



**Study Centre for National Reconciliation**

**Študijski center za narodno spravo**

INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE

MEDNARODNA ZNANSTVENA KONFERENCA

**FLUID LANDSCAPE: SPATIAL POLITICS IN THE NORTH  
ADRIATIC AREA AND OTHER EUROPEAN BORDERLANDS  
DURING AND AFTER WORLD WAR II**

**FLUIDNA KRAJINA: PROSTORSKE POLITIKE NA  
SEVERNOJADRANSKEM OBMOČJU IN DRUGIH  
EVROPSKIH OBMEJNIH REGIJAH MED 2. SVETOVNO  
VOJNO IN PO NJEJ**

Ljubljana, 18. 4. 2023



**International scientific conference FLUID LANDSCAPE: SPATIAL POLITICS IN THE NORTH ADRIATIC AREA AND OTHER EUROPEAN BORDERLANDS DURING AND AFTER WORLD WAR II**

**Mednarodna znanstvena konferenca FLUIDNA KRAJINA: PROSTORSKE POLITIKE NA SEVERNOJADRANSKEM OBMOČJU IN DRUGIH EVROPSKIH OBMEJNIH REGIJAH MED 2. SVETOVNO VOJNO IN PO NJEJ**

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## **FOREWORD**

### **International Scientific Conference**

#### **FLUID LANDSCAPE: SPATIAL POLITICS IN THE NORTH ADRIATIC AREA AND OTHER EUROPEAN BORDERLANDS DURING AND AFTER WORLD WAR II**

The *Fluid Landscape* conference aims to provide an original contribution to the history of European borderlands during and after World War II. Although borderlands have long been considered marginal to understanding the workings of nation-states, recent research has shown that this is not the case. Indeed, some border regions were not only extremely important as a source of tension due to the overlapping territorial ambitions of competing countries, but often played a central role on a symbolic level as well. Their importance in ideological narratives thus often exceeded their economic, demographic and strategic value. Geographically, the primary focus of the conference covers the area of the North Adriatic, a typical European border region characterised by its ethnic diversity and frequent changes in political affiliation. This territory could be characterised as one of the most obvious examples of the “central periphery”, since in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it represented one of the central European crisis hotspots. Between 1943 and 1954, the history of this territory was particularly tumultuous, as different countries and ideologies fought for military, political and symbolic control over it. Even after the end of the Second World War, the region remained one of the central European crisis hotspots.

In terms of content, the conference focuses on the symbolic dimension of this process, more specifically on the symbolically charged spatial politics that characterised this area at that time. Existing research has confirmed that ever since the beginning of the rise of national movements in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, public space in the region has been subjected to ideological appropriations. Various political groups strove to achieve and consolidate their political goals by (re)shaping the appearance of the local landscape in accordance with their own ideological postulates. In order to achieve these goals, they erected public monuments and representative public buildings, but architectural styles and even urban planning also gained

ideological significance to a greater or lesser extent. As spatial politics occupies a complex point at the intersection of political power, ideology, collective memory and identity formation, it offers a unique research opportunity, especially as this research topic has remained rather under-researched. Spatial politics in the North Adriatic has already been a subject of historical interest, but existing research has almost completely ignored the period after the end of Italian rule in the region, especially in the crucial time period from 1943 to 1954, when the political future of the region was extremely uncertain. As this topic remains very poorly researched to this day, the conference will provide an important contribution to a more complex understanding of this period. In a broader view, its importance for a deeper understanding of the relations between political power and public space, between collective memories, state legitimacy, totalitarianism and public space in European border areas, and consequently also in Europe as a whole in this pivotal historical period, is also evident.

Although the primary focus of the conference is on the territory of the North Adriatic, experts on spatial politics in other European border regions at this time are also invited to participate, as we aim to place these processes in a wider European context. In this way, the results of the conference will be even more relevant for international humanities research, and in addition, opportunities for fruitful scientific dialogue between researchers of different geographical areas will be established.

From the thematic point of view, the following examples of spatial politics will be analysed:

- (re)naming of local toponyms;
- public signs and slogans;
- construction and destruction of monuments;
- undesirable tangible cultural heritage (e. g. castles, churches, certain architectural styles etc.).

