

Chronotopes and commodification on the Streets of St. Charles

Daniel Duncan

Abstract: New residential and commercial developments provide opportunities for ideological and semiotic work to be performed in the course of naming the development itself and streets, buildings etc. within it. This paper examines the names given within one such development in a suburb of St. Louis, Missouri, USA. I offer a framework to examine the semiotic work names such as these do, in which I consider place names to evoke chronotopes in order to construct a place as authentic. Relying on this constructed authenticity in selling space and the use of space within the development means that place names and the chronotopes evoked by them carry symbolic onomastic capital and are effectively commodified.

Keywords: chronotope, commodification, toponyms, place, development, suburb

1. Introduction

Some time ago I met a friend at a restaurant in a mixed-use development in St. Charles, Missouri, USA, a suburb of St. Louis. This development is styled as an urban village (Levin 2018), in which entertainment and living space are within walking distance of each other. However, it is at the same time a clearly suburban development, tucked into a plot of land just off of an interstate highway. Given the nature of the development, I was intrigued by its name – *Streets of St. Charles* – and the names of the two streets along which people live, dine etc. within it: *Lombard Street* and *Beale Street*. These names are clear allusions to urban imagery and, in the case of the street names, specific places. That toponyms in suburban developments, in the US usually selected by the developer themselves,¹ are often allusive and connected to the selling of space is well known (Schwartz 1980; Norris 1999). However, the allusions made in such naming practice are typically rural rather than urban, as in this case.

The street names, as well as the name of the development, are part of the semiotic landscape of the development (Jaworski & Thurlow 2010; Modan 2018) and serve to help construct the development as an urban environment. In doing so, the names contribute to the commodification of space (Leeman & Modan 2009) by acting as cultural symbols available for sale within a symbolic economy (Leeman & Modan 2010). In adding to the value of a space, the symbolic capital that these names carry is what Puzey et al. (2021) describe as onomastic capital. However, although the names in this development clearly add value to it, their onomastic capital does not carry the clear monetary value that naming practices such as sponsored naming rights

¹ Developments like the one described here can be found around the world, as examples like the similar *Nya Hovås* development in suburban Gothenburg, Sweden, demonstrate (Järlehed et al. 2021). This similarity extends to the use of urban allusion in naming as well, as *Nya Hovås* comes from an upscale neighborhood in the city. However, the ability of the developer to give the space an official name depends on the country. In the US and similar countries, the developer largely has free rein in naming, while in others like Sweden, the developer may make suggestions but the official name is determined by a government body.

(Light & Young 2015; Puzey et al. 2021) have previously found. As such, these naming practices provide an excellent opportunity for, as Puzey et al. (2021:150) call for, the ‘further elaboration and wider application of this concept in socio-onomastic and critical approaches to the field of name studies’. Exploring them further will help to better understand how names carry capital of different forms.

In particular, in this paper I seek to address two key points: what exactly in names like these carries onomastic capital, and what the mechanism by which a name lends that capital to a place is. I take a largely theoretical and qualitative perspective on this. Theoretically, I draw on sociolinguistic research into semiotic landscapes, place and authenticity in order to develop a framework for the qualitative analysis of a name’s onomastic capital. I suggest that place names evoke chronotopes (Blommaert 2015) to construct a sense of place (Gao 2012). In my framework, it is this evocation that effectively is, and is available to be leveraged as, onomastic capital. In the context of development, there is often a gap between the chronotope evoked by the place name and the image otherwise evoked by the development. This gap provides a context for generating and applying onomastic capital; namers use the chronotope evoked by the name to construct and sell the development as an authentic instantiation of that chronotope. Qualitatively, I apply this framework to the names in the Streets of St. Charles development as an exemplar.

The qualitative framework I develop for analyzing the role of names in constructing and selling a development as authentically urban requires a holistic approach to understanding the place referent of the name. While the number of names discussed in this paper is quite low then, this focus on a single case study is a representative illustration of the framework. However, the framework I develop is generalizable well beyond the specific instance considered here. As such, this study is not about the Streets of St. Charles, or even Greater St. Louis, alone, but rather names and one way in which they are commodified in real-estate and commercial developments more generally. By examining the semiotic work done by these names, this

framework offers a contribution to the critical toponymies approach to place name studies (Berg & Vuolteenaho 2009).

In the following pages, I first give background on the theoretical concepts necessary for the analysis. I then develop my qualitative framework for analysis. I walk through how to apply it using Streets of St. Charles as a case study. Finally, I offer some discussion of the generalizability of the framework and its implications for our understanding of how onomastic capital is generated and used.

2. Theoretical background

In this section I draw upon sociolinguistic literature into several related topics. Throughout, I situate toponyms not only in their relation to these themes, but as a lens through which we can see the relations between these topics. First, I consider the role of names in constructing place in the semiotic landscape of a space. I offer the concept of the chronotope (Blommaert 2015) as a useful tool in discussing the images evoked by names in this context. Then, I consider the developer's interest in the built space. I argue that because they are engaged in place-making, the space is commodified not only with respect to the literal space, but with respect to having an authentic sense of place. The chronotopes evoked by names are crucial to giving a space this sense of place, which I suggest is a form of onomastic capital (Puzey et al. 2021).

