frames or constructed deposits of memory such as monuments, museums or street toponymy. Further on, I will particularize streets as sites of remembrance in the broad framework of collective memory.

### **Street Names as Memorial Landscapes**

Starting from Halbwachs's observation that collective memory finds itself in a permanent process of revision, Pierre Nora (1989) differentiates between 'real memory', 'social and unviolated', an apanage by excellence of archaic societies, and modern history, which embodies a perpetual obsession for change in an attempt of permanent reinvention. Memory appears as being affective, magical, vivid while history is merely an incomplete re-enactment.

Thus, history can be understood as a process of disenchantment, critical and secular. It is from the latest that the need of creating '*lieux of mémoire* where memory crystallizes and secretes itself' (Nora 1989, 7) arises. By the same token, it was in the '90s that Huyssen (Huyssen apud. Alderman, Rose-Redwood and Azaryahu 2008) brought into reference the increasing need of individuals to find isles of memory in an informational and highly mediatic society. Sites of memory represent the last remains of memorial consciousness in a derritualized modern society, accused by Pierre Nora for killing its sacrality with its own reflexiveness. As a result, they develop because environments of memory gradually cease to exist, therefore, they need to be artificially reinforced: 'Museums, archives, cemeteries, festivals, anniversaries, treaties, depositions, monuments, sanctuaries, fraternal orders – these are the boundary stones of another age, illusions of eternity.' (Nora 1989). They embody the product of transformation, alteration and alternation specific to modern history. These are the results of a society where memories are removed, then subsequently rehabilitated.

According to Neculau (1999), there are three main existing central mechanisms, employed in the construction of social memory: globalization, symbolization and commemoration. Globalization is the equivalent of a synthetic process of recollection, while the opposite of globalization is symbolization, which consists of using an element such as a photograph or a discourse to evoke an entire memorial universe. Both symbolization and commemoration, that is the reminiscence of historical events, figures, places, narrations, are ordered into use by the naming and renaming of streets. Following the same line of thought as Nora, Neculau also argues that it is the illusion of eternity, which is sought to be constructed by appealing to commemorative symbols.

Nora (1989) asserts alongside that the transition from memory to history practice fades away. Its bearings are no longer negotiated in the process of transmission, but artificially imposed to the individuals as a necessity while no longer immanent. Taking into account the fact that women were historically ascribed with roles corresponding to the private sphere of life and their legacy is firmly affined to oral accounts, the shift from negotiating the past to ingesting it as it is redeemed by constructed sites of memory make women *les grandes perdantes* of history.

Pierre Nora emphasizes that each individual becomes one's own historian, engaging in a permanent search of one's roots, recovering a past which will always be threatened to be contested. Gary Fine uses the term 'reputational politics' to refer to

one's struggle to reclaim and then defend one's memorial inheritance (Fine apud. Alderman 2002). Historical reputation represents a construction derived from a process of negotiation between agendas of different social groups and is regulated by 'reputational entrepreneurs' (Fine apud. Alderman 2002) as Fine calls them. Such 'custodial agents' (Alderman 2002) are individuals in charge with advocating, contesting and controlling symbolical power attributed to social categories formed after criteria like gender, race, ethnicity, profession, social status. Alderman concludes that the power they display over the process of asserting historical reputations derives from their motivation, their rhetoric abilities and their social position among hierarchies of power.

Moreover, Alderman argues that named streets act like 'memorial arenas', public stages used for disputing reputational politics between groups of influence. These urban spaces can be interpreted as depositories of historical representations, circulating the prestige of important figures, standing for their relevance, and consequently for their place in the social memory. Street names appear as holders of symbolical power as they embed commemorative bearings into the urban quotidian, thus, legitimating identities of social actors and groups (Alderman, Rose-Redwood and Azaryahu 2008). Hence, they represent urban embodied versions of different historical discourses in general and of femininity and masculinity in particular, structuring the experience of *memorial landscapes*. Also, Graham, Ashworth and Tunbridge (Graham, Ashworth and Tunbridge apud. Alderman 2002) point out that the co-existence of several versions of history in the same spatial boundaries results in social tensions and conflicts, which limit the individual ability to celebrate one's past. Such social pressures and rivalries for symbolical power are the core of politics of memory.

After synthesizing two decades of cultural geographical studies, Dwyer and Alderman (2008) conclude that there are three central metaphors used to understand memorial landscapes in the urban space: arenas, texts and performances. By the same token, Palonen (2008) employs the term 'city-text' to refer to street names and memorials in Budapest. The theorist argues that through the process of renaming streets and monuments, the urban setting becomes not only a space where the past is constantly re-evaluated, but also a stage for disputing problems of national identity and political platforms by different groups of interest. Palonen's research upon street names and memory redefinition demonstrates that the city-text can prove to be a fertile

ground for observing the symbolic striving for deciding what society, in her case post-communist Hungary, should celebrate and what it should forget.