#### Organiser

Matic Batič, PhD, Study Centre for National Reconciliation



# PREDGOVOR

## Mednarodna znanstvena konferenca

### **FLUIDNA KRAJINA: PROSTORSKE POLITIKE NA SEVERNOJADRANSKEM OBMOČJU IN DRUGIH EVROPSKIH OBMEJNIH REGIJAH MED 2. SVETOVNO VOJNO IN PO NJEJ**

Namen konference *Fluidna krajina* je ponuditi izviren prispevek k zgodovini evropskih obmejnih regij med drugo svetovno vojno in po njej. Čeprav so obmejne pokrajine dolgo veljale za obrobne za razumevanje delovanja nacionalnih držav, so nedavne raziskave pokazale, da temu ni bilo tako. Nekatera obmejna območja namreč niso bila izjemno pomembna le kot vir napetosti zaradi prekrivajočih se ozemeljskih ambicij različnih držav, ampak so pogosto igrala osrednjo vlogo tudi na simbolni ravni. Njihov pomen v ideoloških naracijah je tako pogosto presegal njihovo ekonomsko, demografsko in strateško pomembnost. Geografsko gledano primarno težišče konference zajema območje severnega Jadrana, ki predstavlja tipično evropsko obmejno regijo, za katero je bila značilna etnična raznolikost in pogoste spremembe politične pripadnosti. To ozemlje bi lahko označili za enega najočitnejših primerov »centralne periferije«, saj je v prvi polovici 20. stoletja predstavljalo eno izmed srednjeevropskih kriznih žarišč. Med letoma 1943 in 1954 je bila zgodovina tega ozemlja še posebej burna, saj so se tu različni državni in ideološki sistemi spopadali za vojaški, politični in simbolni nadzor. Tudi po koncu druge svetovne vojne je regija ostala eno izmed srednjeevropskih kriznih žarišč.

Vsebinsko se konferenca osredotoča na simbolno razsežnost tega procesa, natančneje na simbolno nabito prostorsko politiko, ki je zaznamovala regijo v tem času. Dosedanje raziskave so potrdile, da je bil javni prostor vse od začetka vzpona nacionalnih gibanj v drugi polovici 19. stoletja podvržen ideološkim prilastitvam. Različne politične skupine so si prizadevale doseči in utrditi svoje politične cilje s (pre)oblikovanjem videza lokalne krajine v skladu z lastnimi ideološkimi postulati. Za uresničitev teh ciljev so postavljale javne spomenike in reprezentativne javne zgradbe, tudi arhitekturni slogi in celo urbanistično načrtovanje so v večji ali manjši meri imeli ideološki pomen. Ker prostorska politika zaseda kompleksno točko na presečišču politične moči, ideologije, kolektivnega spomina in oblikovanja identitete, ponuja edinstveno raziskovalno priložnost, še posebej, ker je to raziskovalno področje doslej ostalo premalo raziskano. Prostorska politika na severnojadranskem področju je sicer že bila predmet zgodovinskega zanimanja, vendar so dosedanje raziskave skoraj povsem zanemarile obdobje po koncu italijanske oblasti v regiji, še posebej v ključnem časovnem obdobju od 1943 do 1954,



ko je politična prihodnost regije bila izjemno negotova. Ker je ta tema še danes zelo slabo raziskana, bo konferenca pomembno prispevala k kompleksnejšemu razumevanju tega obdobja. V širšem pogledu so tozadevne raziskave pomembne za globlje razumevanje odnosov med politično oblastjo in javnim prostorom, med kolektivnimi spomini, državno legitimnostjo, totalitarizmi in javnim prostorom v evropskih obmejnih območjih in posledično tudi v Evropi kot celoti v tem prelomnem zgodovinskem obdobju.

Čeprav je primaren poudarek konference na ozemlju Severnega Jadrana, na konferenci sodelujejo tudi poznavalci prostorske politike v drugih evropskih obmejnih regijah. Na ta način bodo procesi na severno-jadranskem področju umeščeni v širši evropski kontekst, poleg tega pa bodo tako rezultati konference še bolj relevantni tudi za mednarodno humanistično raziskovanje. Končno bodo tako vzpostavljene možnosti za ploden znanstveni dialog med raziskovalci različnih evropskih obmejnih regij.

S tematskega vidika referati analizirajo naslednje primere prostorske politike:

- (pre)imenovanje krajevnih toponimov;
- javne napise in slogane;
- gradnjo in rušenje spomenikov;
- (ne)zaželeno oblike stvarne kulturne dediščina (ko so npr. gradovi, cerkve, nekateri arhitekturni slogi itd.).