2.1 Names and chronotopes in the semiotic landscape

The linguistic landscape of a space is the totality of the language used on signage within that space. By paying attention to which languages are used to varying degrees, research into linguistic landscapes can inform researchers about who uses the space, how they use it, and what language attitudes are asserted within that space. Recent work in semiotic landscapes (Jaworski & Thurlow 2010; Modan 2018) has expanded this focus to include the social meaning of this use of lan-

guage. A semiotic landscape encompasses both language and other cultural symbols in a space, which contribute to how that space is constructed as a place (Modan 2018).

Such a view reflects how cultural geographers have come to see place as a social construct (Johnstone 2004). Britain (2013) outlines how place is constructed through three elements of spatiality: Euclidean space, social space and perceived space. Euclidean space refers to what one might see on a map, and includes terrain, distance, area and the like. Social space refers to the built environment and how people are distributed within it, while perceived space refers to how people interact with and interpret a space. These elements combine to give a sense of place.

In this sense, the language use in a semiotic landscape reflects how builders and users of a space construct, perceive and interpret it. For example, Modan (2018:326) describes how the semiotic landscape of a suburban shopping center in the Midwestern United States makes use of ‘linguistic items and other symbols commonly associated with US cities’ in order to give a feeling of being on an urban street. Likewise, Leeman and Modan (2009) show that non-Chinese businesses in the Washington, DC, Chinatown make use of Chinese language in their signage in order to sell the neighborhood as an authentically Chinese space.

As linguistic and cultural symbols, toponyms and their use in signage are a part of a space’s semiotic landscape that is available for use in constructing a place. I take place names to be a verbal symbol (Cavanaugh 2005; Kostanski 2016) of a place. This is not exactly a new position; Nicolaisen (1974) suggests that names are ‘verbal icons’, for example. This is not a trivial position either, however. If a place name is indeed a verbal symbol of a place, this means that the name evokes the elements of spatiality described above.

To evoke spatiality is complex because place is dynamic. Social space can be built up over time, people can move in and out of a space, and people’s interpretation of a space can change. As such, social space and perceived space, and therefore how a place is socially constructed, can change over time. In this light, it is not surprising

that in their discussion of the Nya Hovås development in Gothenburg, Järlehed et al. (2021) observe that naming is used to sell the development on both a spatial and a temporal scale. However, that space and place can change over time suggests that space and time are linked. How a name evokes spatiality should reflect this link. A useful concept for considering this is the *chronotope* (Blommaert 2015; cf. Bakhtin 1981). A chronotope is an image of a linked space and time: what a space is like at a particular time or period. It can be specific in reference (perhaps a particular city) or general (the ‘urban’ as a whole). In speech, people construct and evoke chronotopes to take an ideological stance, do identity work etc.

Because the social construction of place is so time-dependent, a place name evokes a chronotope as a matter of symbolizing and evoking a place. That is, how a place name evokes the elements of spatiality is by evoking a chronotope. This observation echoes Kostanski’s (2016:416) finding that for members of the public, toponyms ‘give you a vision’ of a place. The name thus symbolizes a place by evoking an image of that place at a certain point or period in time. As the place changes over time, the chronotope evoked by the place name can change and/or be contested by speakers. An example of this is *Times Square*, in New York. This space had a rather seedy reputation in the 1970s, before developing into the tourist location it is today (Wollman 2002). The name *Times Square* can therefore generate either of these images, depending on the time imagined. In other words, it can evoke a chronotope that captures the earlier seedy space or one that captures the touristy space. One’s use of the name, and the chronotope that is evoked by it, represents some social positioning with respect to one’s interlocutor. To claim that a place name is a verbal symbol thus reflects both an approach to language and an assertion that we need a holistic understanding of a place to examine its name and the semiotic work that that name does.

2.2 Authenticity, commodification and onomastic capital

Adopting a holistic perspective on how a development is constructed as a place allows us to directly compare how the place relates to the chronotopes evoked by the names it serves as a referent of. For instance, one may find that the evoked chronotopes accurately reflect the development as a place. More likely, and certainly more theoretically rich, are cases where there is some gap between the image evoked by the name and the ‘reality’ of the place itself. Since a place is a social construct, it of course does not have a single reality. I take the ‘reality’ of a place to be the sense of place evoked by the Euclidean and social space itself. I suggest that to explain the gap between the images evoked by a space and its name is to explain the semiotic work done by these names.

One reason why such gaps are of particular interest is that in countries like the US, the developer is able to name the streets and space (Schwartz 1980). Given their agentive role in naming a real-estate or commercial development, any gap between a chronotope evoked by a name and the reality of a place is intentional. Therefore, the developer must have had a reason for creating this gap. After all, for any place one could imagine an alternative name which more accurately describes the sense of place associated with the space. A name which evokes a different image must have favorable attributes in comparison to the unused alternative (Kostanski 2016). I suggest that the reason for creating a gap between the image evoked by the name and that evoked by the space is that the semiotic landscape contributes to place-making through the meaning of the cultural and linguistic symbols present in the space.