In the present paper, the more comprising term of 'memorial landscapes' was preferred to the others mentioned in the presentation above on the criterion of its complexity and vastness. Street toponymy evokes the entire metropolitan universe of a street, which encompasses a diversity of spaces, interactions, realities, manifold worlds colliding and mixing. An urban street brings together spaces of habitation like houses and blocks, spaces of consumption such as markets, shops, coffeehouses, spaces of leisure and entertainment as theatres, movie houses, concert halls, parks. Moreover, it represents a junction of gendered trajectories of everyday life. The street also comprises several forms of embodied memory as monuments, statues and memorial plates recalling social, political, military, cultural, artistic, scientific personalities who used to live there. It represents a meeting point between different ages evoked by all elements of the surrounding urban space, therefore, reuniting arenas, texts and performances in a complex and diverse memorial landscape.

### **The Power of Naming**

Naming streets fulfills two types of functions, practical and symbolical. The pragmatic character of designation implies differentiation between several streets. It represents an administrative measure which fulfills the need for spatial orientation in urban and rural areas. An example of a toponymic system which accurately reflects this function is the alphanumerical one utilized in New York. Although it started by being the primary function, purposes of naming streets gradually glided towards its symbolical use. This shift finds its best representation in cases of totalitarian systems when the ideological goals of naming streets are probably at their highest rank. For example, one of the strategies of augmenting the political impact of street toponymy in Communist Bucharest (1948-1965) consisted in using repeatedly particular names throughout the different areas of the city. Hence, relevant historical personalities such as Vasile Roaită, Nicolae Bălcescu and Tudor Vladimirescu, events like 23 August, 30 December, 6 March or concepts as Freedom or Peace with ideological bearings could name from 7 to 10 different streets in Bucharest City (Light, Nicolae and Suditu 2002).

This administrative taxonomic procedure operated by authorities becomes invested with political meanings once we refer to naming as a mark of symbolic control

over public space. In his article *The Power of Commemorative Street Names*, Maoz Azaryahu discusses the plurality of emblematic functions associated with toponymy in contemporary urban settings. In a symbolical register, naming equals an expression of authority and an agency of appropriation. In modern societies, authorities are in charge of establishing and modifying toponymy. Therefore, the act of naming or renaming is a state power expression.

Another symbolical function of street designation is commemoration. Aligning with Nora's considerations (1989), street names with historical resonance represent 'lieux of memoire' in the social settings of modernity (Azaryahu 1996, 312). Furthermore, Azaryahu (1996, 319) highlights the instrumental role of commemorative naming in the reification of particular historical events by integrating them in the everyday life: 'Spatial commemorations in particular, which merge history and physical environment, are instrumental in the naturalization of the commemorated past.' All the more so, the commemorative message of street names is circulated through all instrumental means necessary in the everyday life, 'road maps, phone book listings, the sending and receiving of mail, the giving of directions, advertising billboards, and of course, road signs themselves'(Alderman 2008, 101) and recently, Google Maps, GPS devices and other technological applications with similar purposes. When referring to streets, we can talk about several types of signs such as the street plates indicating denomination, memorial plates placed on buildings to evoke the presence of a significant figure linked to the space or region or events of collective importance which took place in that setting. Signs indicating directions in cities also take part in creating the sense of space and integrate a particular street in a broader urban picture by relating to other central destinations of the metropolis.

Since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, commemoration has been transformed into a key strategy for constructing and implementing the concept of 'nation'. George Mosse's 'nationalization of the masses' or Hobsbawn's 'invented traditions' imply the usage of national monuments, museums or celebrations which act like markers of the national specificity for social actors, but can also be applied to commemorative street names which bring national heroes or crucial historical events into the everyday life of the citizens. The 20<sup>th</sup> century is emblematic for national and ethnical revivals operated by means of street renaming, due to its role of imprinting the relevant past and its mythical foundations into the landscape itself. Thereby, the urban setting is transformed into an

embodied history which accommodates all of social activities. Smith (apud. Azaryahu 1996, 319 – 320) accentuates the role of 'poetic landscapes', saturated with national and ethnical meanings and symbols, in the semantic re-appropriation of a terrain as a homeland for a community. James Duncan and Nancy Duncan (apud Duncan Azaryahu 1996) argue that if they are not the subject of profound reflection, such landscapes do not only naturalize the past in a particular cultural pattern, but also project, highlight and legitimate a certain type of social relations, materializing them into the present social reality. For that matter of fact, it is in the interest of the present study to inquire upon the types of social relations among genders legitimated by urban spaces in contemporary Bucharest.

Above all, commemorative street names have the function of implementing, consolidating and legitimating the socio-political order as it is conceived by the present administration of the state (Azaryahu 1996). Political powers make use of the urban landscape in order to institute and anchor their ideological perspective into the social reality of everyday life. In some cases, the internal organization may be dictated even by the influence of foreign political powers of the moment or international organizations. This socio-political order represents an officially accepted version of the world and of life, which symbolically invests stipulated meanings.

