Title: Frisco: San Francisco or Ivano-Frankovsk? Informal Toponyms in Post-Soviet Russian

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In colloquial speech of the Soviet era only official names of cities and towns were used in formal language. The few exceptions that existed were mostly abridged original or "archaic" pre-Soviet names, e.g. "Piter" for Leningrad and "Koenig" for Kaliningrad. In the 90-s, however, many informal toponyms became a part of the mainstream language and are common in the speech of the young generation. These names are constructed on the basis of various word-formational patterns such as an abbreviation of the official name (sometimes with an added suffix), an equivocal approximation (often based on obscene language), an acronym, etc. Generally speaking, in the Soviet era toponyms fell outside of the informal speech realm but in the past couple of decades they became an object of linguistic metamorphosis. The paper will focus on the sociolinguistic aspect of this phenomenon as a reflection of transformational processes in the Russian language during the transition from Soviet to Post-Soviet discourse. The paper will also discuss particular derivational patterns of informal toponyms.

An informal toponym is born out of deconstruction of the inner form of the official toponym. Such processes as abbreviation, stress shift, anagrams make familiar names sound whimsical and create a wide range of associations.

The paper is based on the original database of several thousand informal toponyms which follow more than thirty derivational patterns. The most productive patterns are: adding the -ik suffix to the reduced original name (e.g. "Vladik" for Vladivostok, "Yarik" for Yaroslavl), abbreviation ("STR" for Sterlitamak, "PTZ" for Petrozavodsk), substituting one of the stem morphemes by an obscene one ("Krasnosransk" for Krasnoyarsk, "Izzhopsk" for Izhevsk), etc. The paper will demonstrate that in each particular case the choice of the derivational pattern depends on morphological and/or phonetic characteristics of a toponym. For example, the –ik forms are usually based on three- or four- syllabic masculine nouns with an ultimate or penultimate stress.