The developer is engaged in top-down place-making, both because they built a space and because they designed it to have a sense of place (Lew 2017). This sense of place is important for selling a space to consumers. It would be difficult to sell use of a space that did not achieve what it aspires to be. This means that a sense of place must feel *authentic*. Lacoste et al. (2014:2) observe that while authenticity is typically portrayed as a question of whether a copy of something is a faithful match to the original, there are in fact a few modes of authen-

ticity. *Canonical authenticity* is determined by an authority figure, *explanatory authenticity* is reconstructed from evidentiary sources, and *performative authenticity* is staged by a credible performance. An authentic sense of place within the development context relies on performative authenticity, in which consumers are left to decide whether the available space successfully plays as the kind of place the developer wants it to be seen as.

By contributing to place-making through meaning, the semiotic landscape is crucial to this performance. The meaning associated with the semiotic landscape is used by the development for the purposes of performing a sense of place. For example, because a name is part of the semiotic landscape, the chronotope evoked by a name provides an image of a particular kind of place that is lent to the development's performed sense of place. A developer's naming practice therefore has the goal of maximizing success in staging the type of place the space claims to be. To be most effective, this practice must find success in being an 'embodied social action that brings into being the very things it appears to merely represent, ... a mode of *doing* that plays a central role in the practices of identity formation, subjectification, boundary-making, and the enactment of the worlds in which we live' (Rose-Redwood 2021:158).

This type of performative naming can be for many reasons, but the importance to a developer of successfully staging a place and a sense of place is economic. After all, a development that successfully performs authenticity with respect to these will presumably be more lucrative and bring in more income for the developer. In this sense, the authenticity is crucial to selling the space. In contributing to performed authenticity, names and other symbols in the semiotic landscape are commodified. This commodification certainly involves economic value. However, it is more abstract as well; as part of the symbolic economy, the symbolic capital carried by these items in the semiotic landscape provides added, if difficult to quantify, value to the space. Examples of this have been found around the world. Gao (2012) shows how West Street in Yangshuo, China, evokes a 'global village' image and as such commodifies the sense of place constructed by

discourse surrounding the street. Drawing on examples from a Canadian tourist site, Heller (2014) suggests that in tourism encounters the sense of authentic speech, being an authentic speaker and authenticity itself can be commodified. Wang and Kroon (2020:118) further illustrate how this process results in what appears to be ‘artificial authenticity’ in the promotion of Tujia heritage for tourism in China.

Recent work has explored the role of commodified linguistic features as well, which can be tied to place. For example, Johnstone (2009) examines how in Pittsburgh, dialect features held to be representative of local identity and the local dialect come to be sold as objects printed on T-shirts and similar items. This exploration of commodified linguistic features has reached onomastics as well (Rose-Redwood 2011). Puzey et al. (2021:119) cast this in terms of *onomastic capital*, which they define as ‘firstly to imply the capacity or potential for any existing or future nameable referent to be commodified or mobilized through naming acts or processes for conversion into some (other) form of capital, and secondly to encompass the implicit perceived properties inherent in an existing or emergent name that may increase in capital terms... The focus of onomastic capital is on the value of names themselves, not on the value of their referents as land or buildings.’ In this sense, a commodifiable name carries onomastic capital, which adds value to its referent. Puzey et al. (2021) primarily discuss onomastic capital in economic terms by focusing on the sale of naming rights.

Light and Young (2015) similarly discuss naming rights for stadiums and similar new buildings, where the name of something is quite literally a commodity to be sold in what Capra and Ganga (2019) term ‘entrepreneurial toponymy’. In addition, Light and Young find other examples of commodified names. For example, they are part and parcel of the data sold in spatial analytics packages. This case too is rather literal, as the monetary value is attached to the name itself. However, it is a more abstract case of commodification than naming rights because the data attached to the name is also of value and sold.

In addition to viewing onomastic capital in terms of monetary value, Puzey et al. (2021) note that a name’s onomastic capital can

be symbolic as well. Rose-Redwood and Alderman (2011:2) note that the symbolic capital of a name ‘has become so inextricably bound up with the economic logic of capital accumulation that the symbolic naming of a “place” is itself increasingly being enlisted as an integral strategy of maximizing profitability’. Järlehed et al. (2021) offer one view of doing so as ‘entrepreneurial scaling’, by which the symbolism in a name can be used to upscale a place in value.

In this sense a development as a whole therefore relies on the commodification of authenticity (Heller 2014), as an authentic experience, sense of place or the like. This means, though, that any element of the property that contributes to construction of the development’s authenticity is a commodity because it individually generates some of that value. If the names of streets, the development and other spaces within it contribute to constructing the space as authentic, they would thus be commodities as a result. In this context, the value in the name as commodity is drawn from the chronotopes it evokes. By drawing on this link between chronotope, authenticity and profit, the place names act as commodities in the same way as more tangible produced objects like salami or music in advertising do (Cavanaugh & Shankur 2014). In order to be commodified in this way, the names must carry symbolic onomastic capital. At the same time, this instantiation of toponym-as-commodity is similar to how Light and Young (2015) find names to be commodified in spatial analytics software, where the name has value in its association with the data embedded in it.²

² An anonymous reviewer suggests that names that carry more literal capital, such as those associated with corporate naming rights, may nevertheless contribute to the place-making of the space they name. This is an interesting point, as it suggests that such names are part of the semiotic landscape of their space, and thus carry symbolic capital themselves. For example, while a stadium named for a corporate entity quite literally sells that company, it may also add value to the space by situating it as a site for marketing, in which additional advertising does not feel out of place. The line between economic capital and symbolic capital may therefore be quite fuzzy in practice.

