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Metonymy and Metonymic Transpositions in the Officially Functioning Potamonyms of Vilnius County: Cognitive Models and Cultural Reflections

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The article examines cognitive and cultural foundations of metonymic naming and metonymic transposition in Lithuanian potamonymy by analysing a corpus of 404 officially functioning potamonyms of Vilnius County, 212 of which are metonymically motivated. Based on cognitive linguistics and onomastic theory, the study establishes three principal metonymic models underlying potamonym formation: PLACE FOR RIVER, SALIENT FEATURE FOR RIVER, and PERSON FOR RIVER. The analysis shows how perceptual salience, functional relevance, and culturally significant features of the landscape determine naming practices, with particular attention to analogy-based transfers between semantically related toponyms. Such processes often result in the extension and parallel functioning of toponymic meanings rather than semantic change in the traditional sense. The findings reveal that Lithuanian potamonyms are not merely geographical labels but rather cognitive and cultural constructs that reflect spatial organisation, ecological awareness, and collective memory encoded in the landscape.

Keywords: metonymy, potamonyms, hydronymy, cognitive linguistics, toponymy

INTRODUCTION

The naming of rivers and streams represents a domain where language, cognition, and landscape intersect. Hydronyms, like other place names, reflect how communities perceive and structure their environment [cf. 1; 44]. From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, naming is a motivated conceptual act shaped by key cognitive mechanisms, particularly metonymy – the use of one concept to refer to another within the same experiential domain [cf. 20; 21; 34]. The cognitive-linguistic framework, especially cognitive

semantics, has already been applied in international onomastic research; however, this approach is only beginning to gain methodological ground within Lithuanian onomastics. Given the exceptional richness and structural diversity of the Lithuanian onomasticon, its analysis through the prism of cognitive semantics offers both theoretical and empirical potential.

This article investigates the cognitive and cultural assumptions of metonymic naming and metonymic transposition in Lithuanian potamonymy. The object of the research is the officially functioning potamonyms of Vilnius County, i.e., the names of rivers and streams currently recorded in official toponymic sources and referring to the watercourses within this administrative territory. The empirical basis of the study consists of 404 officially functioning potamonyms, of which 212 are metonymically motivated and constitute the main analytical material of this article. The aim of the research is to identify and systematise the metonymic models underlying these names and to explain their conceptual and cultural motivation. The analysis is based on official registries, toponymic databases, maps, catalogues, and relevant onomastic and etymological research. Each potamonym was examined etymologically and contextually, taking into account official forms and local variants, in order to reconstruct broader naming patterns from both synchronic and diachronic perspectives.

Each potamonym was analysed individually through several stages: (1) its etymology was established using lexicographic, historical, cartographic, and onomastic source, (2) the original naming motivation was then reconstructed using both linguistic evidence and geographical and historical context, (3) the reconstructed motivation was interpreted within the framework of cognitive linguistics and assigned to the metonymic model that best reflected the primary conceptual relationship behind the potamonym.

The classification was based on the dominant naming motivation rather than on the present-day characteristics of the named watercourse. Potamonyms motivated by neighbouring settlements, lakes, rivers, or other related geographical objects were classified under the PLACE FOR RIVER model. River and stream names based on physical, ecological, or perceptually salient features were assigned to the SALIENT FEATURE FOR RIVER model. Names derived from anthroponyms or anthropocentric associations were included in the PERSON FOR RIVER model. Although individual potamonyms may reflect more than one motivational factor, each potamonym was assigned to the model representing its primary motivation.

Since historical naming motivations cannot always be reconstructed with complete certainty, the level of confidence varies among individual etymological interpretations. Where several explanations exist in previous research, they were considered and evaluated against linguistic, historical, geographical, and semantic evidence, with alternative interpretations noted where relevant.

After classification, the frequencies of the principal and subordinate metonymic models were calculated to identify the dominant naming patterns in the corpus. The quantitative data are used only descriptively to illustrate the productivity of different naming models but not for statistical analysis.

Due to space limitations, this article discusses only selected examples illustrating the main metonymic models identified. A complete classification of the metonymic models, together with the full set of analysed potamonyms, will be presented in a more comprehensive future study.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In cognitive linguistic theory, metonymy is viewed as a fundamental mechanism of meaning construction based on contiguity rather than similarity. In contrast to metaphor, which connects entities across different conceptual domains through perceived resemblance, metonymy operates within a single experiential domain. It relies on relations of spatial, temporal, causal, or functional proximity. In this context, contiguity refers to a cognitive principle that enables speakers to extend meaning by invoking elements that are closely connected in experience [cf. 21, 35–40; 17, 140–149; 29, 2ff.].

From this perspective, one entity can be accessed and understood through another that belongs to the same conceptual frame. A common example is naming a place after a neighbouring feature, an institution, or another contextually salient element [12; 18; 19; 21]. Such cases demonstrate that metonymic relations are grounded in real-world adjacency and play an important role in structuring both linguistic expression and cognitive representations of space.

In onomastics, metonymy is central to the formation and interpretation of proper names. Toponyms frequently emerge through metonymic or metaphorical processes that reflect how communities conceptualise and organise their environment [53; 54]. As a result, metonymy provides a particularly fruitful framework for analysing place names, especially when naming is motivated by salient landscape features, proximity to settlements, ownership, or functional relationships in a shared spatial domain.

