

## PLACE NAMES FOR SALE: A PLACE OF UKRAINE IN THE UNIVERSE OF TOPOONYMY COMMODIFICATION

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### Place names for sale: A place of Ukraine in the universe of toponomy commodification

The issue of commercial use of geographical names, constituting a promising and booming area of the second wave of critical toponomastics studies, remains poorly investigated in Ukraine. Simultaneously, Ukraine, passing a long and controversial post-Soviet transformation, represents a real honey pot for scrutinizing the commercial use of place names and its consequences for cultural landscapes and territorial communities. The aim of this article is to show Ukraine, as a country representing economically, socially, politically and culturally-specific part of the post-Soviet realm, in the global arena of toponymy commodification, creating the basis for further research in the field. The research methods include analysis of existing scientific literature, media screening, analysis of the names of residential complexes in Kyiv and its suburban area, field observations and the study of the legal framework. The most common form of toponymic commodification in Ukraine is the use of local geographical names and the names of historical regions for marketing purposes, in particular branding of goods and services. Gentrification-led type of toponymic commodification has already changed the symbolical space of the largest Ukrainian cities, while the possibilities for and practices of the infrastructural toponymic commodification are still quite limited although several existing cases may represent an early sign of upcoming global trend. In the field of tourism, an emerging practice is the use of formal and folk toponyms in order to create thematic cultural landscapes.

**Key words:** toponym, toponymic commodification, critical toponomastics, place branding, Ukraine

### INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, world toponomastics, as a science focusing on place names, has moved away from the traditional linguistic etymological analysis of toponyms and their classification towards critical toponomastics – a critical understanding of the socio-political and symbolic role of place names, practices and policies of naming and renaming (Vuolteenaho and Berg 2009, Rose-Redwood et al. 2010 and Rose-Redwood et al. 2017). This paradigmatic shift, with a certain delay, has occurred in Ukraine, both as a result of understanding the latest world scientific achievements and under the influence of internal socio-political transformation in Ukraine, including rethinking the national memory policy after the Revolution of Dignity and adoption of decommunization laws in 2015. Like in other post-socialist contexts, researchers have focused mainly on the politics of memory in the socialist and post-socialist periods. In particular, these are the preconditions, course and consequences of recent decommunization of toponymy, regional strategies and practices of decommunization (e.g. Takhtaulova 2017, Gnatiuk 2018, Dronova and Maruniak 2019, Golikov 2020, Kudriavtseva 2020 and Kovalov 2021).

However, commercial use of geographical names in Ukraine (as in the rest of intensively transforming, contested and multilayered post-Soviet space) remains almost unexplored and, in the national academic community, not even perceived as a scientific problem, with a few exceptions, including Homanyuk (2016, 2017, 2019 and 2020) regarding the names of historical regions and Mezentsev and Mezentseva (2017) on the names of suburban cottage townships. Meanwhile, the post-Soviet space seems to be a promising realm to study the commercial use of place names and its implications for cultural landscapes and societies, from the local level to the international comparative prospective. In the tumultuous epochs or political regime change, place names often turn into resources for accumulation of symbolic capital and political recognition (see, e.g. Karimi 2016 for the commodification of place names in post-Taliban Kabul city).