3. Analytical framework

The above section takes place names to carry symbolic onomastic capital (Rose-Redwood & Alderman 2011; Puzey et al. 2021), in which the commodification of and value added by a name is in the symbolic value it contributes to a development. I have suggested that this value lies in the evocation of a chronotope by the name, which enables the development to more successfully achieve performative authenticity (Lacoste et al. 2014). Because a name is a verbal symbol of a place, there is a degree to which it always has and carries symbolic onomastic capital. The value of that onomastic capital, however, can depend on the place to which the name is assigned. In this section, I aim to take this approach beyond theory by offering a qualitative framework for identifying not only whether a name carries symbolic onomastic capital, but what the specific symbolic value added to a development by the toponym is. Such a framework will deepen our understanding of symbolic onomastic capital beyond simply recognizing that such capital is something carried by a name. Because they evoke such specific places, it is perhaps easiest to see how *Lombard Street* and *Beale Street* evoke urban chronotopes and are commodified as such. However, the framework I offer here can apply equally to more generic references, such as *Streets of St. Charles*, as well.

The framework I offer is a series of steps to be taken in observing a place and the naming practice surrounding it. It makes use of the gap between the chronotope evoked by a place name and the reality of the referent place, taken here to be the image evoked by the space in which the place is situated. To identify this gap therefore requires identification of the chronotope(s) evoked as well as an accurate description of the place. I suggest that this means the following steps are necessary in order to identify and describe the symbolic onomastic capital of a place name:

1. Describe the spatiality of the place symbolized by the name
2. Consider what, if anything, the place is sold as (private usage, an authentic exemplar of something, a piece of an ideological schema etc.)
3. Consider whether the spatiality of the place is sufficient to sell it as such
4. Identify any chronotope(s) evoked by the name
5. Identify any gaps between the identified chronotope(s) and described spatiality
6. Consider whether the evocation of a chronotope adds value to the selling of the place

The first and fourth steps are primarily descriptive. As argued above, to evaluate a toponym as a verbal symbol of a place requires a description of that place. In turn, a toponym will evoke a chronotope in its role as a verbal symbol. In order to analyze the semiotic work done by a name, whether as commodity or in any other use, these descriptions must take place. I separate these steps, however, because while I am ultimately interested in the relation between these descriptions, identifying the semiotic work of a name relies on fully recognizing how a place is constructed, presented and sold.

For this reason, the second and third steps situate this framework in terms of commodification. Considering what a place is sold as can help to determine whether there is a context in which commodification of a name can take place (cf. Johnstone 2009:162). This can be as simple as private land usage, whether in terms of housing or a commercial use. Selling a place can involve more abstract uses as well. Perhaps the place is claimed to be an authentic exemplar of something. Alternatively, use of the place may be framed as fitting into an ideological schema of some sort. If any of these is the case, there is a context for commodification. Note that because private land usage constitutes such a context, most modern commercial and real estate developments are contexts available for toponym commodification. If a commodification context for the place is not found, there is no

context for a name to be lending symbolic capital to that referent. In such a case, the name may carry as yet unrealized symbolic onomastic capital, or more likely is doing some kind of semiotic work other than acting as a commodity. The third step, upon finding a context for commodification, is to identify whether the place itself can be sold as it is actually sold. In other words, if a place is claimed as an authentic exemplar of something, for example, can it in fact be viewed as an authentic exemplar without considering associated elements like names? If so, the name of the place is unlikely to be commodified itself.

If there is a commodification context and the place itself is insufficient to sell it as sold, the final steps of the framework are used to decide what, if any, the added symbolic value of the name is in commodifying the place. As discussed above, I use the chronotope to formalize the semiotic work done by the name. As such, the first part of this approach is to identify the chronotope(s) evoked by a name or set of names in a development. Identifying these can help determine if there are any gaps between the spatiality of a place and the chronotope(s) evoked by its name. In other words, once the chronotopes evoked by names in a development have been identified, these images can be compared to the description of the place. When there is a gap between image and reality, the toponym can be interpreted as adding to the view of the place through claiming such an image. The final consideration is whether those claims add value to the place. If so, the name, by virtue of the chronotope(s) it evokes, has been commodified. In this sense, the chronotope evoked by a name, or how this chronotope differs from the place it describes, is effectively its symbolic onomastic capital. Adding this imagery to a place is a direct contribution to its value. Without the name, the place may not strike consumers as authentic, appropriately ideological or the like. Note that the value added by the name is symbolic. While added symbolic value will certainly have economic repercussions, I do not claim to be able to derive the monetary value of the name from this framework.

4. Case study: Streets of St. Charles

This section offers an illustration of the framework offered above, in which I apply it to the toponyms observed in the Streets of St. Charles development. Methodologically, this involves participant observation of the place under study: what does it look like? How is it laid out? What sense of place does the observer get from it? My framework offers a guide as to what to look for in the course of such observation, as it calls particular attention to the spatiality of the place, the commodification context and names within the place.

