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An overview of the history of ideologically motivated place-name changes in Hungary

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Abstract: The history of ideologically motivated place-name changes in Hungary can be traced back almost two centuries and has been influenced by a number of factors, including patriotic movements, legal acts and government policies. Place names have been changed intermittently, and these changes could be explicitly linked

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to political courses. This paper identifies and describes seven distinct periods in the last two hundred years during which ideologically motivated place-name changes were particularly intense. It is evident that political power has played a dominant role in the decision-making process regarding official names, especially those for public places, throughout these periods. However, the alternative use of names by local communities in informal communication and the occasional struggle to retain familiar names could also be detected. The paper presents a number of illustrative examples to support the above observations.

Keywords: Place names, politics of naming, renaming, ideological motivation, Hungary.

Aperçu de l'histoire des changements de noms de lieux motivés par l'idéologie en Hongrie

Résumé : L'histoire des changements de noms de lieux à motivation idéologique en Hongrie remonte à près de deux siècles et a été influencée par un certain nombre de facteurs, notamment des mouvements patriotiques, des actes juridiques et des politiques gouvernementales. Les noms de lieux ont été modifiés par intermittence, et ces changements ont pu être explicitement liés à des changements politiques. Cet article identifie et décrit sept périodes distinctes au cours des deux derniers siècles pendant lesquelles les changements de noms de lieux pour des raisons idéologiques ont été particulièrement intenses. Il est évident que le pouvoir politique a joué un rôle dominant dans le processus de prise de décision concernant les noms officiels, en particulier ceux des lieux publics, tout au long de ces périodes. Cependant, l'utilisation alternative des noms par les communautés locales dans la communication informelle et la lutte occasionnelle pour conserver des noms familiers ont également pu être détectées. Le document présente un certain nombre d'exemples illustratifs pour étayer les observations ci-dessus.

Mots-clés : Noms de lieux, politique de dénomination, renommage, motivation idéologique, Hongrie.

Ein Überblick über die Geschichte der ideologisch motivierten Ortsnamensänderungen in Ungarn

Zusammenfassung: Die Geschichte der ideologisch motivierten Änderung von Ortsnamen in Ungarn reicht fast zwei Jahrhunderte zurück und wurde von einer Reihe von Faktoren beeinflusst, darunter patriotischen Bewegungen, Rechtsakten und Regierungspolitik. Die Ortsnamen wurden in unregelmäßigen Abständen geändert, und diese Änderungen können explizit mit politischen Richtungen in Verbindung gebracht werden. In diesem Beitrag werden sieben Perioden der letzten zweihundert Jahre betrachtet und beschrieben, in denen ideologisch motivierte Ortsnamensänderungen besonders intensiv waren. Es wird deutlich, dass in diesen Perioden die politische Macht eine dominierende Rolle bei der Entscheidung über amtliche Namen, insbesondere für öffentliche Orte, gespielt hat. Es wird jedoch auch die alternative Verwendung von Namen durch lokale Gemeinschaften in der informellen Kommunikation und der gelegentliche Kampf um die Beibehaltung vertrauter Namen festgestellt. Der Artikel enthält eine Reihe von Beispielen, die diese Beobachtungen untermauern.

Schlüsselbegriffe: Ortsnamen, Namenpolitik, Umbenennung, ideologische Motivation, Ungarn.

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1. Introduction[1]

In the early 1990s, the critical turn in the social sciences gave rise to the emergence of Critical Toponomastics as a subfield of place-name studies. In contrast to earlier approaches to the study of place names, which concentrated on the etymology, categorisation and linguistic description of name forms, the main innovation of Critical Toponomastics is to focus on place naming rather than on place names. Consequently, the exploration of the political backgrounds of place naming is a significant research topic within the field of Critical Toponomastics (cf. Rose-Redwood et al. 2010, 2018). As Maoz Azaryahu (2011: 28) states, "Underlying most critical analyses of place naming is an understanding that the (re)writing of the toponymic landscape demonstrates the connections between cultural and political processes."

In Critical Toponomastics, the practice of naming and renaming places is regarded as a strategic tool often used by rulers "to achieve legitimacy for their social, political, and national objectives" (Lim & Perono Cacciafoco 2021: 1). The set of toponyms is seen as a reflection of the political values espoused by the government in power. Consequently, place names are susceptible to change when a new political authority comes to power. In this view, place (re)naming is often a performative act with political overtones, aimed at "securing the right to rule […], reconstructing former glories, ridding the country of its dark past, or (re)building the real or imagined nation" (Lim & Perono Cacciafoco 2021: 5). Critical toponymists draw attention to the significant role of place naming in construing landscapes and shaping worldviews alongside political ideologies, and describe place (re)naming as a process through which power is inscribed onto the landscape or cityscape (Williamson 2023: 3, 4, 9). The politics of street naming and its implications is a particularly popular topic in Critical Toponomastics (e.g., David 2013; Erőss 2017; Bitušíková 2022; Felecan 2023).

The regulation of the use of place names can easily become imbued with language ideologies. Since the middle of the 19th century, some of these ideologies have exerted a profound influence on official place names in Hungary. The most influential language ideologies were linguistic majoritarianism (the belief that the linguistic majority within a political unit is entitled to additional language rights compared to the minority), linguistic etatism (the belief that state borders should coincide with ethnic and linguistic borders), linguistic patriotism (the belief that using certain linguistic forms is consistent with the interests of the nation, while using others is not), and linguistic onoetatism (the

[1] This study is the revised version of the conference paper "An overview of the history of conceptual place-name changes in Hungary", presented at the conference "Naming the Community", organised by the Institute of Ethnology and the Czech Language Institute, Czech Academy of Sciences, in Prague, Czech Republic, on May 16th and 17th, 2024.

belief that the linguistic form of geographical names should be consistent with the language of the ethnic group responsible for organising the state). In more recent times, the influence of other language ideologies has become apparent. These include linguistic onoidentism (the belief that the linguistic form of geographical names should be consistent with the linguistic identity of the indigenous inhabitants of the area) and linguistic plurionomism (the belief that settlements and geographical objects in multilingual regions can have more than one [official] name) (Lanstyák 2017: 28, 21, 32, 31, 32, 34).