Two key metonymic patterns dominate toponymy. The first turns *common geographical terms*, such as mountain, river, or forest, into proper names by virtue of uniqueness or local distinction [cf. 3, 983; 51, 35]. The second, *analogy-based nomination*, extends existing names to nearby or related features, for example, when a river name is given to a neighbouring settlement [35, 372–373; 37, 74]. These reflect cognitive mapping and spatial continuity, which can also extend through cultural or communicative links [cf. 3; 22; 23; 35].

Recent studies distinguish three main metonymic models that commonly motivate place naming. The first, PLACE FOR PLACE, is based on spatial proximity, where one location receives its name from a neighbouring or territorially related place. The second model, SALIENT FEATURE FOR PLACE, draws on a distinctive natural or landscape element that stands out in the environment and becomes the naming basis. The third, PERSON FOR PLACE, reflects an anthropocentric perspective, as places are named after individuals connected to them. Together, these models show how metonymic naming emerges from everyday spatial experience, environmental perception, and human presence in the landscape [cf. 2; 36; 42].

Metonymy thus functions as both a cognitive and cultural mechanism, encoding how communities perceive and interpret their surroundings [36]. Hydronyms illustrate this vividly by naming rivers and streams through salient natural or human-related features that reflect collective memory and worldview [cf. 11; 16]. In sum, metonymy functions as a fundamental and productive mechanism in toponymy, influencing both primary and secondary naming. It reveals how language, cognition, and geography interact in preserving cultural memory and mapping human experience onto the landscape.

1. SALIENT FEATURE FOR RIVER MODEL

This is the largest metonymic model comprising potamonyms derived from salient natural features such as forests, meadows, vegetation, terrain, or soil. Because these elements are perceptually prominent, they strongly motivate naming. A defining environmental feature

is metonymically transferred to the potamonym, reflecting a close conceptual link between the landscape and the watercourse. Below, several particularly illustrative sub-models are presented.

1.1. The FROZEN WATER FOR RIVER sub-model includes potamonyms based on a river's tendency to freeze or remain ice-bound for much of the year. Names capture the visual or tactile impression of ice or cold, highlighting seasonal freezing as a salient feature, particularly in colder climates such as those in Lithuania. The source domain for names in this category is frozen or ice-covered water. For instance, the name of the *Apšalaĩ* stream (Ukm D) is formed as a plural inflexion derivative from Lith *ãpšalas* 'frozen to ice' or 'icing' [24], comparable to related appellatives such as Lith *ãpskardas* and *ãpskarda* 'freezing rain' or 'a layer of ice that forms when it rains during freezing conditions' [24]. The potamonym *Apšalaĩ* denotes a small, shallow stream that reliably freezes in winter during significant temperature drops. This recurring physical condition, i.e., the transformation of the stream into a frozen state, constituted its most prominent and defining feature, serving as the primary motivation behind the naming: Lith *ãpšalas* + *pl* inflexion *-ai* → the icing/frozen stream → *Apšalaĩ*. The freezing is conceptualised and transposed linguistically, showing how direct environmental observation can evolve into a formal hydronym.

1.2. The MANNER OF FLOW FOR RIVER sub-model shows that rivers and streams are often named for how they move rather than for their surroundings. These potamonyms reflect perceptible flow qualities such as speed, sluggishness, turbulence, or gurgling. By foregrounding the rhythm of the watercourse and surface motion, this pattern captures the experiential aspect of flowing water. The observed manner of flow serves as the source domain and is metonymically mapped onto the potamonym, demonstrating how movement itself becomes a basis for naming. Two subtypes are identified:

1.2.1. Fast-flowing rivers, reflecting rushing or forceful movement, motivated by the gushing flow and turbulent, wavy surface, e.g., *Vìlnia* or *Vilnẽlė* (V C, V D).[1] The potamonym derives from Lith *vilnìs* 'rolling water mound, wave' and the verb *vĩlnyti* 'to wave, sway; to flow abundantly' [cf. 24; 51, 384]. Another possible etymological link is with Lith *vielóti* 'to wrap, twist' from IE *u̯ei-la [cf. 24; 8, 519; 30]. The name likely reflects the river's dynamic, rolling character, particularly as it flows over and around boulders, creating swirls, waves, and constant motion. The derivation can be reconstructed as Lith *vilnìs* + *f sg* inflexion *-ia* → waving, rolling river → *Vìlnia*. The alternative name *Vilnẽlė* is a diminutive form derived with Lith Suf *-elė*. This form expresses endearment or a tender, affectionate attitude toward the river. The river name fits the metonymic naming model where the name is motivated by the river's expressive and dynamic flow.