The first requirement is a description of the place itself under consideration. Streets of St. Charles is a mixed-use development in St. Charles, Missouri, built in the early 2010s as a redevelopment of land near the Missouri River. The uses are primarily residential, in the form of apartments, and commercial, mostly in the form of restaurants, bars and other retail. This type of development is often described as an ‘urban village’ (Levin 2018; Goldberger 2019), in which the traditional mixed-use neighborhoods of cities are replicated in a suburban environment. Such developments can be found at least in the US and Europe, as Järlehed et al. (2021) describe a similar space in Gothenburg. An important consideration, as Goldberger (2019) observes, is that whereas traditional neighborhoods constitute a public space, urban village developments are privately owned. This means that such developments are crucially not new forms of traditional urban neighborhoods, but rather privatized facsimiles of them in which access to the street is sold as a perk. Such facsimiles can at the same time be controlled much more than in public space (see Kohn 2004). Goldberger (2019) notes that the urban village style of development has been used in the construction surrounding new Major League Baseball stadiums, including the Baseball Village built next to the St. Louis Cardinals’ Busch Stadium. As such, there are multiple of this kind of development not only across the United States and around the world, but more locally within Greater St. Louis.

As seen in Figure 1, Streets of St. Charles is closest (but importantly, not adjacent) to suburban neighborhoods with winding roads. It is separated from much of St. Charles, including the gridded streets

of the central business area, by Interstate 70, making it mainly accessible by automobile.

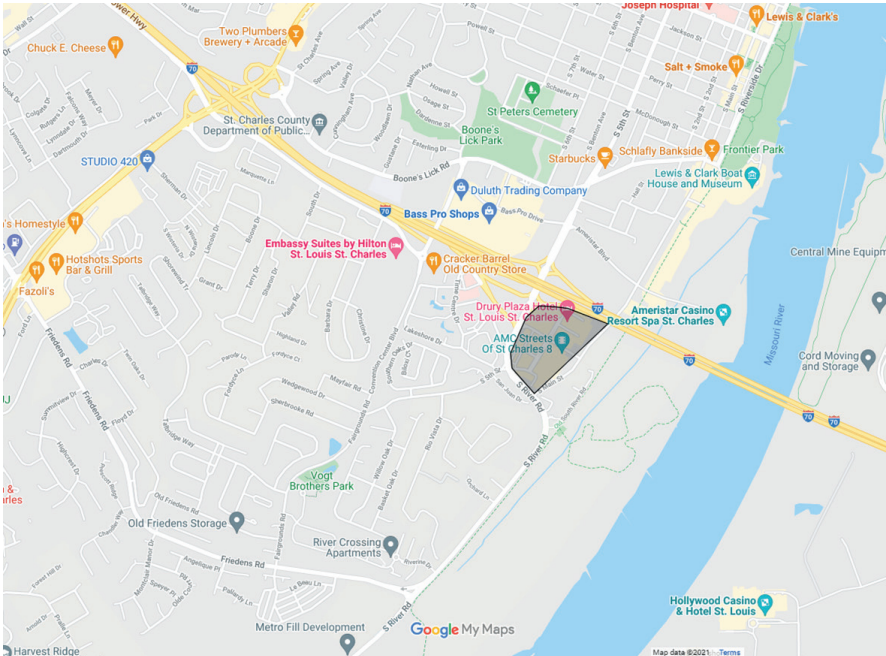


Figure 1: Location of Streets of St. Charles (shaded polygon) within the surrounding area.

Figure 2 shows the layout of Streets of St. Charles, including some examples of the commercial enterprises there. There are two main streets in the development: Lombard Street (Figure 3), which visitors enter the development on and which hosts standalone establishments, and Beale Street, which as the main street through the development contains the majority of the mixed residential/commercial use (some of this usage is illustrated in Figure 4). Neither street is very long; they were created for and exist solely within the space of the development. Figures 3–4 show a street-level view of these two main streets.



Figure 2: Layout of Streets of St. Charles.

Given the above, Streets of St. Charles can be described with respect to spatiality. In Euclidean terms, it is relatively isolated from the rest of St. Charles. In terms of social space, it is suburban and accessible by road, with parking and a mix of residential and commercial buildings. In terms of perceived space, people, even residents, mainly interact with the development as consumers. While in a suburban location, whether the facsimile of an urban neighborhood feels urban to consumers is a personal matter.



Figure 3: Street view of Lombard Street. (Photograph by Paul Sableman 2020a).



Figure 4: View of Beale Street showing mixed residential and commercial usage. (Photograph by Paul Sableman 2020b).

The next step is to consider what Streets of St. Charles is sold as. There are two ways of interacting with the space as a consumer: as a resident and as a visitor. Both groups are sold usage of commercial (retail, restaurant etc.) space, while residents are additionally sold housing. Note, however, that the urban village style of development creates a facsimile of urban public space. As such, it is not simply the usage of the space, or housing within the space, that is sold, but the impression of using this space in an urban environment. Whether or not this impression includes awareness of being in the suburbs is an interesting, but somewhat immaterial, question, as in either case the impression sold is of urban space. Streets of St. Charles is therefore sold as both private space and an authentic exemplar of urban space.