Furthermore, Kudriavtseva (2020: 5–6) identifies toponymic ideologies that influence the choice of place names, for instance, by members of naming commissions. Influential toponymic ideologies include iconisation (the belief that toponyms are iconic representations of history and indexes of personal, group or local identities), fractal recursivity (the phenomenon that an opposition between large groups of toponyms is reproduced in any subgroups of these place names, e.g., the "ours vs foreign" dichotomy), and erasure (the process by which unappreciated historical periods are rendered invisible). As in many post-socialist countries, all three toponymic ideologies have had a significant impact on the recent (re)naming of places in Hungary.

2. Periods of ideologically motivated place-name changes in Hungary

The history of ideologically motivated place-name changes in Hungary began in the early decades of the 19th century and can be partitioned into seven periods of intensified activity. These periods are the Reform Era (1825–1848), the Bach Era (1851–1859), the Monarchy Era (1867–1918), the Period of the Socialist Federative Republic of Councils in Hungary (1919), the Horthy Era and the Second World War (1920–1945), the Socialist Era (1949–1989), and the Era after the Change of Regime (1990 to the present). While the primary focus of this paper is on the trends in place-name changes that have occurred in the 20th and 21st centuries, a brief overview of the relevant events in the 19th century is necessary to contextualise the later changes.

The present paper sets out to undertake a qualitative analysis of ideologically motivated changes to place names in Hungary. Each of the seven periods mentioned above is described by means of a series of illustrative examples representing the main features of toponymic changes in the given period. The illustrative examples are drawn from a dataset of more than a thousand place names compiled by the authors using contemporary gazetteers, maps, news articles and place-name dictionaries (see Primary sources). In addition, relevant scholarly literature was consulted (see especially T. Somogyi 2009; Palonen 2018; Baroch 2019; Szívós 2021). With the exception of the final two periods, the topic is presented with respect to the historical borders of Hungary, taking into account the contemporary boundaries of the country in each historical period. The last two periods will be discussed in relation to the present context.

2.1. The Reform Era (1825–1848)

Throughout its history, Hungary has been a country of many nationalities, where bi- and multilingualism in place names were a natural phenomenon. In the first third of the 19th century, for example, the towns of Buda and Pest were inhabited mainly by Germans, and to a much lesser extent by Serbs and Hungarians. The towns began to develop rapidly and became the centre of the country. Not only did the proportion of the Hungarians increase, but many national institutions (museums, theatres, publishing houses, etc.) were established there. In the spirit of national revival, a mass renaming took place under the leadership of the renowned philologist Gábor Döbrentei (1785–1851): Hungarian names were given to plots of land, fields and vineyards on the outskirts of Pest and Buda that had previously borne German names.

The "christening ceremony" took place on 19th June 1847, in the presence of Gábor Döbrentei. In total, 56 toponyms were changed. The recommended Hungarian place names were created through a variety of methods, including the revival of medieval names, e.g., *Sasad* (cf. the name of a nearby medieval village; FNESz 2: 135, entry *Mezősas*), *Kelenföld* (from Middle High German *grīn* 'rumbling', 'waterfall', cf. the often flooding stream known as *Ördögárok* 'devil's ditch'; FNESz 1: 708, entry *Kelenföld*), *Kőér* (from *kő* 'stone' and *ér* 'brook'; FNESz 1: 790, entry *Kőérberek*); word-for-word translation, e.g., *Adlerberg* > *Sashegy* ('eagle hill'; FNESz 2: 457), *Paulithal* > *Pálvölgy* ('Paul's valley'), *Wolfswiesen* > *Farkasrét* ('wolf meadow'; FNESz 1: 443), *Teufelsgraben* > *Ördögárok* ('devil's ditch'; FNESz 2: 297); partial translation, e.g., *Grüngraben* ('green ditch') > *Zöldmál* ('green southern slope'; FNESz 2: 810); the adoption of similar-sounding words, e.g., *Krutzenwinkel* > *Kurucles* ('lurking place of the Kuruc people', led by Prince Francis II Rákóczi, the anti-Habsburg freedom fighter, when they attacked Buda, a town loyal to the Habsburg emperor; FNESz 1: 816); and the introduction of innovations without antecedents, e.g., *Csillebérc* (formerly *Csiki-hegy*, misspelt as *Berg Csile* > *Csillebérc*; FNESz 1: 333), *Rézmál* (from *rez* 'ridge' and *mál* 'southern hillside'; FNESz 2: 414), *Vérhalom* (from *vér* 'blood', and *halom* 'hill'; István Hédervári Kont was buried there in 1393, as was László Hunyadi on a temporary basis in 1457; FNESz 2: 753).

This was the first time in the history of the country that place names had been changed for ideological reasons. These changes served the ideology of the rise of the national language and culture and had nothing to do with the actual use of toponyms. The cultural embeddedness of the proposed names and the relationship between the landmark and its name were marginalised. However, we are not aware of any social conflict that has arisen from these name changes.

2.2. The Bach Era (1851–1859)

During the period known as the Bach Era – named after Alexander Bach, the Austrian Minister of the Interior at the time – the Habsburgs sought to incorporate Hungary into the Empire through centralisation. The German-speaking central administration endeavoured to Germanise a number of Hungarian settlement names. However, some of the place names created by German officials with limited knowledge of Hungarian were somewhat comical. For example, the name of the settlement of *Böszörmény*, which was derived from an old Hungarian word for 'Ishmaelites' (i.e., Muslims who lived in the Kingdom of Hungary in the 10th–13th centuries; FNESz 1: 558, entry *Hajdúböszörmény*), was translated into German as *Wütender Armenier* ('angry Armenian', cf. Hungarian *bősz* 'angry' and *örmény* 'Armenian'). Another confusing example is the word-for-word translation of *Törökszentmiklós* into *Türkischer Heiliger Nikolaus* ('Turkish Saint Nicholas'). In fact, the settlement was named after the patron saint of its church and the distinctive addition is a reminder that the settlement was occupied by the Turks between 1552 and 1685) (FNESz 2: 677; Kálmán 1989: 141). These mistranslated German settlement names had no real significance or impact, but they certainly reflect that the issue of place naming had entered the political arena.