1.2.2. Slow-flowing rivers, reflecting lethargic or heavy currents, as in the potamonym *Aluonà* (Trak D), derived from the base *al-*, which is related to Lith *aléti* 'to flow, to drip' [24; 49, 205]. It is also suggested in the onomastic literature that this potamonym, along with other hydronyms of the same root, can be linked to Lith *aléti* or *alaušaĩ, ãlaušos* 'a place with abundant water' [24]. Comparative evidence includes Latvian toponyms such as *Ala* and *Āllums,* the Prussian *Alowe,* and German names like *Aland* and *Alantia* [cf. 50, 38; 41, 883] in which the root *al-* can ultimately be traced back to Indo-Eur *el-/*ol- 'to flow' [cf. 9, 414; 25, 62; 51, 130]. The potamonym appears to include Lith Suf *-uona*, which is commonly

1 Bel *Вільня*, *Vilnia*; Pol *Wilejka*, *Wilenka*. The recorded historical forms of this potamonym are 1430 Vilnja, Vilna; 1592 Vilejka, Vilenka; 1663 Wiln(i)owka; 1715 Wilneyka [cf. 6, 111]. The river is believed to have given rise to the name of Vilnius city itself [cf. 5; 8; 52].

used to form verbal *nomina agentis* and proper names, particularly toponyms. This suffix can also convey notions of intensification or acceleration [cf. 40, 277, 283–284]. Thus, *Aluonà* likely originated as a descriptive name that reflects the river's dynamic and flowing nature: Lith *aléti* + Suf *-uona* → a (fast) flowing river → *Aluonà*. This metonymic mapping conveys a physical state (the act of flowing or dripping) onto the river that exhibits it.

These potamonyms show how perceived movement becomes a defining feature, illustrating how human cognition and sensory experience of water flow shape the river's identity and hydronymic naming practices.

1.3. The results show that potamonyms are most frequently conceptualised through features of river and stream channels. The RIVERBED FEATURE FOR RIVER sub-model comprises potamonyms motivated by the physical structure, shape, or texture of the channel or the terrain along which the river or stream flows. These potamonyms reflect a metonymic or descriptive link to the geomorphological characteristics of the riverbed, such as natural depressions, sediment accumulations, depth variations, dammed or waterfall-obstructed channels, and the quality of the banks and the bed. A recurring pattern is the association between the river and the concave landform it follows. Here, the source domain is the valley, channel, hollow, or ditch, which is metonymically mapped onto the potamonym.

1.3.1. The DEPRESSION FOR RIVER model is based on the conceptual association between a river and the concave landform it occupies. For instance, the potamomym *Dóbis* (Švčn D) appears to be Lith *m sg* inflexion *-is* derivative from the base *dob-* and is related to Lith *dóbti* 'to make a hole, a hollow, to sink in', *duobẽ* 'excavated or otherwise sunken place in the ground; ravine, valley; deep place in a river', or *duobẽ*, *dúoba*, *duobà* 'indentation at the bottom of the chest' [24], which in dialectal usage can denote any sunken or hollow place [cf. 26, 301, 397–402]. *Dóbis* is likely derived from **Duobis* or **Duobys*, the older forms based on Lith *duobẽ* [50, 88]. The semantic field of these roots strongly aligns with the characteristics of the river's physical terrain: a natural depression or hollow in the land where water collects or flows. The formation process can be outlined as Lith *dóbti* / *duobẽ* + *m sg* inflexion *-is* → the river that flows in the natural depression in the ground → *Dóbis*. This reflects the river's observable geography: it flows through fields with visible depressions and, in the lower reaches of the Dotenėnai forest, runs through ditches. The riverbed itself represents a natural hollow, and swales and ditches are present in the river's lower reaches. This name captures not just the river as a physical entity but also its interaction with the surrounding terrain, using metonymy to linguistically encapsulate this characteristic.

1.3.2. Several potamonyms reflect the metonymic naming model RIVERBED/BOTTOM TEXTURE FOR RIVER. They are derived from terms that describe the material or tactile quality of the river's bottom, such as 'sandy', 'pebbly', 'muddy', or 'gravelly'. These names highlight the surface texture and substance encountered beneath the waterline, i.e., features often noted during wading, fishing, or crossing. The most telling example is the potamonym *Graužìnė*, also known as *Graužùpė* (Trak D, Vrn D), which originates from Lith *gráužas, graũžas* 'small pebbles; a component of gravel; gravel; the ground near a quarry; a quarry; a pile of sand, an islet carried away by a flood; or the pebbled, sandy edge of a river or lake' [24; cf. 50, 121; 27, 260–261]. This etymology reflects the defining characteristic of the river: its pebbly, sandy bed, which stands out despite the river flowing through arable fields, meadows, and pastures. The official form *Graužìnė* includes Lith Suf *-inė*, commonly used to denote a prominent feature of the named object [30, 246ff.]. In

this case, it emphasises the river's pebbly and gravelly nature. The form *Graužùpė* is a compound in which the second component, *ùpė*, explicitly means 'river', identifying the nature of the named object. *Graužìnė* and its variant are motivated by the salient feature of the riverbed: abundance of pebbles, sand, and gravel. Similarly, the potamonym *Žvirgždė*[2] (Trak D) derives from Lith *žvirgždas* 'coarse gravel' or 'finely broken stones'[24]. The gravelly, pebbly nature of its riverbed, which contrasts with the surrounding forest and peatlands, motivated this potamonym. The derivation can be presented as Lith *žvirgždas* + *f sg* inflexion *-ė* → a sandy, pebbly, shingly river → *Žvirgždė*.

The potamonyms above exemplify the metonymic naming model, which highlights how the riverbed's visible, tangible qualities inform naming practices, particularly when such traits influence human interaction with the watercourse. These names often point to local ecological knowledge and reinforce the sensory and practical relationship between people and rivers.