Is the spatiality of Streets of St. Charles enough to sell it within the commodification context that has been identified? As far as usage of space is concerned, it is; private residential and commercial space is on offer for those purposes. However, I suggest that the design of the development is not sufficient to fully sell the place as an authentic exemplar of urban public space. There are some design elements which do contribute. For example, the mixed use of apartments, shops and restaurants in a single building is a style of development common to urban spaces, but much less so in American suburbs. In a broad sense then, this development is essentially like the shopping mall described by Modan (2018), in that it makes use of urban symbols – here, the architecture itself – to create an urban feeling. However, that this development is nevertheless next to a highway in suburban space limits the sense of urbanness that can be contributed by design alone. For this reason, Streets of St. Charles is unlikely to successfully achieve performative authenticity without additional semiotic work.

Having established in which ways the development is commodified, and that additional semiotic work is needed to successfully sell the space as an authentic exemplar of urban public space, the potential role of toponyms within the development in contributing value can now be considered. The first part of this is to identify the chronotopes evoked by the names in it. As Modan (2018) found in the shopping mall she evaluated, the names here are symbols that overtly relate to US cities.

Lombard Street and *Beale Street* are quite specific, as they evoke cityscapes with famous streets by those names. In the present day, San Francisco's Lombard Street is a well-known tourist site thanks to its steep, zigzagging stretch,³ while Memphis' Beale Street is a destination famous for its nightlife and blues music. Both street names thus evoke an urban chronotope linked to urban space at night generally, and more specifically, urban space in the here and now. This chronotope offers a sense of urban place that is a lively destination, a place to be. *Streets of St. Charles* too evokes an urban chronotope through its reference to [the] streets, albeit a more generalized one that does not relate to as specific a place or time. Taken together, the names evoke the image of modern urban public space.

Identifying these chronotopes makes evident the gap between them and the spatiality of the Streets of St. Charles development. As noted, while the architectural design and mixed uses of the buildings in the development bear a resemblance to urban design, the location and other features of the development make clear that it is not in fact urban public space. That is, the space itself does not evoke an image of urban public space. Despite this, the chronotopes evoked by the name of the development and streets within it are of urban public space. This is a clear gap: the names evoke a kind of space which the development is obviously not.

This observation leads to the final step in the framework I am offering, in which the question of whether the chronotopes evoked by the names are adding value to the development is considered. This appears to be the case. Urban village-style developments are modeled on urban public space (Levin 2018), and as such the developer has an interest in presenting consumers with the feel of such a space. It is precisely this sense of urban public space which is contributed by the names within the development, and in this development in particular the names appear to constitute a key part of the semiotic landscape (Modan 2018) that presents the space as authentic urban public space.

³ Having spent several years on the East Coast, I personally tend to think first of Philadelphia's Lombard Street when I see the name in Streets of St. Charles. However, I believe the intended reference was San Francisco's.

To sell the Streets of St. Charles development as urban therefore depends on the symbolic value of the names within the development asserting it as such. If the names contribute symbolic value in this way, this means that the chronotopes evoked by the names are the thing of value in the contribution.

The symbolic onomastic capital held by these names is thus the form of the chronotopes they evoke. This capital contributes symbolic value to the development because the chronotopes differ so clearly from the image evoked by the place. This is particularly interesting because the gap between the chronotopes and the development is essentially the gap between the image evoked by the development itself and the image the developer seeks to sell it as. This suggests that the mechanism by which symbolic onomastic capital is lent to a place lies in a chronotope filling the gap between the desired and actual image of the place. This appears in my framework as a gap between chronotope and place. That a chronotope fills such a gap to lend symbolic onomastic capital to a place suggests that the size of the gap may be important in delineating how much symbolic onomastic capital a name carries. In other words, filling a small gap may be less valuable than filling a large one.

5. Discussion

Broadly speaking, the case study offered above used a qualitative framework to identify that there is symbolic value in the use of names in the Streets of St. Charles development, which gives a sense of urbanness. Intuitively this seems ‘right’; it makes sense that urban sounding names yield an urban sense of place. However, that the result of the case study matches intuition does not make it a trivial result, but rather shows that the framework is capable of properly generating results. In this section, I discuss what the framework I am offering contributes to our understanding of symbolic onomastic capital beyond what is contributed by casual observation. There are three main contributions: explanatory power, replicability and generalizability.

We know that names can carry symbolic capital (Rose-Redwood & Alderman 2011). It is this knowledge that we make use of in casual observation, as we see that the name and its meaning or references appear to contribute to our interpretation of the referent. Casual observation, however, cannot explain what it is about the name that has symbolic capital, nor how that symbolic capital is applied to the referent. The framework I offer explains both of these points: symbolic onomastic capital lies in the chronotopes evoked by names, and this capital is lent to a referent in commodification contexts where the image evoked by the referent does not match what it is sold as. In the case study above, there was a large gap between these, and the chronotopes evoked by names in the development clearly filled this gap. However, this framework does not presume there will be such a gap, nor that the chronotope(s) evoked by name(s) will fill it. By calling attention to chronotopes, spatiality and the commodification context, this framework can accommodate cases where, for example, the chronotope evoked by a name or the commodification context matches the spatiality of a place. In such cases, we might expect the name to have less symbolic capital, or for it to contribute less value to the place. As such, application of this framework has quite a bit of explanatory power; it can show not only that a name has symbolic capital, but whether and to what degree it adds value to a place. This enriches our understanding of how symbolic onomastic capital works.

