

# Public place naming: Towards a gender inclusive cityscape

## Policy Brief



**unesco**  
Chair



**UNIVERSITÉ  
DE GENÈVE**

UNESCO Chair in Inclusive Toponymy  
“Naming the World”

# Selected remarkable and inspiring initiatives webpages

- 1 <https://asmn.univ-nantes.fr/index.php?id=803>
- 2 <https://x.com/Alexismouss/status/1466305210104659968>
- 3 <https://mappingdiversity.eu>
- 4 <https://rouen.fr/debats-memoires>
- 5 <https://cartes.toponymie.gouv.qc.ca/femmes>
- 6 <https://100elles.ch/>
- 7 <https://en.stnameslab.com/gendered-cities/#evo>
- 8 <https://www.gcro.ac.za/outputs/map-of-the-month/detail/tshwanes-street-renaming-initiatives/>
- 9 <https://noms-geographiques.app.ge.ch>
- 10 <https://genderatlas.at/schule/articles/strassennamen.html>
- 11 <https://equalstreetnames.org/>
- 12 <https://musees.isere.fr/publication/musee-de-la-resistance-et-de-la-deportation-de-lisere-carte-postale-marie-reynoard>
- 13 <https://www.toponomasticafemminile.com/sito/>
- 14 <https://www.unige.ch/universite/figurations-historiques/groupe-de-reflexion-interdisciplinaire-sur-les-figurations-historiques/>
- 15 <https://www.calameo.com/read/00000810146e9819ad898>
- 17 <https://www.paris.fr/pages/une-place-simone-veil-a-paris-5243>
- 18 <https://www.geneve.ch/actualites/dossiers-information/objectif-zero-sexisme-ville/espace-public/actions-symboles>
- 19 <https://www.epfl.ch/about/vice-presidencies/fr/celebrons-les-femmes-de-science/>
- 20 <https://geochicasosm.github.io/lascallesdelasmujeres/>
- 21 <https://ge.ch/grandconseil/memorial/seances/020202/7/8/>
- 22 <https://www.ge.ch/document/college-ecole-culture-generale-madame-stael>
- 23 <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02723638.2020.1825275>
- 24 <https://solidarites.ch/ne/journal/341-2/agassiz-au-fil-de-notre-histoire/>
- 25 <https://www.ruamariellefranco.com.br>
- 26 <https://www.paris.fr/pages/alice-milliat-a-l-avant-garde-du-sport-feminin-8139>
- 30 <https://repository.uneca.org/handle/10855/14283>
- 31 <https://www.ratp.fr/decouvrir/coulisses/au-quotidien/place-aux-femmes-du-t3>
- 33 <https://nomspeutetre.wordpress.com/>
- 34 <https://www.womensmarchfoundation.org/feminist-street-initiative>
- 35 <https://www.kqed.org/news/11710877/san-francisco-unveils-frida-kahlo-way-renaming-phelan-avenue>

Cover photo: Demonstration in Rio in memory of the assassinated councillor and activist Marielle Franco, 10 octobre 2018, José Lucena/Futura Press

# Plan

## Statement : Place naming matters !

**Step 1** Mapping the issue - Diagnosis

**Step 2** Inventoring eligible personalities

Inspiring and/or remarkable initiatives

**Step 3** Inventoring places to name

**Step 4** Naming: Thinking qualitatively !

## Acknowledgements

## Transversal priorities

- P** Building partnerships (Local gvt, activists groups, academy, community centres)
- Q** Thinking qualitatively (prioritizing personalities and places)
- M** Multiply (events, exhibitions, tours, programs, happenings, etc.)
- E** Enlarging the scope (linking to inclusive initiatives and policies)

## Steps' reading notice

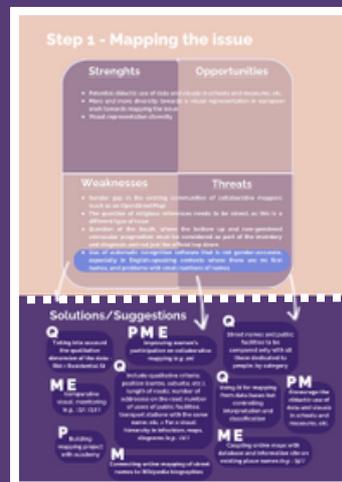
Step's context

**1**



Examples linked to the issues shown in this step

**2**



**3**

SWOT that identifies what to take into account for each step

**4**

Solutions / Suggestions in regard of the step

# Place naming matters !

**It is a fact, women are out of the cityscape: far less than 10% of personal street names are given to women !**

Place Names Sphere

- is an open-air spectacle of social and memory hierarchies in gender relations
- is a fundamental element of collective identity through individual addresses
- is a place for education, for imagination and for building perspectives
- is a spectacular and powerful tool for mobilization and transformation
- **follows rigorous functional rules, it should follow Sustainable Development Goals as well!**

In other words, street and urban facility names are formative in numerous ways, through their commemorative dimension. They support values, memories, knowledge and priorities, while they make invisible others. They are marked by a strong patriarchal prism that undermines the visibility and importance of women's contribution to public life. They constitute an evolving practical and commemorative practice, providing a unique opportunity for a double edge strategy, addressing both, international objectives of inclusion, represented notably by Sustainable Development Goals 5 & 11 (particularly when dealing with gender inclusiveness), and concerns around proper toponymic practices.

**This statement leads to a threefold imperative:**

- **Inclusive and Educational**, in accordance with the SDGs: The toponymic landscape, expressed by signage, addresses and cartography, has a cultural and social value through its commemorative role, and an educational value through its edifying, demonstrative and formative dimension.
- **Functional**, in line with the need to standardise addressing and nomenclature of public places, encouraging a certain degree of stability and absence of ambiguity. According to two past UNCSGN resolutions : VI/9 & VIII/2 dedicated to the value of the cultural and historical heritage significance of existing place naming and the issue of stability in geographical names.
- **Participatory**, to take advantage of collective intelligence based on diverse knowledges, experiences and perceptions, and to ensure collective appropriation of the process at local and municipal levels. Public debate should be conducted throughout all phases of the process by deliberative assemblies, the concerned administrations and the civil society in its various expressions and expertises.