### Organizator

dr. Matic Batič, Študijski center za narodno spravo



# **PROGRAMME / PROGRAM**

# PROGRAMME

**9.00 – 9.15**

## **Welcome Remarks**

Tomaž Ivešić (Director of SCNR)

Matic Batič (Organiser)

**9.15 – 10.45**

Luca Caburlotto (*Isontina State Library of Gorizia*): **Totalitarianism on the Road. Toponomastic Narratives in Italian Eastern Borderlands before World War II**

Sophie Elaine Wolf (*University of Innsbruck*): **Two Tales of One Landscape - The Representation of South Tyrol/Alto Adige in Two Regional Newspapers**

Ivan Smiljanić (*Institute of Contemporary History*): **Monument as an Accusation: Case Studies of Two Ljubljana Interwar Memorials**

Discussion

**10.45 – 11.00**

Coffee break

**11.00 – 12.30**

Izidor Janžekovič (*Central European University*): **The Role of Archaeology and History in Spatial Politics during and after World War II**

Piotr Mirocha (*Jagiellonian University*): **Changing Streetscapes of Rijeka and Šibenik after World War II: Places of Conflicting Identities and Spaces of Hybrid Ideologies**

Eric Ušić (*University of Ljubljana*): **(De)constructing the Landscape: The Case of (Post-)World War II Graffiti in Istria**

Discussion

**12.30 – 14.30**

Lunch

**14.30 – 16.00**

Erika Jazbar (RAI): **Gorizia, estate 1944: un monumento simbolo, la sua distruzione, le molteplici dinamiche di una città**

Damjan Hančič (SCNR): **Nazi Constructions in Kamnik - The Contribution of the German Occupier to the Development of Kamnik during World War II**

Matic Batič (SCNR): **Between Impositions from Above and Initiatives from Below: Toponomastic Policies of the Yugoslav Communist Authorities in the Primorska Region (1948–1955)**

Discussion

**19.00**

Dinner



## PROGRAM

**9.00 – 9.15**

### **Pozdravni nagovor**

Tomaž Ivešić (direktor SCNR)

Matic Batič (organizator)

**9.15 – 10.45**

Luca Caburlotto (*Državna knjižnica Isontina v Gorici*): **Totalitarianism on the Road. Toponomastic Narratives in Italian Eastern Borderlands before World War II**

Sophie Elaine Wolf (*Univerza v Innsbrucku*): **Two Tales of One Landscape - The Representation of South Tyrol/Alto Adige in Two Regional Newspapers**

Ivan Smiljanić (*Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino*): **Monument as an Accusation: Case Studies of two Ljubljana Interwar Memorials**

Razprava

**10.45 – 11.00**

Odmor za kavo

**11.00 – 12.30**

Izidor Janžekovič (*Srednjeevropska univerza*): **The Role of Archaeology and History in Spatial Politics during and after World War II**

Piotr Mirocha (*Jagelonska Univerza*): **Changing Streetscapes of Rijeka and Šibenik after World War II: Places of Conflicting Identities and Spaces of Hybrid Ideologies**

Eric Ušić (*Univerza v Ljubljani*): **(De)constructing the Landscape: The Case of (Post-)World War II Graffiti in Istria**

Razprava

**12.30 – 14.00**

Kosilo

**14.00 – 15.30**

Erika Jazbar (RAI): **Gorizia, estate 1944: un monumento simbolo, la sua distruzione, le molteplici dinamiche di una città**

Damjan Hančič (SCNR): **Nazi Constructions in Kamnik - The Contribution of the German Occupier to the Development of Kamnik during World War II**

Matic Batič (SCNR): **Between Impositions from Above and Initiatives from Below: Toponomastic Policies of the Yugoslav Communist Authorities in the Primorska Region (1948–1955)**

Razprava

**19.00**

Večerja





## **ABSTRACTS / POVZETKI**

## **TOTALITARIANISM *ON THE ROAD*. TOPONOMASTIC NARRATIVES IN ITALIAN EASTERN BORDERLANDS BEFORE WORLD WAR II**

Luca CABURLOTTO

*Isontina State Library of Gorizia*

The use of giving a name to squares and streets, which increased with the French Revolution, acquiring in that period an evident political meaning, became more and more relevant in the 19th century as a pedagogical way to create a national identity, while it promoted the spontaneous learning and assimilation in all social classes of names, dates and places related with the recent history of arising states. Trieste has a singular role in this topic. Before the First World War, in the Austro-Hungarian context, it tried to appear similar to great Italian cities, giving the names of famous Italian people to streets and squares (both to new ones and to old ones, which had existing names). Before the Second World War, with fascism, Trieste gave a stronger ideological quality to its toponymy (just think about “Piazza dei Caduti fascisti” or “Via degli Squadristi”), with some interesting changes during the war. Perhaps Fiume/Rijeka had a no less important role in this symbolical spatial strategy in the same period.