By breaking the examination of chronotopes, spatiality and the commodification context down into steps, the framework is also replicable and generalizable. By *replicable*, I mean that different observers should be able to apply the framework to the same place and place names and obtain a similar result. A reader visiting Streets of St. Charles themselves for the first time, for example, should be able to use this framework to draw conclusions similar to my claims. Likewise, two onomastic researchers encountering a new development can apply the framework and obtain comparable results. The degree of replicability does depend on the researcher's theory of place. As Kostanski (2016) notes, there are several theories of place in use by different researchers. While I suggest that two researchers operating

under the same theory of place should obtain quite similar results under my framework, when they operate under different theories the comparability of their results will depend on the compatibility of their theories of place. Nevertheless, I suggest that my framework can reduce inter-researcher variability in the qualitative analysis of names where applicable.

By *generalizable*, I mean that this framework can be applied across a wide range of places and types of development. For example, toponyms in suburban real estate developments often have names which refer to the rural (Schwartz 1980; Norris 1999). These authors observe that the rural imagery used in subdivision names seems to be connected to the selling of houses in a particular neighborhood. Applying my framework to such developments would find that they typically consist of detached single-family houses on winding streets and are mostly isolated from other neighborhoods, schools and retail, and accessible only by automobile. However, because American suburbs developed out of a rejection of the urban in pursuit of a rural ideal (see Nicolaidis & Wiese 2006 for further discussion), such developments are sold as participation in this ideological scheme, if not as authentically rural space itself. We can immediately see that names with rural references would evoke a rural chronotope, which is symbolic onomastic capital lent to the clearly not rural development. In this way, my framework generalizes across styles of development and types of chronotopes evoked. This is but one example; the framework can generalize further to include single commercial properties (restaurant names, for example) in addition to large developments, as well as other commodification contexts, including when the place is not in fact commodified (in which case we would expect to find that a name is perhaps not carrying and certainly not leveraging symbolic onomastic capital).

An important point regarding the generalizability of this framework is that in the course of arguing for its general applicability, I am in effect arguing in favor of a theoretical generalization about symbolic onomastic capital. With respect to places and toponyms at least, symbolic onomastic capital is generated through a name's evocation of

a chronotope. Regardless of the type of place or specific chronotope evoked, this capital is leveraged into value when it is able to fill a gap between the spatiality of a place and what it is sold as. This means that distinct patterns in naming practice, such as the use of urban references in urban village developments illustrated here, the use of rural references in suburban residential subdivisions (Schwartz 1980; Norris 1999), and in fact other practices in non-suburban developments, are in effect individual cases of the same general phenomenon.

6. Conclusion

If, as I have suggested, we take a toponym to be a verbal symbol of a place, that toponym evokes an image of what is ultimately a social construct. In this view, a toponym makes an assertion about the type of place that a given space is. This is of interest for two reasons: there is the potential for the assertion to be inconsistent with what the space appears to be, and many toponyms are given by a developer or founder of a space. As such, a namer can do place-making and other semiotic work through the process of naming a space.

This paper explored one form this semiotic work can take through names given to streets and the space of an urban village-style development. Taking the images evoked by the toponyms to be chronotopes, representations of space linked to a particular time, I showed that the names evoke a setting of urban public space within a suburban, privatized space. In doing so, they help the development to perform as authentic public space. Because the development is sold as such, the toponyms add value to retail and real estate uses of the space. In this sense, the names, through the chronotopes they evoke, carry symbolic onomastic capital. The approach taken to examine the urban village-style development can be generalized into a framework for determining whether the semiotic work done by a toponym includes lending symbolic value in a commodification context. As shown, such a framework is applicable to other development contexts, offers explanatory power to long-observed patterns of naming practice, and is capable of providing a unified analysis of seemingly dif-

ferent naming practices. I suggest, then, that considering the chronotopes evoked by names and how this relates to commodification may be a useful tool for future onomastic studies.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Mary Robinson for helpful discussion.

References

- Bakhtin, Mikhail. 1981. *The dialogic imagination*. Ed. M. Holquist, trans. C. Emerson & M. Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Berg, Lawrence D. & Vuolteenaho, Jani (eds.). 2009. *Critical toponymies: The contested politics of place naming*. New York: Routledge.
- Blommaert, Jan. 2015. Chronotopes, scales, and complexity in the study of language in society. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 44. 105–116.
- Britain, David. 2013. Space, diffusion, and mobility. In Chambers, J. K. & Schilling, N. (eds.), *The handbook of language variation and change*, 471–500. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Capra, Gian Franco & Ganga, Antonio. 2019. The intangible heritage of the Anthropocene: The toponymic revolution in the human age. *Names* 67(3). 125–135.
- Cavanaugh, Jillian R. 2005. Accent matters: Material consequences of sounding local in Northern Italy. *Language & Communication* 25(2). 127–148.
- Cavanaugh, Jillian R. & Shankar, Shalini. 2014. Producing authenticity in global capitalism: Language, materiality, and value. *American Anthropologist* 116(1). 51–64.
- Gao, Shuang. 2012. Commodification of place, consumption of identity: The sociolinguistic construction of a ‘global village’ in rural China. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 16(3). 336–357.
- Goldberger, Paul. 2019. *Ballpark: Baseball in the American city*. New York: Knopf Doubleday.
- Heller, Monica. 2014. The commodification of authenticity. In Lacoste, Véronique, Leimgruber, Jakob & Breyer, Thiemo (eds.), *Indexing authenticity: Sociolinguistic perspectives*, 136–155. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