1.4. The INVERTEBRATE FOR RIVER sub-model is a part of the broader FAUNA FOR RIVER category and presents probably the most interesting and rarest naming motif. The potamonym *Sliekinė* (Ukm D) is derived from Lith *slíekas* 'worm', specifically referring to the earthworm (*Lumbricus*) [24]. The Suf *-inė*, commonly used in Lithuanian, often denotes a place characterised by an abundance of something [30, 263ff.]. The derivation of the name can be reconstructed as Lith *slíekas* + Suf *-inė* → a stream where earthworms are abundant or extracted → *Sliekinė*. It is likely that local inhabitants historically used the stream, or a section of it, to collect worms for fishing, showing how lesser-known but ecologically important animals can shape hydronymic identity. Though not aquatic, these invertebrates play a role in riverine ecosystems and human activity. This case illustrates that even minor fauna, closely tied to local use or ecology, can serve as a metonymic source domain in river naming.

1.5. The TREE FOR RIVER sub-model, being part of the broader RIVERBED SHAPE FOR RIVER category, maps river tributaries onto tree branches, producing names that evoke ramified, branching patterns. It relies on abstract structural analogy, using familiar tree forms to describe the layout of waterways. The source domain of these potamonyms is the tree structure. Two representative potamonyms are identified in this model: *Šakẽlė* and *Šakupis*. *Šakẽlė* (Ukm D) is the only named tributary of the *Duoburys*. While five smaller unnamed tributaries feed into the main watercourse, *Šakẽlė* stands out as the sole identified one. The name *Šakẽlė* is derived from Lith *šakà* 'a branching part of a river that flows in a different direction' [24]. The use of DIM Suf *-elė* emphasises the relatively small size of the tributary compared to the main stream [cf. 50, 324]. This naming pattern reflects the conceptual and structural parallels between rivers and trees: just as trees have branches extending from a trunk, rivers have tributaries branching from a main channel. This analogy is cognitively efficient as it uses familiar terms to describe unfamiliar natural features. The potamonym derivation is Lith *šakà* + DIM Suf *-elė* → a small tributary → *Šakẽlė*. This model is similarly evident in the potamonym *Šakupis* (Ukm D), which has eight nameless tributaries feeding into it, forming a branching network that visually resembles a tree. *Šakupis* is a compound name, consisting of *šak-*, related to Lith *šakà* 'a river branch' and *upìs* 'river, stream' [24]. It captures the stream's physical characteristics, with its many tributaries forming a branching system like a tree. The derivation is Lith *šakà* + *upìs* → a river with multiple tributaries/branches → *Šakupis*. These two names reflect both the appearance and

2 1872 *Свиржа* [cf. 33].

function of streams within the broader hydrological system. By conceptualising rivers as a tree-like structure, this model demonstrates cognitive efficiency by using familiar biological forms to understand and name complex natural patterns.

1.6. The ORIENTATION FOR RIVER model reflects a metonymic shift from spatial direction to the river itself, showing how rivers can be named depending on their orientation in space. In the dataset, this model includes two potamonyms motivated by the riverbed's diagonal or oblique course relative to surrounding features or the stream's general flow. Rather than referring to the source or the mouth, these potamonyms encode relative spatial alignment and reveal a subtle perception of landscape geometry and the flow direction.

The *Pãskrypėlė* (Švčn D) follows a relatively straight course towards lake Lazdiniai, but along its path, it makes two distinct turns causing it to flow somewhat diagonally in certain sections. The potamonym *Pãskrypėlė* is a diminutive derivative formed with Suf *-ėlė* from Lith *pãskripas* 'tilted, diagonal, inclined, oblique' [50, 247]. The name is motivated by the configuration of the stream's riverbed, where its otherwise straight course is interrupted by two sideways bends. The derivation can be reconstructed as Lith *pãskripas* + Suf *-ėlė* → a diagonally flowing stream → *Pãskrypėlė*. The potamonym exemplifies a direct, descriptive naming process in which the observable shape of the riverbed guides the name. Similarly, the origin of the potamonym *Skeřsė* (El D) can be traced to Lith *skeřsas*, *-a* 'diagonal', meaning 'oriented at an angle, turned sideways' [24]. This etymology is consistent with other Lithuanian hydronyms, such as *Skersabalė*, *Skersduobė*, and *Skersupis*, which incorporate the same root [cf. 50, 303]. The name likely reflects the stream's distinctive course and its relationship to the surrounding landscape. The stream flows at an angle relative to nearby geographic features, such as lakes, melioration ditches, and settlements, making its diagonal orientation a key characteristic that name-givers perceive. The derivation of the potamonym is Lith *skeřsas*, *-a* + *f sg* inflexion *-ė* → the stream flowing diagonally to other features → *Skeřsė*. In both cases, the diagonal course of the river serves as the defining feature, demonstrating how observable orientation can become the central motivation for naming.

To sum up, the SALIENT FEATURE FOR RIVER model illustrates how local communities named rivers and streams based on what they observed and experienced in their surroundings. Its various sub-models show that physical, ecological, and hydrological characteristics are the primary motivations for naming. These potamonyms reveal how communities perceive, interpret, and interact with their environment.