2.3. The Monarchy Era (1867–1918)

Following the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, which made the Kingdom of Hungary a sovereign entity within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the use of Hungarian became universal at all levels of public administration in Hungary. Initially, settlements were given Hungarian(-sounding) names at lower administrative levels; however, this process was subsequently made national by law. The legislation that came into force in 1898 (Act IV on the names of villages and other place names) required the standardisation (in fact, the re-registration) of settlement names. The text of the relevant paragraph states that the name for each settlement must be properly unique and that homonyms and synonyms should be avoided. In practice, thousands of settlement names were changed into Hungarian at that time, even if they were unique in the country (Mező 1982: 45–47).

The formation of new Hungarian(-sounding) names involved a number of processes, including translation (or the addition of a Hungarian constituent to a translated stem), e.g., 1898: *Orechó* > 1904: *Diósfalu* ('walnut village', Trencsén County), 1898: *Vodnik* > 1909: *Vizes* ('watery', Krassó-Szörény County), 1898: *Vracsevgáj* > 1909: *Varázsliget* ('magic grove', Temes County), 1898: *Valealunga* > 1909: (Béga)*hosszúpatak* ('long brook', Krassó-Szörény County), 1898: *Vránje* > 1905: *Varjad* ('place with crows', Trencsén County); phonetic modification, e.g., 1898: *Grid* > 1911: *Göröd* (Fogaras County), 1898: *Szmolnik* > 1903: (Új)*szomolnok* (Zemplén County), 1898: *Vrászló*> 1908: *Varászló* (Somogy

County); and the invention of entirely new names, e.g., 1898: *Karavukova* > 1903: *Bácsordas* ('the settlement called *Ordas* in the region Bácska', Bács-Bodrog County), 1898: *Ochtina* > 1905: *Martonháza* ('Martin's home', Gömör és Kis-Hont County); 1898: *Szkerisóra* > 1909: *Aranyosfő* ('the source of the river Aranyos', Torda-Aranyos County); 1898: *Vorocsó* > 1904: *Kapuszög* ('nail of the gate', Ung County) (Mező 1982: 196, 196, 199, 250, 196, 166, 92, 193, 252, 207, 205, 196; 1999: 286, 417, 419, 406, 419, 128, 425, entry *Zemplén-Szomolnok*, 419, 171, 278, 369, 418).

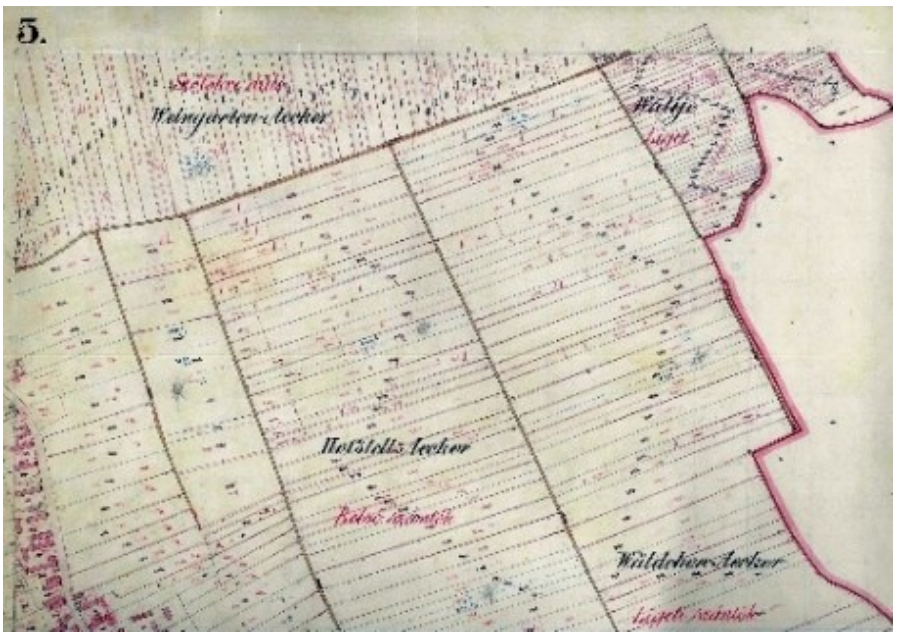
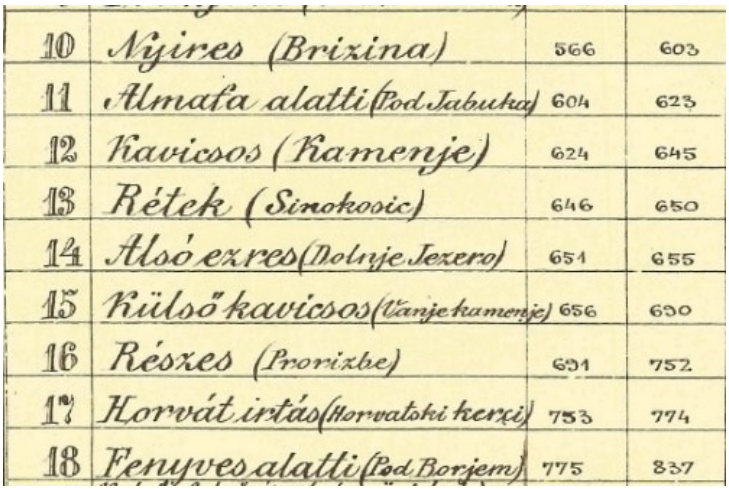