- Järlehed, Johan, Löfdahl, Maria, Milani, Tommaso, Nielsen, Helle Lykke & Rosendal, Tove. 2021. Entrepreneurial naming and scaling of urban places: The case of Nya Hovås. In Leibring, Katharina, Mattfolk, Leila, Neumüller, Kristina, Nyström, Staffan & Pihl, Elin (eds.), *The economy in names: Values, branding and globalization*, 71–86. Uppsala, Sweden: Department of Archives and Research, Uppsala, Institute for Language and Folklore (Isuf).
- Jaworski, Adam & Thurlow, Crispin. 2010. Introducing semiotic landscapes. In Jaworski, Adam & Thurlow, Crispin (eds.), *Semiotic landscapes: Language, image, space*, 1–40. New York: Bloomsbury.
- Johnstone, Barbara. 2004. Place, globalization, and linguistic variation. In Macaulay, R. K. & Fought, C. (eds.), *Sociolinguistic variation: Critical reflections*, 65–83. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press.
- Johnstone, Barbara. 2009. Pittsburghese shirts: Commodification and the enregisterment of an urban dialect. *American Speech* 84(2). 157–175.
- Kohn, Margaret. 2004. *Brave new neighborhoods: The privatization of public space*. New York: Routledge.
- Kostanski, Laura. 2016. Toponymic attachment. In Hough, Carole (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Names and Naming*, 412–426. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lacoste, Véronique, Leimgruber, Jakob & Breyer, Thiemo. 2014. Authenticity: A view from inside and outside sociolinguistics. In Lacoste, Véronique, Leimgruber, Jakob & Breyer, Thiemo (eds.), *Indexing authenticity: Sociolinguistic perspectives*, 1–13. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Leeman, Jennifer & Modan, Gabriella. 2009. Commodified language in Chinatown: A contextualized approach to linguistic landscape. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 13(3). 332–362.
- Leeman, Jennifer & Modan, Gabriella. 2010. Selling the city: Language, ethnicity, and commodified space. In Shohamy, Elana, Ben Rafael, Eliezer & Barni, Monica (eds.), *Linguistic landscape in the city*, 182–197. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Levin, Ayala. 2018. The village within: An alternative genealogy of the urban village. *The Journal of Architecture* 23(3). 392–420.
- Lew, Alan A. 2017. Tourism planning and place making: Place-making or placemaking? *Tourism Geographies* 19(3). 448–466.
- Light, Duncan & Young, Craig. 2015. Toponymy as commodity: Exploring the economic dimensions of urban place names. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 39(3). 435–450.
- Modan, Gabriella. 2018. The semiotics of urbanness: Lifestyle centers and the commodified city. In Low, Setha (ed.), *The Routledge handbook of anthropology and the city*, 326–341. New York: Routledge.

- Nicolaides, Becky M. & Wiese, Andrew (eds.). 2006. *The suburb reader*. New York: Routledge.
- Nicolaisen, W.F.H. 1974. Names as verbal icons. *Names* 22(3). 104–110.
- Norris, Darrell A. 1999. Unreal estate: Words, names and allusions in suburban home advertising. *Names* 47(4). 365–380.
- Puzey, Guy, Vuolteenaho, Jani & Wolny, Matthas. 2021. Signals of onomastic capital: From transhistorical roots to the contemporary trend of sponsored names. *Nordisk tidskrift för socioonomastik/Nordic Journal of Socio-Onomastics* 1. 115–155.
- Rose-Redwood, Reuben. 2021. Concluding commentary: The social and political life of names and naming. *Nordisk tidskrift för socioonomastik/Nordic Journal of Socio-Onomastics* 1. 157–165.
- Rose-Redwood, Reuben. 2011. Rethinking the agenda of political toponymy. *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 10(1). 34–41.
- Rose-Redwood, Reuben & Alderman, Derek. 2011. Critical interventions in political toponymy. *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 10(1). 1–6.
- Sableman, Paul. 2020a. Streets of St. Charles. [photograph] CC BY 2.0 <https://www.flickr.com/photos/pasa/49928560736/in/photostream/> (accessed 11 April 2022).
- Sableman, Paul. 2020b. Bar Louie—Streets of St. Charles. [photograph] CC BY 2.0 <https://www.flickr.com/photos/pasa/49928864702/in/album-72157651649841445/> (accessed 11 April 2022).
- Schwartz, Janet. 1980. The poet and the pastoral in the naming of suburbia. *Names* 28(4). 231–254.
- Wang, Xuan & Kroon, Sjaak. 2020. Chronotopes and heritage authenticity: The case of the Tujia in China. In Kroon, S. & Swanenberg, J. (eds.), *Chronotopic identity work: Sociolinguistic analyses of cultural and linguistic phenomena in time and space*, 105–127. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Wollman, Elizabeth L. 2002. The economic development of the ‘new’ Times Square and its impact on the Broadway musical. *American Music* 20(4). 445–465.