Moreover, relating to gender in the light shed by West and Zimmerman (1987, 125), who define it 'as a routine accomplishment embedded in everyday interaction', highlights the regulatory function of constructed urban spaces in the articulation of 'living femininities' (Rovența-Frumușani 2002, 146 - 149). Masculinity and femininity cannot be discussed without reference to power relations, domination and submissiveness between genders. Connel (1987) integrates the two notions in the theoretical frame of hegemony constructed by Gramsci (Rovența-Frumușani 2002), who argues that domination does not rely on power, but on the cultural system which accommodates it. According to the author, power relations are not grounded upon real difference between individuals or on the patriarchal appetency, but rather on context. Mass media, social policy, income distribution, the layout of both living and urban space are particularly relevant in constructing and intensely circulating gender roles for femininities and masculinities are not matters of essence, but are rather constructed in relation. They represent customized enactments of relationships (Rovența-Frumușani 2002).

The conventional understanding of the past as a linear chronological narrative based on causal explanation and sequential chains makes the present appear as a natural consequence of the objective trajectory of history. Such a manner of comprehending the past leads to the conclusion that the sociopolitical order of the present is a result of history: 'This narrative structure 'explains' and celebrates the present, which is identified with the status quo embodied by the ruling sociopolitical order, as the only possible, and hence inevitable, outcome of the 'objective' course of history' (Azaryahu 1996, 319). Enacting such definitions of the past creates acceptance and even embrace of the present organization of society as it is wrapped in an appearance of simplicity and is not conventionally the object of reflection or criticism.

### **The Act of Renaming**

If naming streets embeds a certain socio-political order among the members of a society, renaming is equivalent to a restructuration of the existent organization or even to its abolition in favor of implementing and legitimating a new ideological system. The symbolic implications of renaming as an instrument for restructuring social memory can also be understood in the light of Bartlett's theory (Chelcea 2008) of structuring memory according to culture and interest. The theorist's experimental studies plead for the idea that it is not oblivion that caused the loss of information, but the reorganization of significances.

According to Azaryahu(1996, 318), the process of renaming streets represents a marker for stages of transition when political strategies are modified or when a society experiences a shift of political regime or government: 'The act of renaming asserts that a radical restructuring of power relations in society has indeed been accomplished, or is underway, and it indicates a profound reconstruction of social and political institutions.' Lefebvre (apud Azaryahu 1996) understands the reorganization of social space as representing the climax of a revolution by creatively using the practices of everyday life in order to crystallize social transformation.

There are two types of processes involved in renaming a street. Firstly, the removal of the former denomination results in a de-commemoration of a certain historical figure or context. The modifications of street denomination act upon the collective memory of a community. They affect the social routine and the relations concentrated around it. Renaming can create cognitive dissonance and also fragment

communication and the circulation of specific memories (Azaryahu 1996). Secondly, another personality or event is invested with symbolical significance by the means of commemoration.

In the article called *Toponymy and the Communist city: Street names in Bucharest*, Duncan Light, Ion Nicolae and Bogdan Suditu discuss the case of the modifications operated to street names of the Romanian Capital in the period 1948-1965. Due to the centralization of state power in the capital and to its significance as emblem of the nation, Bucharest is a valorized urban space and therefore it is saturated with symbols of the ruling socio-political order. By implementing Communist symbols into the urban scenery and the 'politicization of toponymy' (Ilyin apud. Light, Nicolae and Suditu 2002, 142), a socialist mentality was gradually reinforced: 'Street names were essentially one more form of propaganda for the regime.' Legislative modifications were officiated simultaneously with changes in the mundane register of life such as renaming streets.

Another strategy consisted of replacing street names in a district with other historical figures who all fixed a particular type of biography such as revolutionary figures like Nicolae Bălcescu, Ana Ipătescu or Tudor Vladimirescu. This type of practice was particularly common for the marginal regions of the city or former villages which were in process of being assimilated in the city structure. Light, Nicolae and Suditu observed that politics of naming and renaming streets in Communist Bucharest also reflected attitudes towards other state powers such as fidelity to the Soviet Union and later on the 1960s de-sovietization process. Further on, they stand for positions towards institutions inside the national structure such as the Orthodox Church. Although it was under state control, streets named after saints and bishops did not represent a priority in the process of renaming.

Chelcea's (2008) comparative study of reorganizing memory after the 1989 Revolution highlights renaming streets and boulevards as central to the process. As soon as the Romanian Popular Republic was proclaimed, street denominations evoking members of the royal family and political figures of the monarchy were de-commemorated in favor of crucial personalities and moments of communist history. Geopolitical affiliations and departures from other states are reflected by de-commemorations operated by means of changing street denominations. National symbols and markers of technological progress were also circulated by street toponymy. In its most virulent manifestation, the reorganization of memory was objectified through

effacement of entire neighborhoods and churches in its most physical expression. The Romanian Revolution of 1989 symbolized the rise of democracy, which was followed by a systematic effort of obliteration of communist reference points. In addition, opponents of the regime were transformed in models and recognition was offered by re-naming streets in their memory. Chelcea (2008) concludes that nations have a selective way of forgetting, but as well of preserving historical personalities who have had a significant contribution to their development and also manifest a predisposition of remembering those who have suffered from injustice. However, deciding upon who the aggrieved are depends on the historical period one is relating to.