Figure 1: Replacing German microtoponyms with Hungarian names on the cadastral map of Szajk, 1901 (MCL)

Some of the name changes had direct political implications. The Hungarian names *Jármos*, *Árkosfalu* or *Árokháza* were proposed to the local population for the village known as 1898: *Járek* (Bács-Bodrog County) in Vojvodina (present-day *Бачки Јарак / Bački Jarak*, Serbia). As these names were rejected, the Minister of the Interior proclaimed the name 1904: *Tiszaistvánfalva* for the village, after the Prime Minister in power at that time (Mező 1982: 207; Mező 1999: 162). At the turn of the century, the concept of promoting Hungarian names was also considered applicable to microtoponyms, both on maps and in name lists. In 1904, a central land survey decree stipulated that if the name of a land plot could be translated into Hungarian, then it had to be translated. Map naming, which had previously been fairly tolerant of minority names, began to adopt locally unknown names, often based on inaccurate translations: *Stockweingärten* ('stumpy vineyard') > *Botos* ('equipped with sticks', *bot* 'stick' and the suffix *-s*,

Keszőhidegkút,[2] Tolna County), *Hochgipfel* (‘high peak’) > *Csucsos* (‘peaked’, Keszőhidegkút, Tolna County), *Kod hraszta* (‘by the oak’) > *A tölgynél* (‘at the oak’, Kökény, Baranya County), *Meszárszki put* (‘mass way’) > *Mészáros út* (‘butcher’s way’, Kökény, Baranya County) (Mikesy 2022: 17).



10	Nyires (Brizina)	566	603
11	Almafa alatti (Pod Jabuka)	604	623
12	Kavicsos (Kamenje)	624	645
13	Rétek (Sirokosic)	646	650
14	Alsó ezres (Dolnje Jezero)	651	655
15	Külső kavicsos (Vanje kamenje)	656	690
16	Részes (Prorizbe)	691	752
17	Horvát irtás (Horvatski kerci)	753	774
18	Fenyves alatti (Pod Borjem)	775	837

Figure 2: Hungarian and Croatian names in the annex to the cadastral map of Felsőcsatár, 1913 (MCL)

2.4. The Period of the Socialist Federative Republic of Councils in Hungary (1919)

In 1919, the Hungarian Communist Party began to name places after individuals associated with its ideology. Examples include *Marxfalva* (‘Marx’s village’, present-day *Pestszentimre,* see below) and *Leninváros* (‘Lenin’s town’, present-day *Pestszenterzsébet,* see below). However, these settlement names were short-lived and disappeared with the fall of the Hungarian Soviet Republic (Mező 1982: 274).

2.5. The Horthy Era and the Second World War (1920–1945)

In Hungarian history, the period between 1920 and 1944 is known as the Horthy Era, named after Miklós Horthy, Regent of Hungary, who was the political leader of the country at the time. During this period, the implementation of the concept of the Christian nation state was an important political aspiration in Hungary. This ideological content motivated a number of name changes, e.g., 1870: *Erzsébetfalva* (named in honour of Elisabeth, Queen of Hungary between 1854 and 1898) > 1932: *Pestszenterzsébet* (the reference was changed to Saint Elizabeth of Hungary; FNESz 2: 339, entry *Pestszenterzsébet*),[3] 1877:

[2] In the case of microtoponyms, the name of the settlement to which the indicated geographical object belonged is also given in parentheses.

[3] The year in front of the name indicates the date of the record.

Soroksárpéteri (the settlement called *Péteri* near the village of Soroksár) > 1931: *Pestszentimre* (the reference was changed to Saint Emeric of Hungary on the 900th anniversary of his death; FNESz 2: 339, entry *Pestszentimre*). Political loyalty was also expressed, e.g., 1222/1550: *Szomolya* (derived from a personal name; FNESz 2: 592) > 1937: *Gömbösfalva* (the reference was changed to commemorate Gyula Gömbös, Prime Minister of Hungary between 1932 and 1936). The adoption of these ideologically motivated names was frequently initiated at the local level, rather than being requested by higher authorities.

The only instance of a top-down change of a place name during this period was motivated by anti-Semitic sentiment. The village formerly known as 1284: *Zsidó* (cf. Hun *zsidó* 'Jewish') was indeed compelled to adopt the name 1943: *Vácegres* (the settlement is located near the town of Vác and was renamed after its stream called *Egres* ['lined with alder trees']; FNESz 2: 715). The name that was changed originated from a personal name and had no connection with Jewish traditions or the origin of the population of the settlement.

Ideological content, first and foremost loyalty to the dominant political force, was most often expressed through the names of public spaces: streets, squares, bridges, public buildings. In Budapest, for instance, there was *Horthy Miklós híd* ('Miklós Horthy Bridge'), *Horthy Miklós tér* ('Miklós Horthy Square'), *Ferenc József híd* ('Franz Joseph Bridge'), *Mussolini tér* ('Mussolini Square'), *Hitler tér* ('Hitler Square'). Probably all major cities had these "politically motivated" names for public places: for example, one of the main squares in Kolozsvár / Cluj-Napoca (Romania) and in Szabadka / Subotica (Serbia) was named after Hitler. The governor's name became the source of dozens of place names throughout the country, e.g., *Horthyliget* ('Horthy Grove', Tököl, Pest County; Hnt 1937: 258), *Horthy Miklós-dűlő* ('Miklós Horthy Field', Palánka / Бачка Паланка, Serbia; MTM 1940–1944), *Horthytelep* ('Horthy Quarter', Nemti, Nógrád County; Hnt 1937: 259), *Horthyvára* ('Horthy's Castle', present-day *Máriamajor* / *Степановићево*, Serbia; Wp 2024, entry *Máriamajor*).