# Place naming matters! (Continued)

These three imperatives are not without tension between them. Their hierarchy is not necessarily consensual. In this policy brief, **we do not necessarily collectively agree on all recommendations, but we do agree on the high relevance of the place naming issue, on the importance of promoting it as a major social need and as an asset. We commit to rebalancing place naming in an inclusive way, while considering the practical imperatives and within the framework of public debates and partnerships.**

This policy brief proposes different ways of intervening in place naming and shows the main challenges that it faces today. The suggestions, opinions and remarks on the issues at stake, are based on numerous past and current experiences. It is a compilation and discussion of principles defined by the legitimate stakeholders involved. It gathers numerous recommendations, which are not always consensual among all the stakeholders.



2002, Saint Mathieu (Haute-Vienne, France  
(sce: Dpt Haute-Vienne)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=1rnr5knHDVo>

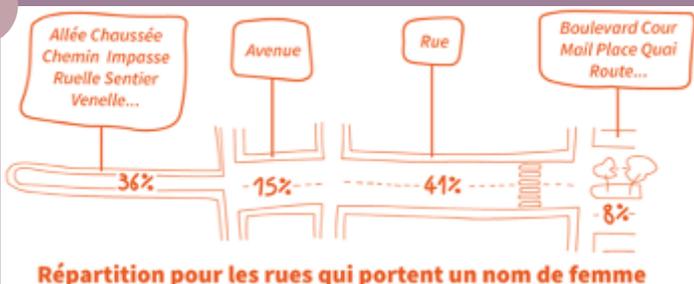
# Step 1 : Mapping the issue - Diagnosis

A fundamental step in the place naming process is to draw up an inventory of the issue, a diagnosis, in the form of statistics and/or online and/or interactive maps.

Since the 2000s, activists, usually in partnerships with academics, have carried out surveys and mappings in Europe and beyond. On International Women's Day, the press often takes up the issue at local level, proposing its own accounting while actions, performances, political announcements or inaugurations take place.

The first accounting and mapping initiatives dating from the 2000s, showed the extent of the gender gap. Digital mapping and online databases make it now possible to show a quantitative deficit (number of routes) as well as a qualitative one (quality, size and position of geographical objects). The interactive sites devoted to these issues provide an educational tool for raising awareness of the issue and mobilising people to take action on it as a public issue of inclusion.

1

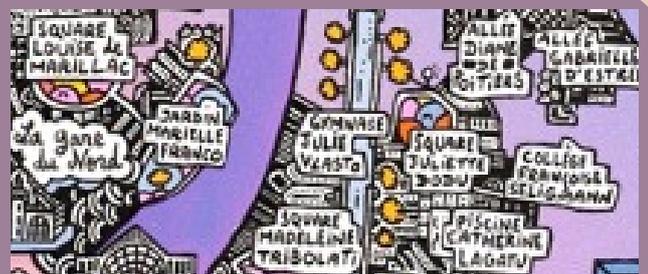


Nantes: A côtés,

In Nantes, the "A côté" collective proposes, within the framework of the Social Atlas of the Nantes metropolitan area, a remarkable set of qualitative analysis of the street names of the city from a gender point of view: not only the streets but also the female names are analysed by types.

2

The « Paris Féminin » project carried out by Alcatela in partnership with @lamaisondefemmes, proposes an alternative archipelago visual based on all the objects named after women (12% of the total, men 66%): streets but also public facilities which are proportionally more numerous to be feminised. The result is very original even if the categorisation of monuments and facilities is questionable in their feminisation and grouping with metro stations and Parisian landmarks.



Paris: Paris Féminin

3



Europe>World Mapping Diversity

Mapping Diversity is a platform for discovering key facts about diversity and representation in street names across Europe, and to spark a debate about who is missing from our urban spaces. It looks at the names of 155,468 streets across 32 major European cities, located in 19 different countries. More than 90% of the streets named after individuals are dedicated to white men. Where did all the other inhabitants of Europe end up? The lack of diversity in toponymy speaks volumes about our past and contributes to shaping Europe's present and future.

# Step 1 - Mapping the issue

## Strenghts

&

## Opportunities

- Potential didactic use of data and visuals in schools and museums, etc.
- More and more diversity towards a visual representation in European work towards mapping the issue (1)
- Visual representation of diversity (2 ; 3)

## Weaknesses

&

## Threats

- Gender gap in the existing communities of collaborative mappers (such as on OpenStreetMap)
- Female religious references (as Mary or female saints in Christianity) are quantitatively important but qualitatively different (not dealing with female emancipation) (16)
- In the global South: difficulty in recording and inventorying bottom-up and non-gendered bodies of vernacular place names, which are more widely used than top-down official ones (23)
- Use of automatic recognition software that is not gender-accurate, especially in English-speaking contexts where there are no first names, and problems with small numbers of names

## Solutions/Suggestions

P - Partnership / Q - Quality / M - Multiplying / E - Enlarging

**Q**

Taking into account the qualitative dimension of the data: Bld ≠ Residential St (1)

**P M E**

Improving women's participation on collaborative mapping (20)

**Q**

Street names and public facilities to be compared only with all those dedicated to people, by category

**M E**

Comparative visual monitoring (3 ; 11)

**Q**

Include qualitative criteria: position (centre, suburbs, etc.), length of roads; number of addresses on the road; number of users of public facilities; transport stations with the same name, etc. > For a visual hierarchy in infovision, maps, diagrams (1)

**Q**

Using AI for mapping from data bases but controlling interpretation and classification

**P M**

Encourage the didactic use of data and visuals in schools and museums, etc.

**P**

Building mapping project with academy (1)

**M**

Connecting online mapping of street names to Wikipedia biographies

**M E**

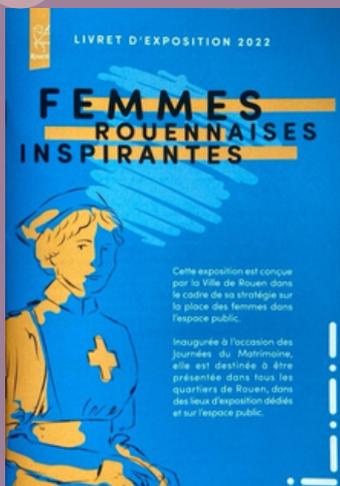
Coupling online maps with database and information site on existing place names (9)

# Step 2 - Inventoring eligible female personalities for naming

It involves compiling an inventory of women eligible for nomination. The inventory depends on local eligibility rules, which may be more or less restrictive (local level only, death imperative, with different criterions concerning the number of years from the date of death, etc.). It must also be discussed and validated from a global and inclusive perspective (including intersectionality). It may be based on the principle of “principle legacy” (14), in order to avoid ethical issues.