2. PLACE FOR RIVER MODEL

This is the second largest metonymic naming model, under which rivers and streams are named after nearby locations or features, such as settlements, landscape elements, larger rivers, or lakes. This reflects a process called transonymization, in which a name shifts from one type of place to another [32, 87]. These names serve as cognitive shortcuts, anchoring rivers and streams in familiar surroundings and showing how human habitation and natural geography influence naming practices.

2.1. The first sub-model, SETTLEMENT FOR RIVER, includes potamonyms derived from nearby settlements, reflecting the close link between local communities and their streams. The source domain of the potamonym is a human settlement (oikonym). Naming occurs through three main processes:

2.1.1. *Direct nominal borrowing*, when a stream takes the settlement's name unchanged. One illustrative case is the potamonym *Maišinė* (Trak D), which appears to be a relatively recent formation, derived from the settlement of the same name through which the stream passes. Given the stream's small size and the fact that *Maišinė*, as a village, has been documented only since the mid-20th century [cf. 43], the hydronym probably originated as a secondary name derived from the oikonym following a simple pattern: *Maišinė* (oikonym) → the stream flowing through *Maišinė* village → *Maišinė*.

2.1.2. *Genitive constructions* – the oikonym is transposed into the potamonym in possessive form, combined with Lith *ùpė* 'river' or *upẽlis* 'stream'. The examples include *Jutoniũ ùpė* (Mlt D, Švčn D), a composite potamonym, the first component of which is a genitive case derivative from the oikonym *Jutónys*, the name of the village located near the stream's lower reaches [cf. 28, 253; 50, 140]. In this case, the naming pattern suggests that the stream is closely associated with *Jutónys* village, and the name reflects this geographical proximity. The derivation model is *Jutónys* (oikonym) + gen. case inflexion *-ių* + *ùpė* → a stream near *Jutónys* village → *Jutoniũ ùpė*. Another example is *Šẽternikų upẽlis* (V D), the first component of which is the gen. case inflexion *-ų* derivative from the oikonym *Šãtrininkai* (**Šeterninkai*), the settlement located near the stream's course. The generic term *upẽlis* directly identifies the nature of the water body and emphasises its diminutive size. The derivation pattern is *Šãtrininkai* (oikonym) [a → e phonetic shift] + gen. case inflexion *-ų* + *upẽlis* → the stream flowing near *Šãtrininkai* (**Šeterninkai*) → *Šẽternikų upẽlis*. The minor phonetic shift in the first component further illustrates linguistic adaptation in hydronymic formation.

2.1.3. *Morphological adaptation* – potamonyms may be formed through suffixation, prefixation combined with inflexion, and inflexional adaptation. For instance, *Radžiūna* (Ukm D) derives from the oikonym *Radžiūnai* through the inflexion *-a*. The potamonym follows the derivational pattern *Radžiūnai* (oikonym) + inflexion *-a* → stream associated with the settlement *Radžiūnai* → *Radžiūna*. A more complex derivational pattern is observed in *Nabutiškė* (Ukm D, Šr D), which appears to be a Slavicised form incorporating the prefix *na-*, which conveys the meaning of direction, proximity, or spatial orientation. This suggests that the name marks the stream's course in relation to a settlement. The *-butiškė* component derives from the oikonym *Butiškiai*, the village through which the stream passes, utilising the inflexion *-ė*. The motivation likely stems from the stream's direct geographical association with *Butiškiai*. The formation of the potamonym is Pref *Na-* + *Butiškiai* (oikonym) + *f sg* inflexion *-ė* → the stream flowing in the direction of/past *Butiškiai* → *Nabutiškė*.

The potamonyms of this category emphasise geographical association, reinforce local identity, and show how linguistic structures interact with settlement geography in hydronym formation.

2.2. The LANDSCAPE FEATURE FOR RIVER sub-model includes potamonyms motivated by prominent features in the surrounding landscape, including swamps and meadows, or human-made structures like buildings and embankments. Here, the source domain of the potamonym is natural or artificial landscape objects. Several most telling examples can be pointed out. The first is *Balina* (Trak D), which names the stream and the surrounding areas, as evidenced by historical sources (e.g., the 1872 map [cf. 33]), which have likely been swampy for an extended period. This environmental context provides critical clues about the origin of the stream's name. The potamonym *Balina* appears to derive from Lith *balà*, *balẽ*, *balė* 'a viscous place, usually with standing water in it; marsh, swamp' [24; cf.

25, 314–320; 50, 56–57]. The addition of Lith Suf *-ina*, historically used to form adjectives, nouns, and proper names (especially hydronyms) [30, 239–243], transforms the root into a name signifying a specific feature or quality. This derivation emphasises geographical and environmental characteristics of the stream, specifically its location in a swampy area. *Balina* reflects a metonymic transposition, in which a prominent feature of the landscape (swampy terrain) is extended to name the river flowing through it. This model encapsulates the associative logic of hydronym formation: Lith *balà*, *balẽ*, *balė* + Suf *-ina* → the stream in a swampy area → *Balina*.