Figure 3: *Mussolini tér* ('Mussolini Square') in Budapest in the 1930s (web1)

Another important political issue in Hungary at the time was irredentism. After the Treaty of Trianon came into force, the Hungarian names of settlements in the lost territories were often incorporated into the names of public places within the country. In many towns, street clusters were named after settlements with Hungarian populations situated beyond the newly defined borders of Hungary.

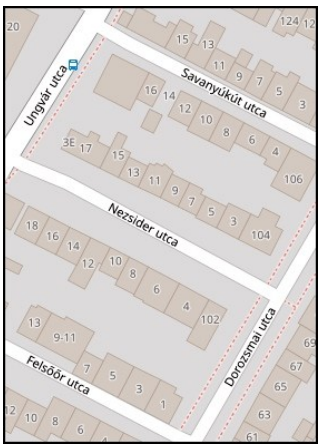


Figure 4: Cluster of streets bearing the Hungarian names of settlements beyond the 1921 borders in the 14th district of Budapest (OSM)

Figure 5: Cluster of streets bearing the Hungarian names of settlements beyond the 1921 borders in the town of Székesfehérvár (OSM)

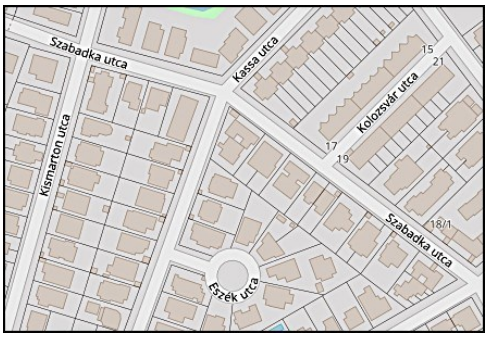


Figure 6: Cluster of streets bearing the Hungarian names of settlements beyond the 1921 borders in the town of Dunakeszi (OSM)

The case of the village of *Mözs* in Tolna County provides a clear illustration of the intertwined process of Magyarisation and the infiltration of ideological content into place names during this era. At that time, Mözs was entirely populated by German inhabitants. In the 1930s, the landscape underwent significant alterations, and the denotata of the traditional German names ceased to exist. This created an opportunity to replace the German names with Hungarian ones, motivated by contemporary political discourse and the politics of memory, with no regard for the language of the local

population, e.g., *Horthy Miklós-dűlő*[4] (cf. Miklós Horthy), *Ferenc József-dűlő* (cf. Franz Joseph), *Trianon-dűlő* (cf. Treaty of Trianon), *Ezeréves-dűlő* (cf. the thousand-year-old borders of Hungary) (MCL).

In the interwar period and during the Second World War, the adoption of Hungarian microtoponyms on maps became a common practice. Examples from the tourist map of the Pilis Mountains from the 1930s, a covert military map produced by the State Institute of Cartography, include translations of existing names, e.g., *Herrentisch* > *Urak asztala* ('table of the lords'), *Kapuzinerhaufen* > *Barát-halom* ('monk's hillock'), *Predigerstuhl* > *Prédikálószék* ('preacher's stool'), *Hrabina* > *Gyertyános* ('provided by hornbeams') and the introduction of (partly) new names, e.g., *Messelia* (unknown meaning) > *Mesélő-hegy* ('storytelling hill'), *Slanicka* ('salty place') > *Sós-hegy* ('salty hill') (Mikesy 2022: 17).

German, Romanian and Slavic (such as Slovak) (micro)toponyms were equally subject to this process of Magyarisation, e.g., 1872–1884: *Magura* > 1940–1944: *Magas t.* ('high peak', Lóznavölgy / Valea Loznei, Romania), 1872–1884: *Hradistya* > 1940–1944: *Várkút* ('castle well', Nógrád County) (Mező 1982: 208; Mező 1999: 152).

Figure 7: Romanian and Hungarian names for the same topographical feature on military topographic maps (a: 1872–1884; b: 1940–1944)

Figure 8: Slovak and Hungarian names for the same settlement on military topographic maps (a: 1872–1884; b: 1940–1944)

In the context of the Second World War, the adoption of Hungarian microtoponyms on maps was promptly implemented in territories under occupation. To illustrate, all Serbian and German names in South Vojvodina between Palánka / Бачка Паланка (Serbia) and Dunagálos / Гложан (Serbia) were removed from the maps. A limited number of these names were translated, e.g., *Saliter Äcker* > *Salétromos szántók* ('saltpetre ploughlands', Palánka), *Jabukovac* > *Almás* ('provided with apple trees', Palánka), *Ziegelofen*> *Téglavető földek* ('mud-brick fields', Dunagálos), *Gläserner Berg* > *Üveges hegy* ('glass-blower's hill', Dunagálos); but for the most part new names were used, many of which were ideologically motivated and commemorated Hungarian historical figures, e.g., in Dunacséb / Челарево (Serbia): *Mátyás király-dűlő* (cf. King Matthias Corvinus), *Szent Erzsébet-dűlő* (cf. Saint Elizabeth of Hungary), *Szent István-dűlő* (cf. Saint Stephen of Hungary), *Széchenyi István-dűlő* (cf. István Széchenyi) (Mikesy 2022: 17–18).

[4] The Hungarian term *dűlő* denotes a distinct part of the non-built-up area of a settlement, situated between two roads or paths, and characterised by soil types that are often similar. These plots of land are typically identified by toponyms (ÉKsz 238).