### **Patterns of Reaction to Street Renaming**

Changing the name of a street also has practical implications for locals. This could mean having them change their identity cards, driving licenses and announce friends and relatives. Therefore, by word of mouth, the newly invested significances start circulating among the members of the community.

Yet, if associated with political oppression, certain social groups might reject the new denomination of the street. This act of resistance can be manifested by not referring to the official name and even using an alternative name. In the article called *Street Names as Memorial Arenas: The Reputational Politics of Commemorating Martin Luther King Jr. in a Georgia County*, Derek H. Alderman talks about the social construction and disproof of commemorated historical personalities and the 'discursive rivalry' between social groups who have particular interest in a figure or another. By presenting this process, the author also highlights civil agencies who actively participate in public debate regarding the politics of naming and renaming streets. If from the perspective of political authorities which embed the socio-political order in the urban setting, the action upon memorial landscapes is equivalent with controlling mechanisms of collective memory, for social actors and groups, the same sites of commemoration become a means of manifesting social resistance (Alderman, Rose-Redwood and Azaryahu 2008).

Azaryahu (1996) argues that although street naming and renaming is an intelligent strategy of introducing political significations into a non-political domain of everyday life, people rarely reflect upon the meanings of the name written on a street signs. As opposed to monuments which are invested with pathos and symbolically

invested with the sacred, streets are rarely referred to in the historical context fixed by their denomination. Moreover, Azaryahu talks about the fact that the semiotic operations carried out by social actors involve other types of contexts than the initial historical ones and usually result in semantic displacements. In other words, individuals rather tend to invest the name of a street with biographical significance or link them with local happenings or places, events which actually happened on that street or important buildings on that street. By the same token, Nas (apud. Alderman, Rose-Redwood and Azaryahu 2008) understands urban memorial landscapes as being 'polyvocal' referring to the plurality of meanings which can be invested by social instances, groups and individuals.

The city-text proposes and legitimates a systematic manner of understanding and interpreting the world, which makes use of symbolic operations of inclusion and exclusion in order to create the impression of immanent coherence (Palonen 2008). By renaming streets and monuments, the mundane reality of individuals is saturated with significances pertaining to the legitimated view over the world.

### **Methodology**

The first dimension of my research subscribes to a quantitative logic of understanding the mechanisms which underlie the present structure of street names. It develops from the assumption that characteristics of personalities evoked by street names like gender and profession influence the rank of the named street (entryways, streets, boulevards). The predilection for historical, military, political, cultural, artistic or athletic personalities, who are representative for particular amalgamations of traits, reflect models proposed as remarkable, therefore desirable, by the present socio-political order.

A complete list with the street denominations obtained from Bucharest Sector 1 City Hall and a summarization of the streets according to rank, gender and domain of activity effectuated by Alice Călin were employed to account for power distribution among genders and professions within the present socio-political order. Moreover, non-numerical social documents, both written and visual sources like *The Bucharest Municipality Street Guide*<sup>1</sup>, *The Bucharest Street Guide (Bordușanu 2001)*, *The Street Index of Sector 1*, Bucharest on [www.strazibucuresti.ro](http://www.strazibucuresti.ro), were put into use for confronting

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<sup>1</sup> Direcția de arhitectură și sistematizare a Consiliului Popular al Municipiului București. *Ghidul Străzilor Municipiului București*. București: Editura Consiliului Național pentru Educație Fizică și Sport, 1969;

changes in street denomination over time in the case of Ion Câmpineanu Street. The research design does not propose an exhaustive account of all the street names, but is rather concerned with identifying key patterns in which they are assigned, that reflect the structure of power distribution and gender relations enabled by the present socio-political order. Furthermore, the socio-political circumstances and interests invest with significance certain traits which make certain personalities eligible for being evoked in order to implement or reinforce the new or the existent order.

So then, the second dimension of my research consists of a qualitative approach, divided in two different directions. The first encompasses a case study aiming to reconstruct the history of a street from sector one, meaning Ion Câmpineanu Street. The main question I am trying to answer in this part of the paper is whether a name of a street and its' development along time also reflects the history of the actual place. This includes non-numerical, public, official, written documents such as city guides of Bucharest approved by the National Office for Land Register, Measurement and Mapping. The second direction of the qualitative dimension is complementary to the first. In the article about *The Power of Commemorative Street Names*, Maoz Azaryahu argues that locals rarely reflect upon the historical references set by the street names and often invest subjective significance, either personal or contextual, which result in subjective biographies of a place. In consequence, this part of the research uses open-ended interview for unfolding the semiotic processes operated upon the street name by the individuals living there and gender differences in constructing memories. Semi-structured interviews with locals' prospect for the meanings associated with the name of the street where they domicile and which also represents the focus of the case study. The central themes of interview focus on the memories associated with the street name, personal or collective events and stories fixed by its' denomination, attitudes towards the changing of street names by local authorities, the manner in which individuals relate to the toponymy of their street and in which they integrate it in their personal narrative. This technique is meant to outline oral histories of the street; a biography of the place complementary to the official development overtook in the case study of Ion Câmpineanu Street.

