

# Comparing urban namespaces: A mixed-methods analysis of European and North American stadium names.

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## Abstract:

Sporting events and music concerts regularly attract thousands of people and stadiums, which are now considered ‘cathedrals of modernity’, are usually the venue for these events (Bale, 1995). They are therefore a significant locational advantage both for small service companies in the immediate vicinity of the stadium (Abbiasov et al., 2023) and for urban economies as a whole, as they also increase the attractiveness for potential employees (Becker Olsen, 2003).

Furthermore, stadiums have a sustainable impact on urban landscapes through their unique architecture (Celedón et al., 2024), their (often) legendary histories (Hüser et al., 2022), for example as venues for major sporting events such as the Olympic Games, and the resulting post-sporting event legacy (Kiuri et al., 2015; Llorca et al., 2024). Finally, the stadium building and its surroundings is inseparably associated with its unique, meaning giving name (Koch et al., 2022).

(Re-)Naming a stadium as a specific place name practice depends even more than replacing street names (Rusu, 2019) on social groups as locally engaged community members or sport supporters, the stadium history itself including former names (Koch et al., 2024) as well as local policies and thus form a distinct and constantly shifting *urban namespaces* (Brasher et al., 2023).

The internet platform [stadium-maps](#) provides a global overview of stadiums, their surroundings and names that go beyond sports and language borders. As expected, stadiums in North America predominantly have commercialised names, while in Europe stadium names are more differentiated (Vuolteenaho et al., 2019). For example, sponsor names also characterise the urban landscape of major stadiums in Germany, whereas eponyms dominate the scene in France and toponyms are common in England and Spain (Bach et al., 2022).

As part of the research project [DISCLOSE](#) (2022-2025), our contribution joining the theme *Toponymy*, attempts to find out which factors influence stadium names and how English – and French-speaking sport fans from the US and Canada as well as from France and the UK – feel about (re-)naming of ‘their’ stadiums.

The theoretical framework consists of a three-dimensional socio-discursive model (Bach et al., 2022) which is tested by means of web-scraped data. In addition, an online survey is conducted among sport fans from these four countries in order to contextualise these results.

Preliminary results indicate that it is not the language family (English vs. French), the type of sport (e.g. American football vs. Soccer), or the stadium-related variables (year of construction, capacity) that are significant, but primarily the culturally determined naming practice with which almost all key decision-makers and key groups are familiar.

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