This essential phase of the process is an opportunity for multiple partnerships. It deserves to be promoted for its own interest in the form of publications (dictionaries, databases of notices, comic strip clips, etc.), museums (travelling exhibitions or museum sections) or even informative names and added information (it is rather common to find numerous creative practices in this sense). Last but not least, it can be used as a support for school activities or for cultural and leisure activities in the public space (tours, conferences, etc.).

4

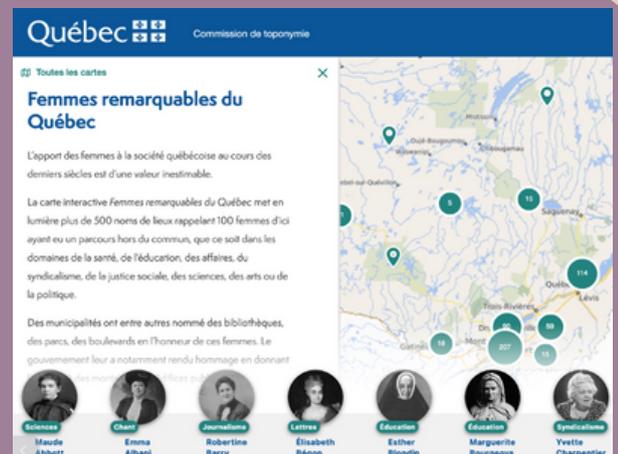


Rouen: Rouen Citoyenne, Débats des Mémoires

Travelling exhibition and booklet produced in partnership with a number of partners. This is part of the ambitious participatory policy being implemented in the neighbourhoods under the name *Débats des mémoires* and its section on the place of women in the public space.

5

The interactive map *Femmes remarquables du Québec* highlights more than 500 place names of 100 local women who have had an extraordinary career, whether in the fields of health, education, business, trade unionism, social justice, science, the arts or politics. Municipalities have named libraries, parks and boulevards in honour of these women. The government has paid tribute to them by naming mountains and public buildings after them.



Québec: Femmes Remarquables du Québec

6



Genève: 100Elles\*

The book presents one hundred biographies of women eligible under the canton's criteria for naming thoroughfares after people. They have left their mark on history from the sixth to the twentieth century. The aim is to combat the erasure of female figures from the collective memory and the patriarchal mechanisms of historiography.

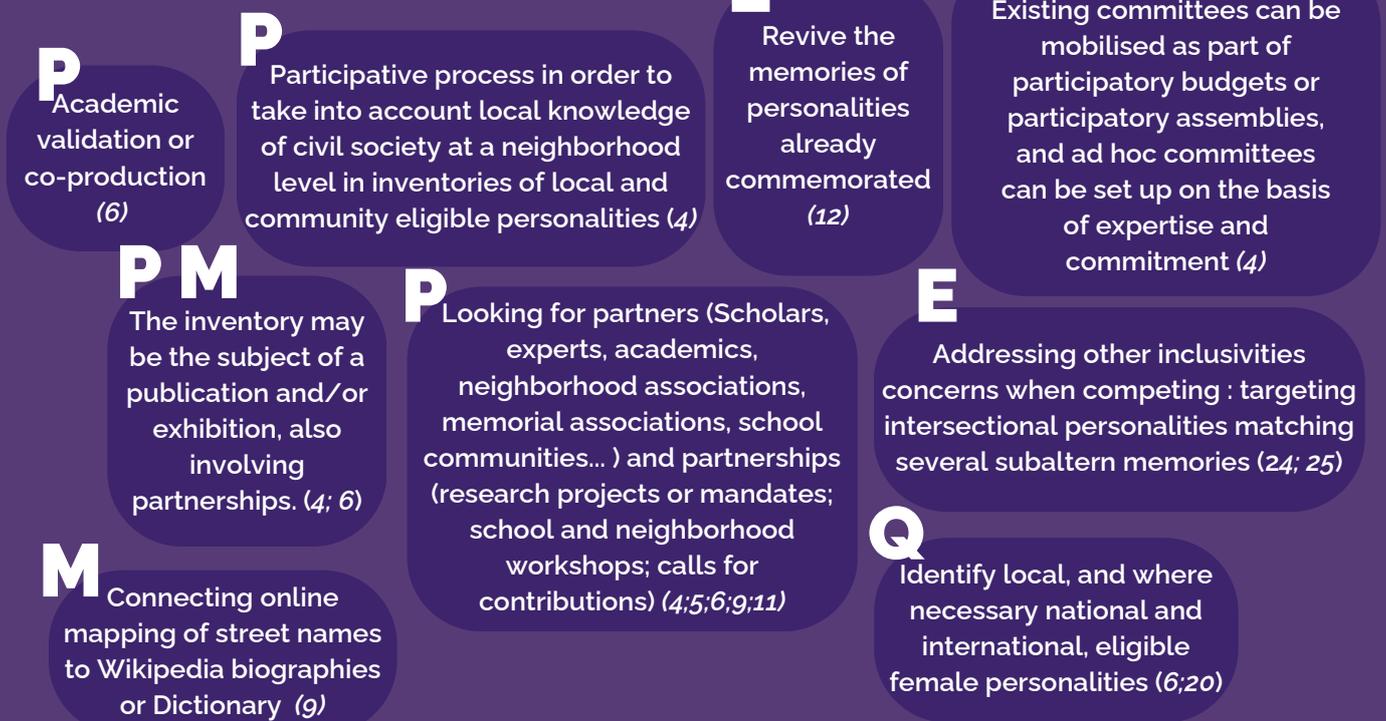
This book is the fruit of a collaborative, local and inclusive effort. Supported by the City of Geneva, written by historians from the University of Geneva and produced under the direction of l'Escouade, it is illustrated by ten artists from Geneva, alumnae of the HEAD - Geneva, a partner in the project.

# Step 2 - Inventoring eligible female personalities for naming



## Solutions/Suggestions

P - Partnership / Q - Quality / M - Multiplying / E - Enlarging



# Inspiring and/or remarkable initiatives

7

STNAMES LAB (Street names Lab) is a research group focused on the quantitative analysis of urban toponyms. They apply data science tools to street names to study social phenomena such as religiosity, political identity, and gender inequality.