## **Research Analysis and Interpretations**

### **Clash of the Titans<sup>1</sup>: Power Distribution in (Re)Naming Streets**

When referring to structures of symbolical power circulated by street denominations, the most pronounced differences between categories have been recorded in the case of gender. In sector one of Bucharest, there are no alleys, roads, main roads, highroads or boulevards baptized after women. Only 7% of the number of streets bearing names of persons refers to a feminine personality. It could be argued that the present reality is the result of the social division of genders in the historical development of humanity. Feminine roles have been long ascribed to the private sphere of life, which presumed domestic activities and an active agency in the education of children. At the same time, men have always been associated with roles subsumed to the public domain of existence, which permitted access to social positions and functions invested with influence and prestige. Masculine figures were empowered with military, political, social and intellectual prerogatives, which enabled them to prove their qualities. Men were the most eligible to be prescribed with remarkable destinies as kings, warriors, generals, philosophers, orators, politicians, thinkers while feminine figures tended to remain behind the curtains of history, educating those who were to be the future heroes. This explanation could account for the unequal division between men and women in naming streets. Due to the manner in which gender roles were socially constructed, it appears that masculine figures were invested in key positions and functions as beneficiaries of prolific historical contexts. In other words, the social organization empowered men to play the most memorable roles of history.

However, even if the majority is still constituted of men, women are best represented in naming entrances. The label of 'entrance' is used for the smallest streets with a dead end, therefore, we are actually talking about hierarchy when referring to the dimension and visibility of streets named by men and of those denominated after feminine figures. Even when taking into account women who proved themselves remarkable in history, the importance they are invested with is still marginal as they are only ascribed with 'blind alleys'.

Regarding the total of 849 streets, 322 of them are named after a man and 24 after a woman. More than a quarter of them is presented in a role which accentuates the

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<sup>1</sup> Title borrowed from the American cinematographic production: *Clash of the Titans*. United States of America: Warner Home Video, 2010. Film.

relationship with a man. Therefore, they are daughters<sup>1</sup> or wives<sup>2</sup> of important men in history. Their husbands or fathers are usually voivodes. For example, we have Doamna Despina, Neagoe Basarab's wife, and Doamna Stanca, the wife of Mihai Viteazul. Functions of servants at the royal court are evoked, for example, Maria Clucereasa was responsible with the food supply for the royal family and guests. In Romanian, the term "clucereasa" refers to the spouse of the so-called "clucer". Veronica Micle is an interesting example from this point of view because she was not married to Mihai Eminescu, but their love affair and all the letters revealed later on were responsible with her notoriety so I believe she could be integrated in this category. The present findings could suggest that women become memorable due to their connection to powerful men with visible positions in the social hierarchy. Characteristics such as marital status and family of origin become central to the recollection of feminine figures. In short, women appear to be valued according to what is already ascribed by existing social structures.

A second category refers to female figures known for their professional attainments or for being the first woman to defer in a certain professional domain. Here we have the example of Ecaterina Teodoroiu, sub-lieutenant, who fought in the First World War. Another example is Elena Caragiani which was the first woman to be an aviator in Romania. In the artistic sphere, there is the soprano Hariclea Darclée, the actress Frosa Sarandy and writers such as Elena Văcărescu. We remarked three religious characters: Saint Mary, Saint Alexandra and Saint Teofana.

The historical marginality of women has been a subject of concern for feminist theorists (Mihăilescu 2006, 132 - 136), who talk about a weakening of collective memory regarding feminine historical personalities and their cultural inheritance. Mihăilescu argues that even feminine figures of autochthonous or international sonority, pioneers in the struggle for rights and freedoms for women, are placed at the loose ends of history. Street denominations do not seem to represent a dissonant tone among other vehicles of social memory as historical treaties, encyclopedias of personalities and dictionaries, which also seem to lack feminine models. Also, urban repositories of femininity like buildings which employ particular significance for the social emancipation of women as the Woman's House are not fixed in the collective memory by any sign usually placed on memorial monuments.

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<sup>1</sup> domnița

<sup>2</sup> doamna

Regarding types of accomplishments, male figures belong to a variety of professions such as politicians, voivodes, rulers, historians, essayists, prose writers, poets, play writers, actors, doctors, chemists, physicians, metropolitans, bishops, sculptors, painters, pharmacists or different positions at the royal court. Saints are also prominent personalities among the ones celebrated in the collective memory by naming a street. The most prominent professional category in denominating streets refers to high culture. Consequently, this finding could suggest personalities with cultural accomplishments are invested with value by the present socio-political order. Another perspective which could be employed in interpreting this result refers to the fact that Romanian society has been prolific in producing intellectually endowed individuals. Another justification for this result may refer to the fact that this category was oppressed by communist authorities, a fact that would lead to a present exoneration of its memory. However, this could also be the consequence of the fact that the cultural domains comprises a diversity of profession such as artistic professions and intellectual professional trajectories such as writers, theoreticians, publicists, professors, social scientists.