## TWO TALES OF ONE LANDSCAPE - THE REPRESENTATION OF SOUTH TYROL/ALTO ADIGE IN TWO REGIONAL NEWSPAPERS

Sophie Elaine WOLF

*University of Innsbruck*

With the Treaty of Saint-Germain, South Tyrol/Alto Adige became part of the Italian Kingdom, and as such the border region and its impressive Alpine landscape turned into a bone of contention between Italy and Austria. Subsequently the fascist government under Mussolini tried to literally “Italianise” the region in all areas of public and private life, while Tyrol continued to claim the region historically, culturally and geographically belonged to it. The ensuing ideological struggle for interpretative sovereignty over culture and landscape in South Tyrol/Alto Adige was fought with all means available but mainly throughout media, among which the local and regional journals and newspapers were an important tool.

This article will use two periodicals to shed light on the divergent tales that the two border nations tried to tell of one and the same landscape. For the Italian side, the *Alpenzeitung* is examined, which was published by the “Ente cooperativo provinciale della stampa fascista”, that is the fascist government. This newspaper was edited in the German language in order to “Italianise” the German-speaking population. For the Tyrolean side, the *Südtiroler Heimat*, which was published in Innsbruck and claimed to be “the voice of South Tyrol”, will be analysed. In the contention about the national and cultural affiliation of the region, the newspapers became the preferred channel for convincing the broad local audience that one or the other truth was the only legitimate one, which was achieved by various rhetorical strategies and topoi, some of which were surprisingly – or not – used by both sides. It is therefore all the more interesting to illuminate which aspects were taken up by the two sides in order to legitimise their own variant of the cultural landscape: “South Tyrol” or “Alto Adige”. At the same time, this contribution raises the question to what extent our scientific instruments and the available sources only show us an incomplete and necessarily distorted picture of the past.

## MONUMENT AS AN ACCUSATION: CASE STUDIES OF TWO LJUBLJANA INTERWAR MEMORIALS

Ivan SMILJANIĆ

*Institute of Contemporary History*

After the Rapallo Treaty was signed, a large part of the territory populated by Slovenes and Croats became part of the Kingdom of Italy. In the Slovene part of the Kingdom of SCS, this caused widespread mourning, and the lost territories were considered to have been wrongfully ripped away from the homeland. Symbolic gestures of protest included commemorations and a few memorials. Central among these memorials was a plaque unveiled in March 1921 in a park in front of the Ljubljana university palace. The unveiling was a reaction to festivities in Trieste dedicated to the annexation. The plaque was strategically positioned inside the autonomous territory of the university, where Yugoslav police had no jurisdiction to act. The Belgrade regime, eager to keep stable relations with the Italian government, did not support the anti-Italian sentiments the plaque instigated yet had no legal right to remove the plaque. The plaque became a location of not only commemorations dedicated to Slovenes suffering or killed under fascism, but also student demonstrations directed against both the Italian regime and the brutality with which the Yugoslav regime met these protests. Plans were made to replace the plaque with a monument. Tone Kralj created an expressionist figure of a suffering kneeling man, *The Sorrow of Slovenia*, but the statue was never put up. During the Italian occupation, the plaque was presumably destroyed, and in 2012 it was reconstructed, though imperfectly. In 1937, a monument to the poet Simon Gregorčič was unveiled in a nearby square. The bust was made by Zdenko Kalin, and the surrounding structure was designed by Jože Plečnik. The monument was put up by members of the Soča society in Ljubljana, mostly made up of Slovene Littoral immigrants. The Gregorčič monument also bore an anti-Italian message expressed in the verses on the pedestal, implying that Slovenes under Italian rule needed help.

# THE ROLE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY IN SPATIAL POLITICS DURING AND AFTER WORLD WAR II

Izidor JANŽEKOVIČ

*Central European University*

In connection to the German invasion of Yugoslavia, Hitler made a notorious order: “Make this land German again for me!” (*Machen Sie mir dieses Land wieder deutsch!*) With this order he clearly referenced the supposed Germanic past of the newly conquered territories. Many archaeological sites were reinterpreted to better fit the new political narrative. In addition to a clearly nationalistic ideology, colonial archaeology and history played a key role in shaping an opinion that the occupied or “colonised” Slovenes could not possess any autochthonic material culture, but that they only had a variation of some other, “higher” culture.