España: STNamesLab, Gendered Cities

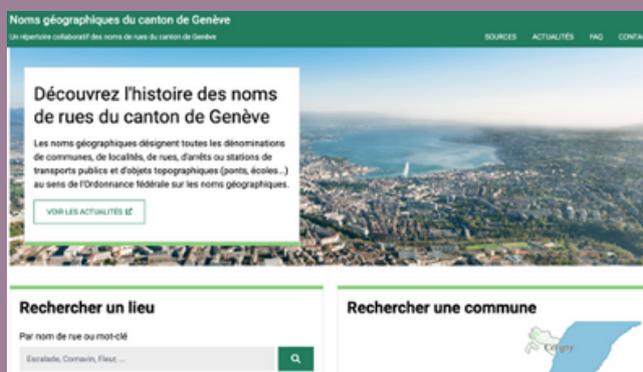
8



Gauteng (RSA): Gauteng City-Region Observatory Map of the Month

Gauteng City-Region Observatory Map of the month is dedicated to the genderization of street naming and renaming in Central Tshwane (formerly Pretoria).

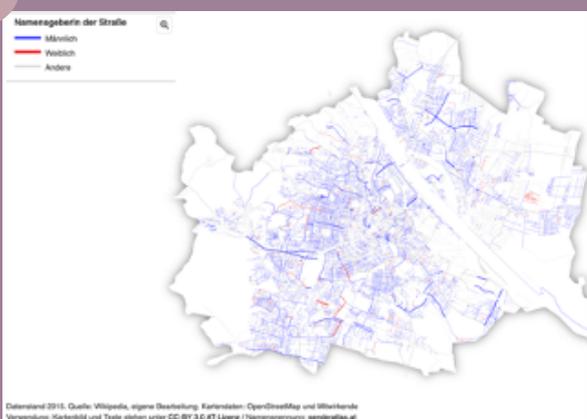
9



Genève: Noms géographiques du Canton de Genève

The State of Geneva, through its Nomenclature Commission, offers an online collaborative directory of all the odonyms (names of thoroughfares, streets, roads, squares etc.) in the canton. The directory includes information on the origin and meaning of the name, as well as legal information on the decision, with the arguments given (decrees) if available.

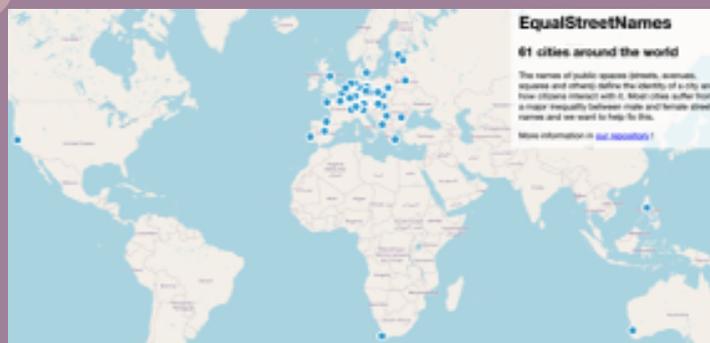
10



Vienna: GenderAtlas

Vienna has been mapped regarding its genderized toponomascap as part of a more general atlas: *Der gender Atlas für die Schule*. A classification of Streets includes the length, so statistics give an accurate idea of the qualitative gap.

11



Bruxelles>Europe>World: Equal Street Names

EqualStreetNames project coordinated by Open Knowledge Belgium with the support of OpenStreetMap Belgium and Wikimedia Belgium. EqualStreetNames is made possible thanks to equal.brussels

# Inspiring and/or remarkable initiatives

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**Marie Reynoard ne mène pas qu'à Grand'place**



The *Musée de la Résistance et de la déportation* in Grenoble has launched a poster campaign to remind people that some of the names of streets and public facilities refer to outstanding figures in the resistance to the Nazi occupation who paid for their commitment with their lives. This is Marie Reynoard, a history and geography teacher and Resistance leader who was executed.

Grenoble: Musée de la Résistance et de la déportation

13



Italy: *Toponomastica Femminile*, Didactic activities

The Italian pioneer activist group in genderizing the toponomastic, *Toponomastica Femminile*, supported many activities of mapping, touring, editing, schooling, advocating the issue. These include educational activities aimed at different publics. Here is an illustrated children's book that can be read by the whole family or used as an activity in school: *Una Strada For Rita*, (2017, *Maria Grazia Anatra & Viola Gesmunto, Roma: Matilda editrice*). It tells the story of the young Rita revolted by male domination on street signs. Through a school activity, she will be in capacity to promote other references with the municipality.

14

The notion of principle legacy means asking first: "what is it about?" rather than: "who is it about?" This directs the social, political and cultural significance of the choice towards what is commemorated by the place name, rather than all the aspects of the personality behind it.

It could establish a hierarchy between, on the one hand, the collective benefits of a personality's actions and, on the other, all the secondary personal statements and implications throughout that same personality's life. In other words, it distinguishes the main (contextual) reason for celebrating an action from other aspects of the personality. This principle is part of the doctrinal and ethical approach of potentially problematic figures, but it could also help to operate a hierarchization or selection between eligible personalities.

*Groupe de réflexion pluridisciplinaire sur les figurations historiques de l'Université de Genève dans l'espace public, 2022, Rapport final, Université de Genève : p. 29*

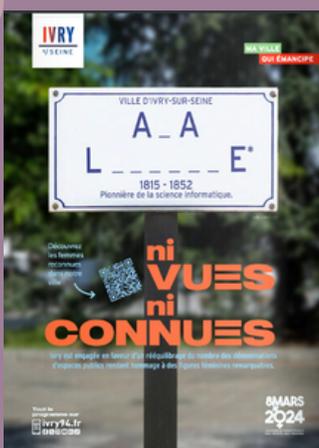
16



Bordeaux (Musée d'Aquitaine): Old signpost indicating the former name (Les Trois Maries) of a medieval city gate.

Was and is a place named after Mary, Notre-Dame or a saint, a way of making women's contributions and career paths more visible?

15



Awareness campaign launched for Women's Rights Day. In the form of a quiz in place of a street sign, the visual highlights the absence of a scientist women's name, despite its obvious legitimacy in the streetscape.

Ivry Ma Ville Magazine n°560 Mars 2024

# Inspiring and/or remarkable initiatives

17



Paris: Europe-Simone Veil Metro Station

Simone Veil, a survivor of the extermination camps, is known as the famous French minister supporting and implementing the right to abortion and as Political leader in the European parliament. After her death, it has been decided by the city of Paris Mayor to add her name to a large Parisian square already named Europe. This entailed changing the name of the metro station beneath the square that bore her name. The double name change therefore involved the city council, the regional council and the public metro company (RATP).

18



City of Geneva: Objectif Zero Sexisme dans ma ville

Since 2019, the City of Geneva's voluntary action, with its Agenda 21 department dedicated to equality and inclusion, has been called *Objectif Zéro Sexisme dans ma ville*. This involves not only street names, with nearly 30 renamings, but also different forms of symbolic representation in the public space (signage, advertisement, etc.).