The next most popular category of accomplishments in denominating streets refers to military ranks. This finding suggests that according to the axiological system of contemporary Romanian society the Army represents an institution which is considered worthy of social recognition. However, the Romanian people have only fought when threatened and provoked, when geopolitical contexts utterly demanded action. It has not been animated by colonist or imperialistic ideals. The prestige affiliated with military occupations could be understood as a smothered desire of Romanians of becoming what they never were: a military power. The valorization of personalities with military accomplishments could also make reference to a fondness of heroic bearing, the sacrifice leitmotif, usually characteristic to the nationalist stage of political development.

In the same line with observations formulated by Light, Nicolae and Suditu (2002), the practice of using the same name for several streets in order to consolidate its social investment is sustained by the results of the present research. It is the case of denominations used both for naming an entrance, an alley, a boulevard and for referring to a street. A couple of examples which illustrate the principle are Grigore Alexandrescu Entrance and Street, Ion Mihalache Entrance and Boulevard, Iulia Hașdeu Entrance and Street, Nicolae Iorga Entrance and Street, Știrbei Vodă Entrance and Street.

Sector 1 of Bucharest City encompasses 157 entrances (*intrări*), 17 alleys (*alei*), 849 streets (*străzi*), 7 roads (*drumuri*), 20 main roads (*căi*), 16 highroads (*șosele*) and 34 boulevards<sup>1</sup> (*bulevarde*). Due to our research objectives, the dimension concerned with analyzing power distribution comprises only the streets which are named after individuals. However, this represents a limit of the data employed in the research because as a result of the process of renaming, many of the streets which are not presently baptized after persons have borne such names in the past. Another limit of the utilized information refers to the way categories were defined in the construction of the data base. Research results would have been more precise if professions would have been described in detail and not presented in wide categories such as medical field, army, culture, politics, religious ranks and titles and combinations among the domains.

### **Down Memory Lane: Ion Câmpineanu Street**

The argument for choosing Ion Câmpineanu Street as the focus of my case study refers to the abundance and diversity of elements which are gathered under this street denomination and transform the urban realm into an eclectic memorial landscape, a *mélange* of modernity and conservatism, between consumerist sensation and communist nostalgia. Ion Câmpineanu Street will be further analyzed from the perspective of street denomination shifts, from the point of view of the place's historical and present setting and as it is constructed in the perception of locals. In addition, marks of feminine personalities, memories and experiences will be prospected for in this central and diverse area of Bucharest. Also, it is of interest for the present study to carry out preliminary inquiries concerning the recurrence of politics of marginality in the history of a street.

The first denomination consigned by official documents from the City Hall and Bucharest's Street Guides is Lutheran Street<sup>2</sup>. This name is determined by the proximity of the Lutheran Church. According to its website<sup>3</sup>, the Church dates from the nineteenth century and it was constructed by the German architect Monbach with the support of German aristocracy and of religious organizations. Furthermore, the fact that the Lutheran Church is at the intersection of Știrbei Vodă Street, Lutheran Street and Ion Câmpineanu Street is not accidental as it was constructed under the reign of Barbu

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<sup>2</sup> In Romanian, Luterană Street.

<sup>3</sup> Biserica Evanghelică C.A. București, accessed at <http://www.evkb.ro/ro/biserica>, retrieved 10.05.2013

Știrbei. In consequence, some street denominations still conserve the memory of the place they indicate. In the inter-war period, the street was renamed after Aristide Briand (1862 - 1932), who was the Prime Minister of France for eleven mandates. He was also recompensed for the Locarno Treaties by being awarded with the Nobel Prize. Naming a central street after Aristide Briand symbolized the recognition of his accomplishments, of his role in the international political scene and, furthermore, stood for the Romanian effort of aligning with French models and ideals.

The logic of choosing the next name of the street, that is Royal Street, is consistent with the first in terms of naming streets according to the history of the space, precisely due to its proximity to the Royal Palace, which presently hosts The National Museum of Art. This was the house of Prince Carol of Hohenzollern and of King Carol I, who initiated projects to extend the Palace. His preoccupation for the space and for his art collections also figure in his will. After it is affected by a fire, it is reconstructed and extended during Carol II's reign<sup>1</sup>. In the communist period, the street was renamed December 13th<sup>2</sup> as a symbol of Proletarian manifestations of typographers in Bucharest, in December 1918. All leaders of the demonstration, including Ion C. Frimu, were further imprisoned and subdued to violent reprisals. After the Revolution of 1989, the street was given the name of Ion Câmpineanu (1789-1863), a boyar of Țara Românească, who was actively involved in the 1848 Revolution. He was particularly animated by cultural interest and took part at laying the foundation of the Philharmonic Society in 1833.

In consequence, Ion Câmpineanu Street possessed denominations invoking a religious institution, royalty, a French Prime Minister, laureate of the Nobel Prize, a proletarian event and a revolutionary boyar. Two wars, four street names later, its denomination still doesn't celebrate a feminine Romanian figure although due to the exquisite inter-war fur boutique down the street, to the Union Cinema and the park nearby, Ion Câmpineanu Street has always been a popular spot for feminine audiences.