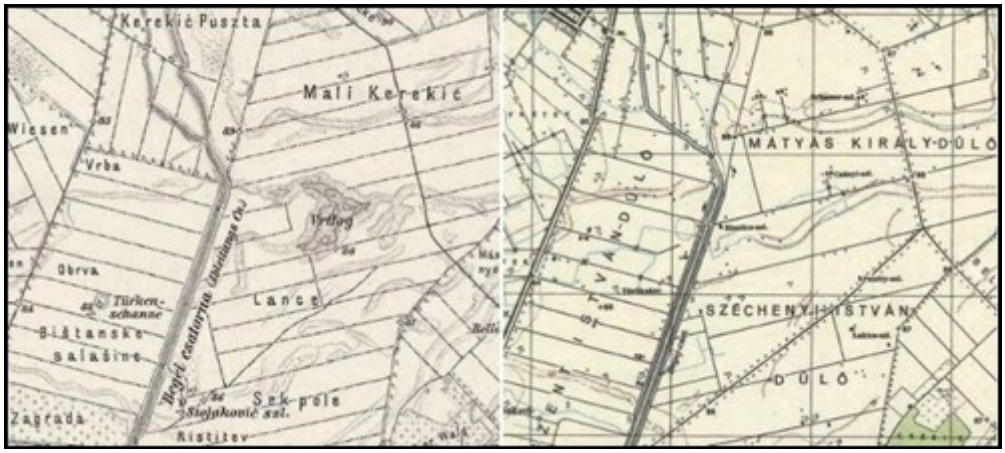


Figure 9: Map extracts of the same area of Palánka / Бачка Паланка and Dunacséb / *Челарево* (Serbia) on military topographic map in 1872–1884 and 1940–1944 (AT)

As the front was approaching, the field survey in the Eastern Carpathians was conducted with haste. The nomenclature of the surveyed topographic features was compiled at the headquarters in Budapest, entirely independently of the fieldwork. In providing Hungarian equivalents, the officers concentrated on the colloquial meanings (as documented in dictionaries, e.g., *D. Corbului* 'raven hill' > *Hollóhegy* 'same', *Hrihorivka* 'Gregory's place' > *Gergely-tető* 'Gregory's peak') or the phonetic forms of the Romanian and Ruthenian names. Illustrative examples of the latter from the region east of Maramureş include *Picniata* > *Pincés t.*, *Pliski* > *Piliske*, *Ladescul* > *Lád köve*, *Scarisoara* > *Szekeres t.*, *Toroiaga* > *Toronyága*, *Vrf. Gogosia* > *Gőgös h.*, *Capu Mundului* > *Mondó feje* (Romanian) and *Berljaszka* > *Barlabérc, Bratkovszka* > *Barátka, Perechreszt* > *Pereskereszt, Vorozseszka* > *Varázsos* (Ruthenian) (MTM 1940–1944, map sections 4772, 4773, 4872 and 4873; cf. Mikesy 2019).

2.6. The Socialist Era (1949–1989)

During the socialist-communist era, political ideology exerted a significant influence on place names, particularly those of public spaces. The process of Magyarisation of place names was no longer a priority, yet there was no apparent demand for measures to counteract this earlier trend.

2.6.1. Settlement names

As far as the names of the settlements are concerned, there were some radical steps, but we cannot speak of systemic changes or a thorough toponymic cleansing. For example, the elements *herceg* ('prince'), *király* ('king'), *nemes* ('noble'), *püspök* ('bishop'), *szent* ('saint'), etc., or the name of the former aristocratic owner (e.g., the Esterházy, Koburg-Kohári, Mailáth families; Baron Dezső Prónay, the politician; Hermina, the owner's wife; cf.

FNESz. 1: 469, entry *Fertőd*; FNESz. 2: 251–252, entry *Nyárlőrinc*; FNESz. 2: 183, entry *Nagyér*; FNESz. 2: 627, entry *Tázlár*; FNESz. 1: 562, entry *Halásztelek*) were removed from many settlement names (see Table 1). However, the majority of settlement names with the same elements have been preserved in their previous form and have been left intact (for a more systematic approach in Croatia, see Brozović Rončević 2009: 122). In many instances, the motivation behind the name changes was not the intention of the state, but rather the overzealous attempts of the local population to please the political elite, to demonstrate loyalty, efficiency and "ideological commitment".

Table 1: Examples of changes of settlement names in the 1950s (Hnt 2003)

Former name	**New name**	**Date of change**
Hercegfalva	*Mezőfalva*	1951
Hercegtőttős	*Töttös*	1950
Kiskirályság	*Eperjes*	1954
Nemespátró	*Pátró*	1952
Nemespécsely	*Pécsely*	1950
Nemesrádó	*Rádó*	1952
Nemestördemic	*Badacsonytördemic*	1950
Püspökbogád	*Bogád*	1950
Püspökmárok	*Erdősmárok*	1950
Püspöknádasd	*Mecseknádasd*	1950
Püspökszenterzsébet	*Erzsébet*	1950
Eszterháza	*Fertőd*	1950
Kohányszentlőrinc	*Nyárlőrinc*	1950
Nagymailáth	*Nagyér*	1952
Prónayfalva	*Tázlár*	1947
Herminatelep	*Halásztelek*	1951

Only a few of the modified settlement names were rehabilitated in the following period.

The most notable political intervention in naming practices was undoubtedly the naming of two Hungarian industrial towns after symbolic Soviet personalities: Joseph Stalin and Vladimir Lenin (see Table 2; FNESz 1: 399, entry *Dunaújváros*; FNESz. 2: 27, entry *Leninváros*).

Table 2: Successive changes in the names of settlements in the second half of the 20th century

Former name	**Later name, date of change**	**Current name, date of change**
Dunapentele	*Sztálinváros* (1951)	*Dunaújváros* (1961)
Tiszaszederkény	*Leninváros* (1970!)	*Tiszaújváros* (1991)

For decades, an urban legend has persisted that the village of *Mátyásdomb*, founded in 1952, was named after the country's leader, Mátyás Rákosi. However, this explanation is most likely untrue, and there was no subsequent local demand to change the name. In general, the adaptation of

settlement names to contemporary political ideology was much more restrained in Hungary than in other Eastern Bloc countries.

2.6.2. Street names

In the case of public spaces, on the other hand, local authorities were given guidance on the need to adopt commemorative names for streets, squares and other public places. The practice of renaming was particularly common in the 1950s, but was, to some extent, characteristic of the period in general.