19



Lausanne EPFL: Célébrons les femmes de sciences

In 2022, the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL) named several streets and squares on the campus after outstanding women scientists linked to the institution. This was an opportunity to take advantage of the compulsory street addressing in the Canton of Vaud. A [website](#) explains the process and provides information on the remarkable women honoured.

20



Latin America>World: Geochicas

Geochicas is an initiative that connects Spanish-speaking women in Latin America and Europe who are professionals in the field of geographic data and cartographic engineering. They document and map the issue of gender in place names and campaign for a greater female presence in the development of public, private and collaborative cartography, particularly in OpenStreet Map groups.

"Mapa de las calles con nombre de mujer en ciudades de Latinoamérica y España, para visibilizar la brecha que existe en la representación de figuras femeninas en las ciudades".

21

## Motion 2536 pour une reconnaissance dans l'espace public du rôle joué par les femmes dans l'histoire genevoise

Le GRAND CONSEIL de la République et canton de Genève considérant :

- qu'à Genève, seulement 7% des personnes ayant donné leur nom à une rue sont des femmes ;
- à renommer, dans un délai de trois ans après l'approbation de cette motion, au moins cent rues ou places d'importance du canton avec des noms de personnalités féminines ayant marqué l'histoire genevoise ;
- pour ce faire, à déléguer la commission cantonale de nomenclature afin qu'elle propose des changements de noms de rues en collaboration avec les communes et le BPEV, en s'appuyant notamment sur le projet « 100Elles\* » et veillant à une répartition géographique équitable des rues

Motion passed on 7 June 2019 by the Grand Council of the State of Geneva calling on the State Council "to rename, within three years of the approval of this motion, at least one hundred important streets or squares in the canton with the names of women who have left their mark on Geneva's history". To this end, it aims to delegate the cantonal nomenclature commission to propose changes to street names in collaboration with the communes and the BPEV (Equality Bureau), drawing in particular on the "100Elles\*" project and ensuring an equitable geographical distribution of the streets to be renamed.

Genève Grand Conseil: Motion pour une reconnaissance dans l'espace public du rôle joué par les femmes dans l'histoire genevoise

# Inspiring and/or remarkable initiatives

22



The Naming of a new High School in Carouge (Canton of Geneva) in 1980 took place in a municipality where no streets are named after women. The highly popular school also gave its name to a tramway station and related line.

*Carouge: Collège Madame de Staël*

23



*Bigon, L., & Zuvalinyenga, D. (2021). "Urban Pulse - Gendered urban toponyms in the global South: a time for de-colonization?", Urban Geography, 42(2), 226-239.*

"This short commentary scrutinizes the contemporary toponymic phenomenon of gendered street naming in the global South with an emphasis on sub-Saharan Africa's cities. It reveals the problematic prevalence of masculine street names in comparison to feminine names in the region's urban spatialities and provides a comparative glimpse into similar realities in the global North. The paper offers explanations for this phenomenon as a consequence of the (post-)colonial experiences of many Southern cities and reports on the socio-political implications of this problem. Our recommendation on a toponymic de-colonization in terms of gender is part of a broader aspiration for more just and inclusionary urban management policies, better accommodated to the challenging realities of urban life in Southern cities."

24



*Neuchâtel (city and university), 2018-19: renaming of the Espace Agassiz in Espace Tilo Frey.*

This fairly new space serves the main campus of the University of Neuchâtel. It was originally (1984) named after the famous naturalist Louis Agassiz, known as one of the main propagandists of "scientific racism" in the mid-nineteenth century. It was renamed in honour of Tilo Frey, the first woman elected to the cantonal parliament and the first person of African origin to be elected at this level in Switzerland. This has changed the official postal address of Humanities and Social Sciences faculty as well.

25

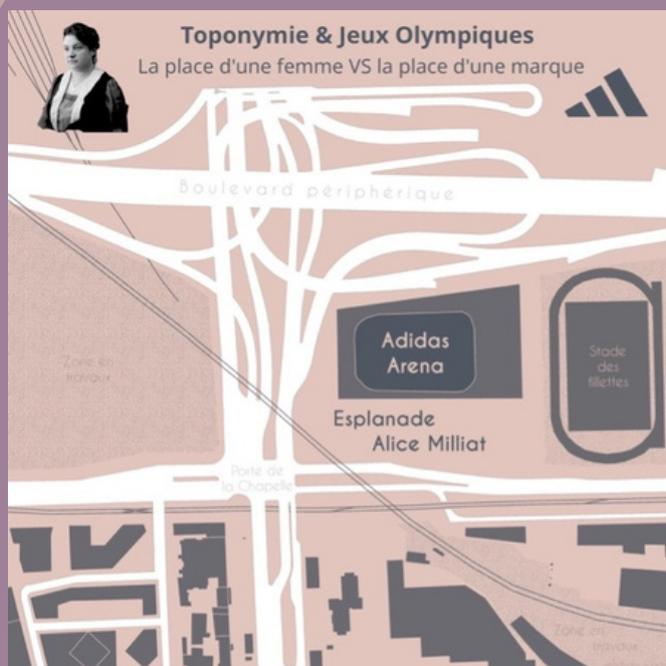


*Rio, World, Rua Marielle Franco Street Sign*

International movement of demonstrations and temporary (or permanently) place renaming with collages and multiplication of the plaque in all types of support. The street sign has become the means and symbol of an international feminist and anti-fascist movement following the destruction in 2018 of the plaque commemorating the assassination of this figure in the defence of human rights and minorities that same year. The site lists and encourages initiatives. You can download a replica of the plaque. More than 30,000 Rua Marielle Franco plaques have been produced since they tried to destroy this tribute. "Let's take the plaques everywhere and show that Maria is the size of the world!"

# Inspiring and/or remarkable initiatives

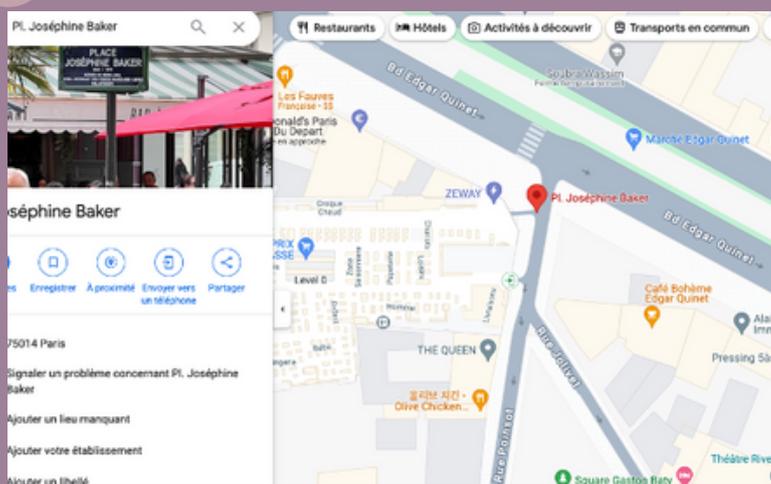
26



Paris: New Olympic Games Development, Adidas Arena and Stade des Fillettes, Esplanade Alice Milliat.