Nowadays, the street is popular for the various urban attractions which it accommodates. It is situated in a hyper-central area of Bucharest, close to University Square<sup>3</sup>, at a twenty minutes' walk from Roman Square<sup>4</sup> and nearby Victory Road. Furthermore, it is in the proximity of the Civic Centre, which is intensely populated due

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<sup>1</sup> The National Museum of Art of Romania Site, accessed at <http://www.mnar.arts.ro/Istoricul-cladirii>, retrieved 10.05.2013

<sup>2</sup> In Romanian, 13 Decembrie.

<sup>3</sup> In Romanian, Piața Universității.

<sup>4</sup> In Romanian, Piața Romană.

to the multitude of bars, pubs, restaurants, coffeehouses, clubs concentrated in the same place. Ion Câmpineanu Street is marked by religious monuments such as Lutheran Church and Kretzulescu Church and cultural destinations such as The Palace Hall, which hosts concerts of popular international and autochthonous artists, conferences and expositions, The National Museum of Art of Romania, which is intensely visited not only for the sake of its collections, but also for the parties which are organized there. Pastry Shop Capșa House<sup>1</sup> is close to Ion Câmpineanu Street and Union Cinematograph is placed in its core. Encompassed by parks, it is situated in the proximity of Cișmigiu Park, 'a place of affective resonance for any individual who lived in Bucharest', as one of the female respondents stated.

The pronounced cultural resonance of the area is given by the proximity of The Romanian Atheneum, of the Central University Library 'Carol I' of Bucharest, to the National Museum of Art of Romania, to several art galleries. Due to the proximity of the popular Muzica Store and of the National University of Music from Bucharest, Ion Câmpineanu Street is also a focus for musicians as the place is pinned with stores with musical equipment and musical productions companies: Music Shop, Muzică For You, Senia Music. Among them, the passers-by can observe shop fronts exposing expensive and professional sportive equipment, emblematic for urban lifestyles of young people: Sport Virus, Outdoor Equipment, Surmount Bikes and Boards Store. In this respect, shop fronts on Ion Câmpineanu Street construct sports as inherent to masculinity because most of the lay figures are representations of men. The street's landscape encloses highly contrasting elements such as the juxtaposition of names such as Outdoor Equipment and Aquarius Garments<sup>2</sup>, which could be called 'left-over spaces of state-socialism' (Light and Young 2010), spaces created by the communist regime which were re-appropriated to suit capitalist functions.

The memories recalled by respondents, who live on Ion Câmpineanu Street in different periods from 1950 until the present, are strongly connected with affections they experienced on this street: the harsh sound of tramway 6 which turned at the corner waking them up in the early morning, the taste of their favorite sweets from the nearby pastry, for which they saved money for weeks, the chill of the nights when they queued for passes at the Union Cinema, the sight of a homeless feeding the birds with his only piece of bread. According to the expectations of this research, the memory of Ion

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<sup>1</sup> In Romanian, Casa Capșa.

<sup>2</sup> In Romanian, Vărsător – Haine.

Câmpineanu Street in the perception of interviewees has a pronounced affective content. In all the ten interviews I conducted, living on a street was linked to the stages of one's life: childhood, adolescence, youth, maturity and aging. Furthermore, for women, marking events of one's existence are fixed by the space they are consumed in: first love, first written poem or song, marriage, having a child, death of parents. This space is invested with the role of repository of memories. While the content of experience is first embedded in the depth of the landscape, in time, the individual comes back to the space after he or she has left it in order to revive the times he or she longs for. Gender disparities regarding the content of memories were more vivid when talking to aged couples. Women tend to regularize memories relating to stages of their marital relationships, for example, getting married or having the first child while men incline to demarcate time periods by referring to material achievements like the first house or the first car, but of course until further studies in depth these preliminary findings can only serve as starting points.

According to my results, individuals tend to create coherency within the spatial and temporal patterns of their life, searching for connections between the numbers they lived at, the name of the street and their significance for the experiences they went through while being there. The interpretations of the number of their address are of the domain of superstition or connected to their date of birth. Furthermore, similar associations are established between the personality naming the street and own familial history, place or region of origin, other relatives' forenames or last names.

From this point of view, that of the connection between the history of the space and its denomination, respondents appear to still be convinced that there is a logical correspondence between the two. For example, one of the female respondents I interviewed needed to get to the Embassy of France and was shocked to learn that it is not situated on Paris Street as it 'should be'. In this line of thought, there was a respondent who stated that this should be the role of street denominations, precisely that of indicating what one could find at that location. For instance, an interviewee concluded that Abatorului Street must be a place where he can surely find a butchery. Moreover, the initiative of naming a street near Mogoșoaia Palace after Princess Martha Bibescu was applauded according to the same principle of marking the history of the space by means of street denomination.

Regarding the process of renaming, one of the interviewee recalled that her father once took part of a comitee for naming streets and described the procedure they followed in choosing names. After selecting prominent personalities and beautiful names, the committee appealed to the dictionary in order to find suitable words. Respondents manifested their preference for streets named according to aesthetical principles, melodic names, with enjoyable resonance and when asked about what types of personalities they would consider appropriate for naming streets all respondents referred to masculine figures with cultural accomplishments, writers, philosophers like Ion Luca Caragiale, Constantin Noica, Emil Cioran. Moreover, living on a street named after a person they admire is perceived as adding prestige to the street.