Another example is *Groblė* (Ukm D), which derives from Lith *gróblis, grõblius* 'embankment, roadbed,' cf. **groblia*, which is comparable to Pol *grobla* 'dam' [27, 311]. The name appears to be motivated by the concept of an embankment or dam. This interpretation aligns with the river's straightened course and its surroundings: it flows through a deep, straightened riverbed, a feature reminiscent of a constructed embankment, and, in its lower reaches, is crossed by a road, further evoking the image of a dam or a roadbed. Thus, the potamonym *Groblė* emphasises the relationship between the river and the surrounding terrain. The derivation pattern is Lith *gróblis, grõblius* (or Pol *grobla*) + Lith *f sg* inflexion *-ė* → the embanked, dammed river → *Groblė*.

As the examples show, this metonymic model illustrates how both natural and human-made features shape potamonyms. Natural objects become cognitively and linguistically salient, reflecting ecological awareness and embedding local environmental knowledge in hydronyms, whereas artificial structures highlight the interaction between human activity and the landscape. This sub-model reveals that rivers are not named in isolation but are anchored in the surrounding environment, encoding both geographic context and cultural perception into the toponymic system.

2.3. AQUATIC FEATURE FOR RIVER is another metonymic naming model through which the potamonyms may also be formed. Under this model, rivers and streams are named after other water bodies (lakes or other rivers) with which they share hydrological, spatial, or conceptual connections. The source domain here is another aquatic feature, and the target domain is a river or a stream forming a metonymic link grounded in natural proximity, flow direction, shared origin, or confluence.

2.3.1. In the RIVER FOR RIVER sub-model, the rivers/streams either (a) *adopt the name of a larger river* they feed into, showing hydrological hierarchy, or (b) *lie near another river*, often sharing a valley or drainage basin, creating associated names.

The first derivational pattern can be illustrated by one of the most recent potamonyms, *Žalesà 2* (V D), first appearing on official maps just a year ago [cf. 47]. The potamonym consists of two components: *Žalesà* – the name of the superior river to which this stream is a tributary, and the numeral *2*[3]– a differentiating marker that distinguishes this tributary from the main river. The name *Žalesà 2* is motivated by its direct connection to the *Žalesà* river, with the name transferred from the larger watercourse to its tributary. The derivation process can be summarised as *Žalesà* (potamonym) + numeral *2* → the tributary stream of the *Žalesà* → *Žalesà 2*. This practice reinforces the hydrological and geographical link

3 The use of numerals in toponyms is a modern trend, typically used to distinguish among similar names (e.g., settlements, ponds, or lakes). While common for settlements and ponds since the nineteenth century [cf. 33; 46], the use of numerals gained prominence in official sources during the twentieth century [44, 915]. The use of numerals in river names is a much more recent practice. The numeral *2* in *Žalesà 2* serves exclusively as a formal identifier in official contexts, such as maps, municipal documents, and other administrative sources, and does not imply local oral use.

between the two watercourses, emphasising the tributary's dependence on and connection to the *Žalesà*. *Žalesà 2* is a clear example of modern naming conventions combining traditional toponymic inheritance with administrative differentiation.

Another name in this group is the stream *Latvẽlė* (V D), a diminutive form derived from *Lãtvė* through Lith DIM Suf *-elė*. Since both names share the same etymology and motivation, *Latvẽlė* was likely named by analogy, emphasising the difference in their size: *Lãtvė* (1.5 km) vs *Latvẽlė* (0.7 km). The Suf *-elė* highlights that *Latvẽlė* is the smaller of the two streams. The principle of name derivation by analogy suggests that *Lãtvė* served as the model for naming. The derivation of the potamonym can be presented as *Lãtvė* (potamonym) + DIM Suf *-elė* → the smaller stream in the vicinity of the *Lãtvė* → *Latvẽlė*. Thus, *Latvẽlė* is a diminutive form of *Lãtvė*, named due to its smaller size and close geographical proximity.

The RIVER FOR RIVER model shows a consistent metonymic strategy: tributaries and adjacent watercourses inherit, adapt, or mirror the names of larger rivers they connect to or lie close to. Diminutives, prefixes, and repeated names signal hierarchy, proximity, and functional relationships. These patterns reflect both natural river networks and cultural naming practices, helping people organise, understand, and communicate about hydrographic space.

2.3.2. The LAKE FOR RIVER model shows how rivers are named after nearby lakes or ponds, reflecting hydrological and spatial connections. The potamonyms motivated by lake names may be *source-oriented names*. These are the most common potamonyms that mark rivers that spring from lakes, such as *Beržuõlė* (El D), which names the stream that originates from the swampy northern shore of *Beržuõlis* lake (El D). The potamonym is a derivative of the limnonym *Beržuõlis*, formed by adding Lith Suf *-uolė*, which conveys the meaning of the external quality or relational attribute of the object it modifies [10]. In this context, the suffix signifies a relationship of origin or derivation, linking the stream directly to the lake as its source. The process of naming involves the metonymic transfer of the lake's name to the stream, signifying the stream as an extension or emanation of the lake: *Beržuõlis* (limnonym) + Suf *-uolė* → the stream from *Beržuõlis* lake → *Beržuõlė*. Thus, the potamonym directly reflects the stream's geographical and hydrological relationship with the lake, exemplifying a naming pattern that emphasises possessiveness and source association.