Although the new Olympic Games arena has been given a private brand name (Adidas Arena), the esplanade on which the arena stands, (as well as the Stade des Fillettes !), has been given the name of a champion of women's sport. Alice Milliat is a multi-sport champion and the first director of the Women's World Sports Organisation.

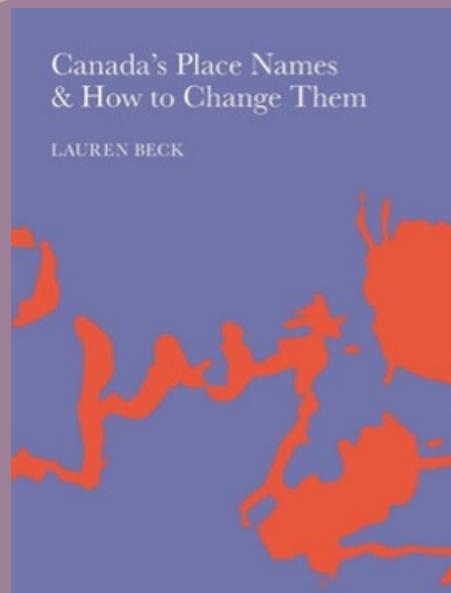
28



Paris: Place Joséphine Baker (Google Maps)

In its proactive policy of naming new places after remarkable personalities, the Paris city council is 'inventing' new squares that are not already named. They may be well placed, such as Place Joséphine Baker on Boulevard Edgard Quinet in the Montparnasse Gaité district, but they may be of lesser importance, such as a street or square giving not personal addresses

27



Canada: Canada's Place Names & How to Change Them, Lauren Beck, 2022, Concordia University Press

"In this chapter, I have outlined the ways that gender is asserted and sometimes operationalized through our place names while offering a history for gendered naming in Canada. I have taken a binary approach to gender, which leaves much room for further research and advocacy regarding non-binary gender and sexual identities as manifested in our toponymy. LGBTQ2S+ individuals will hardly see themselves in any name, such is the engrained and outdated conceptualization of gender in this sense. I have also offered some ways that gender, and particularly the inclusion of women, can be productively addressed by place name commissions, naming procedures, and the Canadian public." (p. 105)

# Step 3 - Inventoring places to name

An essential step involves making an inventory of what can be named or what will have to be named as part of urban planning. Of course, toponyms (the names of streets and squares) are not the only geographical objects with place names. Infrastructure and public facilities are also very important, because of their size, the number of people they attract and their potential multiplier effect on private commercial names and those of public transport stations in particular.

The places or infrastructures selected must be considered both quantitatively (size) and qualitatively (connotation, position) to define their importance. Existing places without names may be revealed, with the risk of lesser importance in terms of visibility and use. The official changes of derogative/insulting names (in former settlers colonies) and names that are racist or relate to former icondemned by law regimes constitute opportunities as well.

Of course, the possibilities and opportunities for naming vary according to local government geographical situations:

- **City centres:** they are by definition the most saturated with inherited street names, particularly in their historic parts and most visible landmarks. The possibility of new names depends on urban restructuring operations and the use of wastelands (industrial, military, railway, port, etc.) with the creation of new infrastructures and facilities. They can also depend on the invention of new places that are not yet named, but are less visible and have no address. It is in these situations that the challenging question of renaming places arises (30), in order to intervene in the naming of landmarks\*.
- **Suburban communities:** they can also be saturated, but are often the focus of urban restructuring projects.
- **Cities in the South:** it should be noted that in such case, the so-called informal suburbs are also saturated with vernacular names that are not primarily street names. Addressing operations can then offer opportunities for female names, but with the risk of decoupling from popular usage (23).
- **Peri-urban communities:** they are the ones where the most new buildings and roads are being constructed, offering opportunities for new names for everyday spaces.
- **Rural communities:** particularly in Europe, they are now seeing a standardisation of addresses, with buildings numbered on named streets, which also offers opportunities. But these are environments in which the names of new streets must first and foremost take up the references to local places and microtoponyms used in previous addresses, which provide valuable information about the landscape and the environment

\* *UNGEEN and geographical names national authorities focus on the primary purpose of a place name which is to name a street, a park, a square, etc., i.e., to aid in interpersonal communication and to help people orient themselves in the urban environment*

# Step 3 - Inventoring places to name

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The street is small and short, but it gives the address to the Public Hospital which is the most frequented place in the canton, giving it a very high visibility. The person honoured was a woman professor of gynaecology and obstetrics who was involved in the fight for abortion rights. The street naming initiative initially led to political controversy over the fact that it was not consensual.



Geneva: Rue Gabrielle-PERRET-GENTIL

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## 9. Recognition of national standardization

**The Conference.**  
**Recognizing** the cultural and historical significance of geographical names,  
**Aware** of the sensitivity to deliberate changing of geographical names, which could lead to the loss of cultural and historical heritage,  
**Discourages** the unauthorized changing of geographical names which have already been established by a legally-constituted entity and nationally recognized,  
**Endorses and Reaffirms** Resolution 16 of the Third United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, which emphasizes that geographical names given and/or standardized by a body other than that nationally authorized, should not be recognized by the United Nations.

VI UNCSGN Conference, 1993

Resolution (VI/9) adopted in 1993 by the Sixth United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names states that geographical names have cultural and historical significance, and that changing the names can lead to a loss of cultural and historical heritage.

31



Paris RATP: Place aux femmes du T3

When the T3a line was extended and the T3b line of the Paris tramway was created, the public transport company (RATP) decided to name most of the stations located between the historic gates after remarkable women. In all, 15 women's names have been given. Until then, only 8 out of more than 300 Paris metro stations were named after women.