This is also the key reason why there was such a forceful response of the “colonised” Slovenes to this colonial paradigm. In the time after the German occupation and during the state-building of Yugoslavia, archaeologists and historians had a mission to prove the existence of early medieval Slavic settlement of the disputed border areas in response to the Germanisation policy and its supporting archaeological theories during World War II. Conscious of their role, archaeologists and anthropologists argued for the Slavic nature of artefacts and skeletons against the former German claims.

I present a case study of the extensive post-war archaeological excavations at Ptuj Castle in 1946 and 1947. Working with the same artefacts, archaeological research techniques under fascism, Nazism and communism were strikingly similar, but the interpretations were irreconcilable. As has been pointed out, archaeology served the prevailing political ideology. Political transitions, mixed with opportunistic behaviour and personal animosities among archaeologists, influenced archaeological analyses. Many archaeologists and anthropologists compensated for activities they had conducted during the war by closely following the post-war nationalist agenda. This generally happened without any direct pressure from above.

# CHANGING STREETSCAPES OF RIJEKA AND ŠIBENIK AFTER WORLD WAR II: PLACES OF CONFLICTING IDENTITIES AND SPACES OF HYBRID IDEOLOGIES

Piotr MIROCHA

*Jagiellonian University*

After World War II, cities and towns in Central and Eastern Europe under communist rule were scenes of another far-reaching reshaping of their commemorative street naming, reflecting the new hegemonic values. This was also the case in the Adriatic area – and an interesting comparison may be provided by the Croatian cities of Rijeka and Šibenik.

The presentation focuses on the post-World War II changes in commemorative toponyms in the two cities, with a special focus on identity building: both referring to ethnicities, as well as to ideologies. The analysed microtoponomastic material is interpreted as a means of creating continuities and discontinuities, both instrumental in maintaining relations with imagined communities of the past (e.g. multicultural history of Fiume-Sušak/Rijeka or, much less prominently, Sebenico/Šibenik) and the present (e.g. multi-ethnic character of the Yugoslav federation or, apparently rarely, of the Partisan troops).

The analysis and interpretation of the material demonstrates a complex interplay between Croatian, Dalmatian and “communist” identities in the newly shaped streetscape of Šibenik, on the one hand. On the other hand, the case of Rijeka is particularly unique, as the Italian identity has not been erased from the urban toponyms; instead, it has been re-shaped with a focus on the concept of anti-fascist struggle.

The presentation demonstrates that street names in the post-World War II reality were still regarded as identity-shaping *lieux de mémoire* as defined by Pierre Nora. On the other hand, they were becoming topoi, not only as places, but also as argumentative schemes used in ideological practices of re-shaping national memory.

## **(DE)CONSTRUCTING THE LANDSCAPE: THE CASE OF (POST-)WORLD WAR II GRAFFITI IN ISTRIA**

Eric UŠIĆ

*University of Ljubljana*

During World War II in Istria, the People's Liberation Movement (NOP) employed a variegated set of symbolic resistance practices. The writing of antifascist graffiti in public was one of the most widespread activities in that context, with graffiti functioning as communication devices of the NOP, as ways of signalling its presence in particular areas and as tools used to disseminate antifascist messages and popularise the movement's politics and goals in the form of wall slogans. Furthermore, graffiti operated also as counter-hegemonic spatial practices that subverted the then dominant political and spatial order imposed by the Nazi-fascist regime: in other words, Partisan graffiti challenged and disrupted the dominant landscape saturated with fascist iconography, inserting alternative, counter-hegemonic antifascist political texts and symbolism in the landscape. On the other hand, the liberation period and the immediate post-war context (1945–1946) saw the emergence of a large-scale, organised and systematic production of bilingual pro-Yugoslav, communist, national and antifascist graffiti in the context of (geo)political tensions evolving around the post-war Italo-Yugoslav border demarcation. The post-war graffiti production initiated a radical transformation, appropriation and (re)symbolisation of the region's landscape. Thus, while Partisan graffiti had undermined the then dominant landscape, post-war graffiti constructed a new form of a dominant landscape imbued with pro-Yugoslav, communist, national and antifascist texts and symbols. Today, almost 80 years later, the remnants of these inscriptions that can be found in large quantities on old, weathered facades in Istrian towns and villages, constitute a peculiar – but gradually disappearing – memory-scape of the borderland region. The presentation will address the historical background of (post-)war graffiti in Istria, with an examination of the context of production, an analysis of the key visual-spatial characteristics and functions of (post-)war graffiti, as well as an exploration of their relation to, and impact on, the region's landscape, while relying on years-long historical and visual-ethnographic research.