Some potamonyms are *pathway-oriented names* referring to rivers/streams that flow through or into a lake; e.g., *Birvos upelis* (Trak D), a small stream that drains into *Birvà* lake. *Birvos upelis* is a composite potamonym derived from two linguistic elements: the gen. case form of the limnonym *Birvà,* which indicates possession or association and the Lithuanian nomenclature term *upẽlis* 'a small river' [24]: *Birvà* (limnonym) + gen. case inflexion *-os* + *upẽlis* → a stream that flows and drains into *Birvà* lake → *Birvos upelis*. The potamonym reflects the metonymic naming model, which establishes a direct semantic and geographical connection between the lake and the stream, highlighting the idea of possessivity and environmental interdependence. The potamonym *Birvos upelis* implies that the stream flows near and into *Birvà* lake, making it an integral part of the lake's ecological and geographical domain. This situates the stream not only in its physical environment but also within a shared understanding of the landscape.

The third group of potamonyms derived from limnonyms are *vicinity-based names*. Such potamonyms are relatively rare in the corpus analysed and denote rivers/streams near but

not directly connected to a lake. An example of such potamonyms is *Lénupis* (Pn D, Ukm D), a compound name consisting of the root *Lén-* referring to the nearby lake *Lénas*, and Lith *upis* 'river, stream' [50, 186], directly indicating the type of the watercourse. Although *Lénas* lake is not the source of *Lénupis* and lies approximately 3 km east of the stream, the stream's proximity to the lake is the primary motivation for its naming. The derivation of the potamonym is *Lénas* (limnonym) + *upis* → the stream in the vicinity of *Lénas* lake → *Lénupis*. Here, *Lénupis* reflects a geographical association rather than a hydrological dependency. Hence, the LAKE FOR RIVER model highlights how local communities conceptualise rivers and lakes as interconnected aquatic landscapes.

Overall, the PLACE FOR RIVER model shows how rivers or streams are named after visible, functional, or culturally important landscape features. Settlement- and water-based names dominate, reflecting the role of rivers in ecological and social space. These potamonyms serve both as practical guides and as records of how people historically engaged with their environment.

3. PERSON FOR RIVER MODEL

This metonymic naming model includes potamonyms that derive from anthroponyms or other anthropocentric associations, reflecting how human presence and collective memory shape toponymic practice. These potamonyms frequently commemorate locally significant individuals, thereby embedding human identity into the landscape and, far from being arbitrary, preserving memory, history, and cultural significance by linking rivers/streams to notable figures, landowners, or community leaders [cf. 4; 13; 14; 15; 42; 45; 48]. Two main patterns of potamonym derivation occur under this metonymic model.

3.1. *Affixation of personal names*. This group includes potamonyms formed by adding Lithuanian suffixes to anthroponyms. These morphological changes often obscure the original name by creating a localised or diminutive form. The result blends personal commemoration with linguistic adaptation reflecting a long-standing or culturally assimilated naming process, as in the potamonym *Adinčiavà* (Al D, Prn D, Trak D), which is of anthroponymic origin [cf. 25, 13; 50, 35]. It is derived by employing Lith Suf *-ava*[4] from Lith PN *Adiñčius* [cf. 31], which is comparable to surnames such as Pol *Odyniec* [cf. 39 VII, 29], Rus *Одинцов* [48, 163], Bel *Адзінец, Адынец,* and Rus *Одинец* [cf. 7, 17], all of which are cognates and share a common etymological root. The potamonym *Adinčiavà* or the personal name *Adiñčius* also appears to have influenced local toponyms, such as the village name *Adinčavà* (Trak D) and the meadow name *Adiñčių pieva* (Al D). This potamonym exemplifies the metonymic transposition: Lith PN *Adiñčius* + Suf *–ava* → the river associated with/flowing through the lands belonging to *Adiñčius* (family) → *Adinčiavà*. In this naming pattern, a personal name is transferred to a natural feature, reflecting either a symbolic or practical relationship rooted in historical land ownership or use. *Adiñčius* likely marked identity or possession, indicating that the river flowed through lands associated with an individual or family.

3.2. *Compounds combining a personal name with a hydronymic term*. These potamonyms consist of an anthroponym and an appellative, namely, Lith *upė* or *upis* 'river'. These names combine identification and classification, linking a specific human figure to a hydrological term and thus encoding both social memory and geographical identity within a single

4 In the Lithuanian language, Suf *-ava* is used to derive proper names, especially place names [cf. 30, 381].

name, e.g., the compound potamonym *Õnupis* (Trak D). This potamonym consists of two elements: *On-*, which is linked to Lith PN *Ona* [50, 234], and *upìs*. The derivation can be expressed as Lith PN *Ona* + *upìs* → the stream associated with *Ona* → *Õnupis*. The stream is a small watercourse flowing through a forest near a single settlement. Given the absence of other notable geographical features, it is plausible that the name of the stream originated from an association with an individual named *Ona*, possibly an early inhabitant or landowner of the area. This personal connection served as the motivation for the potamonym.

In sum, the PERSON FOR RIVER model shows how rivers in Vilnius County and beyond carry the memory of individuals, linking language, landscape, and social history. These names commemorate founders, landowners, or notable figures, marking ownership, presence, or events, and embedding personal and communal stories into the environment. By humanising the landscape, this model preserves local identity and cultural memory through hydronyms.