32



Avenue Alice-et-William-FAVRE is one of the streets renamed as part of the City of Geneva's programme to redress the gender imbalance in place names. In this case, the family name (Favre) has been retained, as has the male first name (William), but the first name Alice has been added. This limits the impact on the addresses, but above all it underlines the previous decision to highlight only the male sibling who donated a large property in the city, to the detriment of the sister who was also president of the Geneva Red Cross. The operation and its explanation on the street sign do justice to this remarkable person and underline the previous patriarchal choices without upsetting the address system.

Geneva: Avenue Alice-et-William-FAVRE

# Step 3 - Inventoring places to name



## Solutions/Suggestions

P - Partnership / Q - Quality / M - Multiplying / E - Enlarging

**P Q**

Mapping both, present unnamed (or to be renamed) and projected new urban amenities, places and streets. (29; 31)

**Q M**

Targeting public facilities with multiplier effect linked with transport facilities (29; 31)

**Q M**

The question of revealed or invented places: back alleys, parts of esplanades or parks can produce nameable objects in town centres or few new opportunities, but of little importance in terms of visibility and use: no postal address (26;28)

**Q**

To be aware of negative connotations of certain places (peripheral, tiny, dead-end, etc.)

**Q**

Importance of the site: length, width, number of addresses, frequency of use (29; 31)

# Step 4 - Naming: Thinking qualitatively !

The production of new names is a crucial operation for developing the cityscape in a more inclusive and less patriarchal direction. It is carried out on the basis of inventories of eligible personalities (Step 2) and of the roads or community facilities (Step 3) that are to be named. For these crucial naming operations, different options can be taken depending on whether it is a central municipality with few new opportunities or a developing peripheral municipality.

Naming and renaming operations can take a variety of forms, ranging from the symbolic and spectacular ephemeral naming carried out by activists (33), possibly in partnership with the public authorities (9) (25), to the renaming of existing streets (9), not to forget the naming of new thoroughfares (19) or stations (31), the invention of as yet unnamed squares and secondary thoroughfares (28) and the addition of a female name to a landmark name (17).

**New street namings** are either peripheral urban extensions or urban restructuring projects, particularly in brownfield areas. In both cases, there are major opportunities in the form of a series of new roads in new districts. The operation can therefore be anticipated and a genuine naming policy implemented on the basis of the previous steps. This will make it possible not to name places one by one, but with qualitative priorities and well-defined objectives that can be shared with the resident communities, if these have already been identified (rehousing).

Proactive public policies for administrative restructuring provide an opportunity to change the names of existing streets. These particular conditions represent major opportunities for the feminisation of the cityscape. This is the case when municipalities merge, forcing the renaming of streets bearing identical names in the new entity (namely: station st, church st, city hall st ..., or even the name of a remarkable person or saint or national event...).

The case of street addressing operations is more complex. These operations change a system of addresses by locality into a system of addresses by number on named streets. These processes are common in rural Western contexts or in the informal neighbourhoods of cities in the global South. Particular attention needs to be paid to vernacular practices and customs and the attachment of local people to these names. The aim may also be to ensure that there is no masculinisation of the toponymic landscape of these spaces.

# Step 4 - Naming: Thinking qualitatively !

## *(Continued)*

To rename or not to rename ? Renaming streets already named with addresses is certainly the most effective way of making quantitative progress in rebalancing the gender odonymy of city centres, where opportunities for new street names are scarce. However, this option poses a number of problems and could generate backlash against the very principle of renomination. Renaming streets that already have names and addresses runs counter to the stability required for official odonymy, as generally advocated by official international, national and provincial toponymy commissions. It also generates costs for the residents and businesses concerned, and has a potential impact in terms of perceived loss of memory. We also need to take into account the attachment to certain vernacular names and practices. In the Quebec context, the addition of first names as a means of highlighting the individual identity of personalities may have been seen as an attack on an Anglophone odonymic tradition.

Renaming should therefore be seen as a radical approach that also requires alternatives to be considered and, if used, should be well prepared and supported.

The possibilities for qualitative alternatives have already been mentioned and should be highlighted: systematically target high-visibility, high-impact facilities (22; 31) and new thoroughfares linked to urban restructuring (29); promote remarkable female figures with the same name as an existing odonym with a partial name change (32); using alternative names that are visible in the landscape but that do not affect official street addressing (the effect is then limited and more of a militant performance) (25; 32); adding a remarkable female name to the name of a landmark (17).

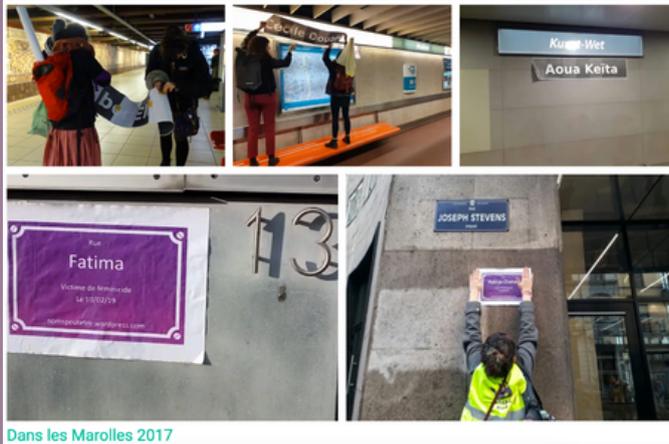
**Accompanying conditions :** In the case of renaming streets in the city centre in order to restore the balance in terms of quality and quantity, and to highlight the issue of priority (9), the question of the acceptability and ownership of the operation by the local communities is of prime importance:

Involve and consult local residents' groups in the preparation phase in order to find suitable streets and names for outstanding personalities. This can be part of an initiative to enhance the social and heritage value of the district (4).

The change of name must be an event that enhances the community concerned by the change of address. The change can be promoted by making it explicit in the public space, mentioning the old name, which has been (re)removed for matrimonial purposes. It can also be achieved through wider initiatives to promote all aspects of odonymic heritage, such as exhibitions, tours (33) and school programmes (12; 13). Finally, those affected by a change of address need to be supported with a budget and a support unit to help with administrative procedures.

# Step 4 - Naming: Thinking qualitatively !

33



Dans les Marolles 2017  
Bruxelles: Noms Peut-Être !

The feminist association "Noms peut-être" is taking various initiatives relating to street names. Feminist strolls through the streets of Brussels; collage the names of female victims of femicide performance happening ; participation in the interactive mapping of the gender gap in street names with the EqualStreetNames.Brussels programme.