## **GORIZIA, ESTATE 1944: UN MONUMENTO SIMBOLO, LA SUA DISTRUZIONE, LE MOLTEPLICI DINAMICHE DI UNA CITTÀ**

Erika JAZBAR

12 agosto 1944. Nella notte un boato sveglia la città di Gorizia. Alle prime luci dell'alba cittadini increduli fissano i resti del tempietto neoclassico che nel Parco della rimembranza ricordava i volontari goriziani, disertori dall'esercito austriaco, caduti durante la Grande guerra per l'italianità della città. Un monumento sacro, di quella sacralità laica legata al Ventennio, preso di mira per la sua carica simbolica.

Chi ha progettato l'attentato e perché? Le domande alle quali cercheremo di rispondere districandoci in un ginepraio di tensioni nazionali ed ideologiche tra occupazione tedesca, sofferenze italiane, risveglio nazionale sloveno, tra partigiani, domobranci, fascisti di Salò, italiani di stampo austriaco e nazisti carinziani con l'eco di un passato di convivenza plurisecolare.

Una pagina di storia da scoprire ed approfondire, dopo 80 anni anche da (ri)scrivere, rimasta intatta nella sua complessità come i resti del tempietto, scomposto in blocchi da un'esplosione violenta e rumorosa, che non ha fatto vittime, perchè mirava agli animi.

# **NAZI CONSTRUCTIONS IN KAMNIK - THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE GERMAN OCCUPIER TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF KAMNIK DURING WORLD WAR II**

Damjan HANČIČ

*Study Centre for National Reconciliation*

During World War II, the Gorenjska region was occupied by the German Army and the territory was de facto annexed to the Third Reich. This opened the potential for the forced Germanisation of the area. The Germanisation also included attempts to make the occupied landscape, including the area of Kamnik, look as “German” as possible, which is why the German occupier constructed new buildings in typical Nazi and Alpine architectural styles. It is worth emphasising that the buildings in question, although bearing the “stamp of Germanisation”, were not erected merely for their symbolic role, but had a very utilitarian character. As to their function, these buildings would have been needed also in different temporal-historical circumstances. The author uses documents and pictures to present the most important buildings and public infrastructure built in Kamnik in the era of the German occupation during World War II, their “pre-history”, their architectural features, their intended use, as well as their post-war use and their current state. In the socialist period after World War II, these buildings retained their functions or partly received new ones, while their external appearances remained unchanged to the present day.

## **Between Impositions from Above and Initiatives from Below: Toponomastic Policies of the Yugoslav Communist Authorities in the Primorska Region (1948–1955)**

Matic BATIČ

*Study Centre for National Reconciliation*

The territory of the former Habsburg administrative unit of Austrian Littoral, which is now split between Slovenia, Croatia and Italy, was characterised by a series of changes in national borders in the 20th century. Changes in political affiliation were not limited only to shifts in national borders; they often led to profound cultural and political changes related to the transition to a different cultural and political system. Among the main such shocks was the transition of a large part of this territory to the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia. The transition to the new communist regime brought about profound changes not only in the political and economic spheres, but also the cultural sphere, which includes the ideologically charged transformation of the local cultural landscape. One of the most prominent and far-reaching aspects of this process was the renaming of local settlement names, which the authorities performed between 1948 and 1955.

The main purpose of these changes was to “remove” problematic names from public space and thus to consolidate a new cultural hegemony in the spirit of communist revolution. Despite the clear ideological character of this process, it did not take place in a linear, “top-down” manner. In fact, there was active involvement of activists at the local level, who were the driving force behind renaming efforts in some cases. In other cases, the authorities toned down their original plans due to resistance from the population, so the result of such efforts was ultimately less extensive than first envisaged.

The paper analyses the characteristics of this process, i.e. the ideological background of changes, the characteristics of “problematic” place names and the legal and administrative procedures for renaming. Particular attention is paid to the dynamics of relations between the central national authorities, local leaders and the population. In such a way, the paper presents the complexity of establishing a new toponymy in Primorska, thus providing an insight into the power relations dynamics within the Slovene communist system of the time.