### **Conclusions and Reflections**

Developing from the premise that principles of the socio-political order of the moment determine street denomination (Azaryahu 1996), the present study employed three complementary objectives: power distribution among genders and professions in the present configuration of street denomination, the street as 'memorial landscape' and its subjective history as it is recreated by locals. Resting upon West and Zimmerman's considerations about gender as 'the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one's sex category' (West and Zimmerman 1987, 127), the present study endeavoured to delineate the regulatory functions of urban spaces, street denominations in particular, in constructing and reconstructing gender identity. While masculinity is presented as remarkable, denominating main arterial boulevards, femininity is at its best marginal, a name for a 'blind alley'. Women seem to be *les grandes perdantes* of history. With no legacy to arise from, they are mostly celebrated only on the strenght of their liaison with the men surrounding them, fathers, husbands or sons, for example, Doamna Despina, Doamna Stanca or for enacting masculine behaviors, attitudes and values. Honouring women like Ana Ipătescu or Ecaterina Teodoroiu can be interpreted as a manner of stating that women are usually not capable of such acts of courage and strong will, that is why they are considered to be a model to strive after. Such female figures could be celebrated as the exception that is meant to fortify the rule.

Methodological triangulation between quantitative analysis, case study and face-to-face social inquiry was utilized to investigate the significances embedded in street

names from three different angles: patterns in naming streets, the renaming of one street and locals' attitudes regarding street denomination with a gender focus. The analysis of Sector One from the perspective of present denominations of streets named after people illustrated an unequal distribution among genders. According to research findings, there are no alleys, roads, main roads, highroads or boulevards celebrating feminine memory in Sector One, Bucharest. In a total of 849 streets, 322 celebrate a masculine figure and only 24 account for feminine personalities. While men name boulevards, highroads and roads, feminine figures are only evoked in entrances and streets. Among professions, cultural and military accomplishment are best represented among street names. The preference for military and scientific professional trajectories, only recently approachable by women, does not endorse celebration of feminine identity, memories and experiences.

Hence, street toponymy as an embodied instrument employed in the social construction of gender in urban spaces are congruent with other vehicles of social memory as historical treaties, dictionaries or encyclopedias of personalities in the marginalization of feminine cultural heritage. Collective memory isn't only responsible for what individuals remember, but also for what they forget. It is Maurice Halbwachs who remarks that social memory is not a question of preservation, but rather of reconvention (Chelcea 1998). Hence, it provides mechanisms of reconstruction and reinterpretation of memories in order to offer justifications for present actions. In this line of thought, presenting feminine figures, memory and experience as peripheral to Romanian social memory as it is reflected in street denominations in Sector 1 of Bucharest could contribute to justifying and preserving this position in the present social configuration.

The area of Ion Câmpineanu Street is at the junction of cultural, religious, entertainment, relaxation, leisure and consumerist interests, a space where memorial significances blend in together without creating a dissonant tone, but rather homogenizing into a spectacular realm of everyday life. Semi-structured interviews sustained the expectation regarding subjective meanings individuals invest in street denominations. In addition, the research revealed numerous aspects of the sensory content of located memory, of the connection respondents establish between naming and the history of the space. Moreover, it asserted gender disparities in the nature of elements used by respondent to regulate memories on a linear axis. Female respondents

tend to temporally layout memories by reference to family-related accomplishments such as marriage or the first-born while material attainments seem to be preferred as milestones for regulating memories. However, it is true this finding is more prominent in the case of aged respondents. Due to the reduced number of interviews conducted, such findings can only serve as leading points for further research.

I suggest as further directions of study treating the selection among historical personalities, who are socially valued as being more or less memorable in relation with the concept of multiple and intersectional discrimination, which highlights that individuals become an object of direct or indirect discrimination as result of a superposition of several characteristics or identities and not only based on one criterion (Grünberg, Borza, 2008). Further studies should also focus upon the link between identity aggregations of features like gender, ethnicity, political appurtenance, type of accomplishment, social origin and the distribution of the named street in the urban setting: central or peripheral position, the rank of the street (entrance, street, avenue, and boulevard) or the amount of the biographical information found on the name plate. Moreover, photography, paintings, drawings can be used in order to reconstruct a visual history of the street. Auditory means of consolidating a memorial landscape such as songs and other written sources such as poems, novels are to be studied as they also contribute to the collective meanings invested in the urban landscape. What is more, the on-line environment, especially blogs and social networks, is a repository for several types of individual memorial like blog spots, personal photos, Facebook tags and posts.

The present research only offers preliminary conclusions, which can stand as premises for future research. However, I believe that it is proof for asserting that street denominations and urban settings represent a fertile field for sociologic investigation and can offer material for a diversity of themes ascribed to several domains such as urban anthropology and planning, visual anthropology, , architecture, politics, gender studies, sociology of values and of discrimination.

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