34



US Women's March Foundation: Feminist Street Initiative

Womens March Foundation officially launched the Feminist Street Initiative to "reclaim our streets" and rename streets across the United States to reflect the names of those women who have paved the way and earned their place in history. The initiative comes on the cusp of Women's History Month and in response to the pandemic, which forced marchers indoors and birthed the idea of maintaining women's presence on the streets even when they could not gather.

35

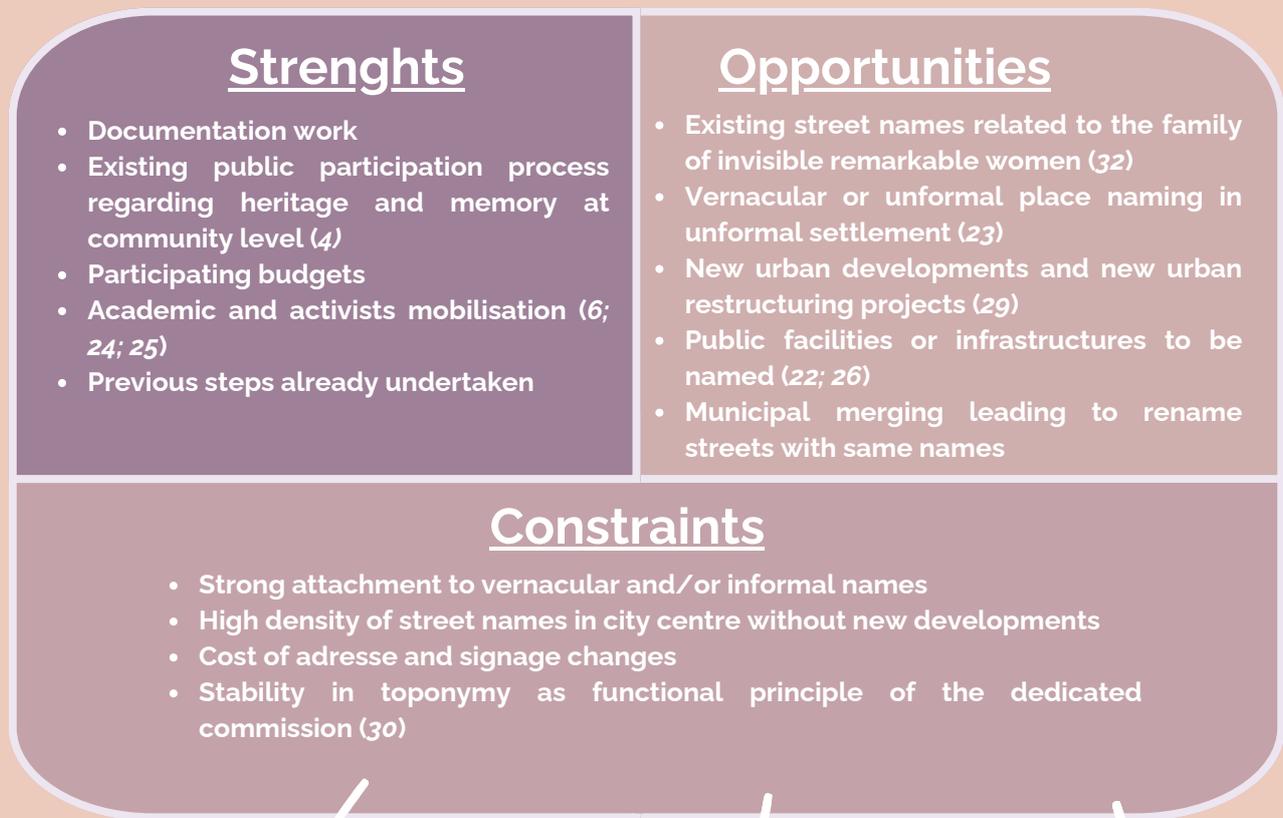
At City College of San Francisco, city officials gathered with students and faculty to celebrate the unveiling of Frida Kahlo Way. The street was formerly named Phelan Avenue, after a family name strongly linked with xenophobic political activism. Remarkable renaming combining feminist and decolonial anti-xenophobic motivations with additional Mural which spectacularly highlight the renaming and multiply presence effect in the public space.



THE CALIFORNIA REPORT  
**San Francisco Unveils 'Frida Kahlo Way,'  
Renaming Phelan Avenue**

San Francisco: Frida Kahlo Way Sign and Mural

# Step 4 - Naming: Thinking qualitatively !



## Solutions/Suggestions

P - Partnership / Q - Quality / M - Multiplying / E - Enlarging

**Q** Spatial differentiation of priorities. City centre = target visible opportunities (public amenities 17; 22; 26; 31); periphery: = massify to rebalance (new developments 19)

**ME** Targetting highly visible public amenities and infrastructures as visited places with leverage effect (26; 31)

**ME** Coupling the naming after a remarkable woman with an initiative of street renaming due to problematic existing personal street name (related to racist theorist for instance) (35)

**M** Proactive approach of naming with political decisions (21)

**P** Well preparing if not avoiding the renaming of adresses streets> could generate strong oppositions from residents and business activities

**Q** Renaming in highly visible city centre only if no new planned urban redevelopments and no public facilities naming opportunities

**Q** Play on pronounciative or homonymic similarities

**PQ** Inherited vernacular local names make sense and are *a priori* not less important than personal names

**EM** Ad hoc or existing commissions? Deliberative assemblies can be mobilised and an ad hoc commission or working group can be set up, starting with the inventory phases and linked to the more general issues of commemoration in the public space

**Q** Importance of additional information: Firts name of the personnality included in the Street-name, Biography elements and context on the street sign (32)

**PQME** Additional or alternative names displaying campaign (33; 34)

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This policy brief is proposed by the UNESCO Chair in Inclusive Toponymy from the University of Geneva. It is devoted to the feminisation of public space through place names that display major gender gap.

It is aimed at all stakeholders involved or wishing to become involved in place naming and its social enhancement, in particular local authorities, their elected representatives and administrations, neighbourhood and heritage associations, feminist activist groups and educational institutions.

It was drawn up following a multi-stakeholder forum and is based on a critical analysis of a number of remarkable and/or inspiring experiences. In particular, Geneva's proactive experience is a point of reference.

The recommendations and examples are divided into four stages, each representing a potential area for action:

- 1 Mapping the issue
- 2 Identify eligible female personalities for naming
- 3 Inventing places to name
- 4 Naming qualitatively

In this way, all the actors involved can participate with inspiration and creativity in an approach to renovating and opening up public space that combines functionality, inclusion, participation and an understanding of the social and historical aspects of places.



UNESCO Chair in Inclusive Toponymy  
“Naming the World”