The most common motivational factors were the commemoration of international and national representatives and martyrs of the communist ideology and movement, e.g., *Marx*, *Engels*, *Lenin*, *Dimitrov*, *Lumumba*, *Béla Kun*, *Sándor Latinca*, *Ferenc Münnich*, *Endre Ságvári*, *Ferenc Rózsa*, *Béla Somogyi, Kató Hámán*. In addition, references to concepts and names commemorating the Soviet victory in the Second World War were also widespread, e.g., *Felszabadulás* ('liberation'), *Vörös Hadsereg* ('Red Army'), *Vörös Zászló* ('red flag'), *Tolbuhin*, *Vorosilov*, *Guszev*, *Április 4.* ('4th of April', the day on which the Soviet Union took control of Hungary). Street names frequently included references to concepts, organisations, groups and dates relevant to the political system, e.g., *Tanács* ('council'), *Népköztársaság* ('people's republic'), *Szabadság* ('freedom'), *Haladás* ('progress'), *Munkás* ('worker'), *Úttörő* ('pioneer'), *Ifjú Gárda* ('young guards'), *Partizán* ('partisan'), *Munkásőr* ('worker guard'), *Vörös csillag* ('red star'), *November 7.* ('7th of November', the anniversary of the 1917 October Revolution in Russia), *Moszkva* ('Moscow'). Communists who died during the 1956 revolution were often commemorated, e.g., *Imre Mező*, *János Asztalos*.

It was rare to find a settlement that did not have one of the above types of street name (although this may have been the case for some very small villages with only one street). In many cases, new street names were given in a rather unimaginative way, simply to remove names and terms associated with the previous political regime. Despite the official names, some streets and squares were informally known by their former names, e.g., in Budapest, 1920s: *Oktogon* ('Octagon') and 1886: *Andrássy út* ('Andrássy Street') were often preferred to 1950: *November 7-e tér* ('7th of November Square') and 1957: *Népköztársaság útja* ('People's Republic Street').

2.7. The Era after the Change of Regime (1990 to the present)

One of the emblematic moments of the regime change that began in 1989 was when a well-known opposition activist (György Krassó) symbolically restored *Münich Ferenc utca*, one of the hated street names of the ruling regime, to *Nádor utca* ('Palatine Street') in the fifth district of Budapest. Ferenc Münnich was a well-known communist leader. The event was widely covered by the press, which at the time was about to become independent (web2).

Figure 10: Changing a street sign as a symbolic act (web3)

In the early 1990s, the country got rid of the commemorative street names of the Socialist Era at the same pace as they had been imposed 40 years earlier (see Table 3). In most cases, public spaces regained their former names (the inner parts of the capital showed a clear pattern in this respect), but no other trends could be observed (on the presence of "cyclical re-commemoration patterns" in longitudinal surveys and the exposure of streets in the city centre to repeated renamings, see Buchstaller et al. 2023, quotation from p. 314). By comparison, in many post-socialist countries, in addition to the reintroduction of street names from preceding eras, tendencies such as "a decrease of political and military place names, and an increase in local toponymy" have been observed. Street names referring to local geographical features or to local industry and culture are typically regarded as less vulnerable to potential future renaming processes (Kudriavtseva 2020: 3–4, 19, quotation from p. 4).

Table 3: Changes of names for public spaces in Budapest in the early 1990s (web4)

Former name	**Current name**
Népköztársaság útja ('People's Republic Street')	*Andrássy út* ('Andrássy Street')
November 7. tér ('7th of November Square')	*Oktogon* ('Octagon')
Lenin körút ('Lenin Boulevard')	*Erzsébet körút* ('Elisabeth Boulevard') + *Teréz körút* ('Theresa Boulevard')
Tanács körút ('Council Boulevard')	*Károly körút* ('Charles Boulevard')
Dimitrov tér ('Dimitrov Square')	*Fővám tér* ('Central Customs House Square')
Tolbuhin körút ('Tolbukhin Boulevard')	*Vámház körút* ('Customs House Boulevard')
Felszabadulás tér ('Liberation Square')	*Ferenciek tere* ('Franciscans' Square')
Hámán Kató utca ('Kató Hámán Street')	*Haller utca* ('Haller Street')

After this period of initial renaming, there were still hundreds of names for public spaces with communist connotations. Rarely out of conviction. Residents and local authorities were either unaware of the identities of the individuals after whom their streets were named or were afraid that it would be expensive for them to change their identity documents, that the post office would not find them, and that they would have to go through other bureaucratic

hassle, such as correcting utility records. They often preferred to keep the old, communist street names to avoid the administrative complications and financial costs associated with adopting a new name.

In 2012, the Hungarian Parliament passed a law prohibiting the adoption of names associated with the totalitarian regimes of the 20th century. The legislation states that

> "(2) [a] public place or public institution specified in Article 13 (1) (3) shall not bear
> (a) the name of a person who participated in the founding, establishment or maintenance of authoritarian political regimes in the 20th century, or
> (b) a term or the name of an organisation that directly refers to the authoritarian political systems of the 20th century.
> (3) If the local government is in doubt as to whether the name of a public place complies with paragraph (2), it shall seek the opinion of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences." (Act CLXVII of 2012, §4)

The implementation of this legislation is still in progress. It is notable that in many instances, residents and local authorities are reluctant to remove street names that have less overt associations with socialist ideology, as for them these names are mere identifiers and no longer carry ideological meanings (for an investigation of the "politics of toponymic continuity" as an understudied area of interest in Critical Toponomastics, see Light & Young 2018).