FINAL REMARKS AND CONCLUSIONS

All three major metonymic naming models identified in the study show how metonymic thinking shapes potamonymic practice by linking the name of a river or a stream to something directly connected to or significant in its surroundings, be it a place, a salient feature, or a person. In many cases, metonymic naming involves analogy-based transposition, i.e., the transfer of a name from one toponymic domain to another, such as the transfer of an oikonym to a potamonym, as in *Nabutiškė* (← *Butiškiai*), or the association of a geographical feature with the name of a neighbouring river or stream, as in *Balina* (← Lith *balà*, *balẽ*, *balė* 'swamp, marsh') or *Groblė* (← Lith *gróblis, grõblius* 'embankment, roadbed').

Following Reszegi [35] and Sjöblom [37], primary and secondary metonymic transpositions can be distinguished. In the former case, potamonyms arise from direct associations, such as place → river or salient feature → river. In the latter case, names originate from extended analogical transfers within a broader conceptual network. Such processes may lead to the parallel functioning of identical names for different geographical objects, not as a result of semantic change but through context-based extension of naming patterns, as seen in the case of the potamonym *Adinčiavà* and the oikonym *Adinčavà*. These cases may create challenges for lexicographic and geolinguistic description, as the same name can denote different entities within the same geographical area.

From a cognitive and cultural perspective, the findings show that potamonyms function as cognitive and cultural constructs, reflecting how people perceive and structure their environment. They also serve as 'cultural texts' that preserve traces of historical land use, settlement development, and local ecological knowledge. Through these names, it is possible to reconstruct how communities conceptualised space, attributed significance to landscape features, and incorporated them into collective memory. In this sense, rivers and streams are not only physical entities but also conceptual anchors of cultural geography.

In conclusion, Lithuanian potamonyms reveal three recurrent metonymic models through which language encodes spatial contiguity, perceptual salience, and anthropocentric orientation. The analysis also demonstrates that analogy-based transpositions constitute a productive mechanism of name formation, contributing to the complex network of relationships within Lithuanian potamonymy. Metonymic naming is thus not only a linguistic phenomenon but also a window into human cognition and cultural engagement with the landscape.

ABBREVIATIONS

Al – Alytus; An – Anykščiai; Bel – Belarusian; D – district; DIM – diminutive; El – Elektrėnai ; *f* – feminine; gen. – genitive; Indo-Eur – Indo-European; *m* – masculine; Lith – Lithuanian; *pl* – plural; Mlt – Molėtai; Pol – Polish; Pn – Panevėžys; PN – personal name; Pref – prefix; Prn – Prienai; Rus – Russian; *sg* – singular; Slav – Slavic; Suf – suffix; Šlčn – Šalčininkai; Šr – Širvintos; Švnč – Švenčionys; Trak – Trakai; Ukm – Ukmergė; V – Vilnius; VC – Vilnius City municipality; Vrn – Varėna.

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Metonimija ir metoniminės transpozicijos oficialiai funkcionuojančiuose Vilniaus apskrities upėvardžiuose: kognityviniai modeliai ir kultūrinės refleksijos

Santrauka

Straipsnyje nagrinėjami kognityviniai ir kultūriniai metoniminio įvardijimo lietuvių potamonimijoje aspektai, daugiausia dėmesio skiriant 404 oficialiai funkcionuojantiems upėvardžiams Vilniaus apskrityje, iš kurių 212 turi metoniminę motyvaciją. Remiantis kognityvine lingvistika ir šiuolaikine onomastikos teorija, tyrime atskleidžiama, kaip metoniminis mąstymas, suprantamas kaip esminis žmogaus pažinimo mechanizmas, struktūrizuoja upėvardžius toponiminiame kraštovaizdyje. Tyrimo metu buvo identifikuoti ir susisteminti trys pagrindiniai metoniminiai modeliai, kuriais grindžiama upėvardžių motyvacija: *vieta vietoj upės*, pagrįstas erdviniu gretimumu ir geografiniu ryšiu; *požymis vietoj upės*, kai upėvardžiai yra kilę iš netoliese esančių miškų, reljefo formų ar kitų svarbių aplinkos elementų; ir *asmuo vietoj upės*, pagal kurį į upėvardį yra perkeliami antroponimai arba antropocentriniai aspektai. Išsamiai išnagrinėjus pirminius ir antrinius metoniminius perkėlimus, buvo atskleista, kaip yra formuojama kalbinė kategorizacija. Ypatingas dėmesys skiriamas analogijomis pagrįstiems įvardijimo procesams, kai upėvardžiai randasi iš kaimyninių gyvenviečių, gamtos objektų ar socialinių-kultūrinių orientyrų pavadinimų. Šie procesai dažnai lemia toponimų reikšmių plėtrą ir paralelinį jų funkcionavimą, o ne tradicine prasme suprantamą semantinę kaitą. Tyrimo rezultatai rodo, kad lietuvių upėvardžiai funkcionuoja ne tik kaip „geografinės etiketės“, bet ir kaip kognityviniai bei kultūriniai konstruktai, atspindintys erdvinę organizaciją, ekologinį sąmoningumą ir kraštovaizdyje įtvirtintą kolektyvinę atmintį.
Reikšminiai žodžiai: metonimija, potamonimai, hidronimija, kognityvinė lingvistika, toponimija