Occasionally, local people make conscious efforts to preserve street names that are familiar to them. The most common method of circumventing the above-mentioned law is to omit the first name from personal names in instances where the shortened form is a meaningful common or geographical noun, e.g., in recent times, forty-six *Mező Imre utca* (after Imre Mező, 1905–1956, a communist politician) have become simply *Mező utca* ('Meadow Street') in thirty settlements. Similarly, *Rózsa Ferenc utca* (after Ferenc Rózsa, 1906–1942, a communist and anti-fascist journalist during the Horthy Era) has typically been reframed as *Rózsa utca* ('Rose Street'), *Ságvári Endre utca* (after Endre Ságvári, 1913–1944, a communist and anti-fascist activist during the Horthy Era) has commonly been transformed into *Ságvári utca* ('a road to the town of Ságvár'), while *Mosolygó Antal utca* (after Antal Mosolygó, 1891–1927, an anarcho-syndicalist leader) has been replaced by *Mosolygó utca* ('Smiling Street') (Sasi 2024).

The HAS resolution recommended the removal of references to Mihály Károlyi (who served as Prime Minister and then President of the First Hungarian Republic between 1918 and 1919) from street names. As a result, in the fifth district of Budapest, the street name *Károlyi Mihály utca* was altered to *Károlyi utca*, in honour of the Hungarian aristocratic family whose palace (last owned by the aforementioned Mihály Károlyi) stands in the street. Similarly, local authorities often felt compelled to provide alternative justifications for the continued use of terms such as *úttörő* ('pioneer') and *felszabadulás* ('liberation') in their street names. Thus, street names containing these words could remain

unchanged, but they no longer evoked the socialist youth organisation and the Soviet triumph in the Second World War (Sasi 2024).

Similar efforts continue today. The Hungarian Committee on Geographical Names (HCGN) has recently received a request from a municipality that had been encouraged by the County Government Office to change the name of a street commemorating Dezső Bokányi (1871–1943, a leading figure of the Hungarian Soviet Republic): "Is it possible to change the name of *Bokányi Dezső utca* to *Bokányi utca*, as a form of the noun *boka* 'ankle' and the suffix of measurement *-nyi*, in the sense of 'the size of an ankle' (i.e., not the size of a finger/a pinkie/a span) as the first element?" The proposed explanation was obviously necessitated by the circumstances. Where the former street name has been retained, it is often accompanied by its alternative explanation on the street sign to make the name acceptable to the authorities and the general public.

Figure 11: Change of motivation 1: *Felszabadulás utca* ('Liberation Street'), "Liberation under the Ottoman Occupation" (Tépe) (Google Maps / Street View by Attila Sasi)

Figure 12: Change of motivation 2: *Károlyi Mihály utca*, "This street is named after Count Mihály Károlyi (1585–1626), Comes of Szatmár County." (Piliscsaba) (Google Maps / Street View by Attila Sasi)

More recently, the renaming of public spaces in Budapest has sometimes been used to express values and political beliefs. In the 2010s, sections of the lower banks of the River Danube on both sides were given honorific names to commemorate people who helped rescue persecuted Jews during the Second World War: 2000: *Budai alsó rakpart* ('Lower Bank of Buda') > 2010: *Gr. Esterházy János rakpart*, *Slachta Margit rakpart*, *Angelo Rotta rakpart*, *Sztehlo Gábor rakpart*, *Friedrich Born rakpart*, *Raoul Wallenberg rakpart*, *Valdemar és Nina Langlet rakpart* and 2015: *Henryk Slawik rakpart*; 2000: *Pesti alsó rakpart* ('Lower Bank of Pest') > *Carl Lutz rakpart*, *Id. Antall József rakpart*, *Jane Haining rakpart* and *Salkaházi Sára rakpart* (növekedés.hu 2019; Wágner 2019; for further details, see Bölcskei 2024).

In the period preceding the 2021 parliamentary elections, the Mayor of Budapest successfully campaigned for the (re)naming of certain roads in the vicinity of a Chinese investment in the 9th district of the capital. The newly

adopted names address politically sensitive issues that are inconvenient for China and its supporters, e.g., 1973: *Hídépítő utca* ('Bridge Builder Street') > 2021: *Dalai Láma út* ('Dalai Lama Road'), 1955: *Helyi Kikötő út* ('Local River Port Road') > 2021: *Ujgur mártírok útja* ('Uyghur Martyrs' Road'), 0 > 2021: *Szabad Hongkong út* ('Free Hong Kong Road'), 0 > 2021: *Hszie Si-kuang püspök út* ('Bishop Xie Shiguang Road'). This act of protest was intended to articulate opposition to the government's pro-China policies (BBC 2021; Komuves 2021; Lau & Bayer 2021).

3. Conclusion

In the nearly two centuries of ideologically motivated place-name changes in Hungary, a number of different political trends have influenced the country's toponymy. The place-name changes of an era clearly reflected the values and beliefs of the prevailing political elite and shaped the people's perception of history. A shift in political power was often accompanied by a change in the toponymic landscape, both in terms of settlement names and microtoponyms.

From about the mid-19th century until 1944, efforts were made to use Hungarian place names in gazetteers, toponymic registers, and on maps. This tendency was part of a wider trend in which the Hungarian language and culture gained significant ground against the centralising German ambitions of the time. It was also part of the nationalist approach of the Hungarian state to prioritise the use of the Hungarian language over minority languages in its territory, which extended to the use of names. Linguistic patriotism, etatism and onoetatism were particularly strong language ideologies of the period.

From around 1900 to the present day, the adoption of street names in Hungary has been largely determined by ideological views. At the beginning of the period, the ideological and linguistic aspects of street naming were rooted in nationalism and the expression of political alliances. Following the Second World War, the communist state sought to use the symbolic value of street names to advance its agenda. This was reversed after the change of regime in 1990. In 2013, legislation was introduced to reinforce the principle that public spaces cannot bear the names of members of authoritarian regimes and that their names cannot refer to concepts that define such regimes.

The history of place-name changes in Hungary over the last two centuries clearly illustrates that the influence of ideological factors in place naming is "a feature of political culture that transcends political regimes and ideological orientations" (Azaryahu 2011: 30).

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