The aim of this article is to show the place of Ukraine, representing economically, socially, politically and culturally-specific part of the post-Soviet realm, in the global arena of toponymy commodification, creating the basis for further research in the field. In order to achieve this aim, we analyze the existing practices and repertoires of the commercial use of place names in Ukraine. Since people tend to think of a place as a collection of particular features and characteristics, place branding may be treated not only as the process of finding umbrella brand for the whole place treated as one product, but also process of finding brands for subproducts of the place (see e.g., Anholt 2007 and Florek 2015). In this regard, it is interesting to look at the toponymic brand of Ukraine in its integrity, formed by the collection of individual products (including places) marketed via the place names.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Although some aspects of the commercial use of geographical names have been revealed in academic literature going further back, the study of place name commodification as a separate promising area of critical toponomastics was stated and outlined in 2010s in the works of Rose-Redwood (2011), Medway and Warnaby (2014) and Light and Young (2015). Although this research direction is more commonly known as “critical toponomy”, the term “critical toponomastics” is more accurate, since “toponomastics” is the term used for a branch of onomastics studying toponyms in a scholarly way, while “toponymy” refers to the set of toponyms within a specific territory/region, language, period of time etc. (The International Council of Onomastic Sciences 2022). The key idea is that geographical names are instruments used to increase the capitalization of space and struggle for its symbolic appropriation, and that is why critical toponomastics is focused on uncovering hidden ideologies that constitute the background of the formation or change of geographical names of various categories (Jordan 2019 and Rutkowski 2021). Under neoliberal policies, virtually all tangible and intangible objects and phenomena can be considered as commodities (Harvey 2005), therefore toponyms, which have the basic characteristics of brands to a certain extent (Medway and Warnaby 2014), are not an exception here. Many locations are being branded and marketed via their name (toponym) to fulfil the needs and wants of the target groups. Strong parallels could be found between the process of place naming and branding, although toponyms cannot be treated in entirely the same manner as conventional brand names (Kavaratzis and Ashworth 2005 and Kavaratzis and Kalandides 2015).

In recent years, the commercial use of place-names continues to unfold in its diversity (Rose-Redwood et al. 2019b). Analyzing the global practices of commercial use of toponyms, Basik (2018) distinguishes between two dominant groups of subjects (public authorities and business), three main strategic toponymic practices (use of existing toponym, creation of a new toponym, acquisition or lease of toponym) and three types of place name commodification (infrastructural, gentrification-led and tourist). In particular, these are opportunities and practices of vending the rights to name infrastructure objects in order to generate income for their construction and maintenance (Basik 2018 and Rose-Redwood et al. 2019a), development of thematic and linguistic tourism (Mair 2009 and Mühlhäusler and Nash 2016), creation of artificial geocultural spaces (Hopkins 1990, Gottdiener 1997 and Zhao et al. 2019), transformation of urban space in order to increase the demand for real estate and symbolic marking of social and property status (Alderman 2008, Vuolteenaho and Ainiala 2009, Sokolova 2016, Madden 2018 and Sotoudehnia and Rose-Redwood 2018).

Despite the growing literature, the conceptualization and description of the commercial use of toponyms, the study of toponymic privatization, rights to naming and their connection to the transformation of geographic spaces in different regional and national contexts is an undeveloped topic in human geography. This needs to geographically systematize this process, highlight key actors, classify strategic practices, as well as identify the main accompanying geographic problems (Basik 2018).

## DATA AND METHODS

The review of toponymy commodification practices in Ukraine is based on the data sources as follows: 1) analysis of existing academic literature, which directly or indirectly considers the practices of commercial use of place names in Ukraine, 2) media screening (web resources) of toponymic commodification practices in Ukraine (primarily tourism, infrastructure, use of geographical names as brands); 3) collected database of the names of residential complexes in Kyiv and its suburban area; 4) field observations in the cities of Kyiv and Vinnytsia (performed in 2020 – 2021) and 5) national and local legal framework in the field of naming and renaming of public infrastructure. The choice of specific cases beyond the nationwide review, namely Kyiv and Vinnytsia, was based on the fact that Kyiv is the capital and the largest metropolis of the country, where the processes of commercialization and branding have reached the highest scale, while Vinnytsia is a second-order but economically vibrant regional centre being a good example of processes happening outside of the metropolitan areas.

The subsequent analysis follows conceptual framework proposed by Basik (2018). The presentation of the results is structured according to the three-fold classification place name commodification: infrastructural, gentrification-led and tourist (however, the widespread category of commercially used place names, serving as brands for commodities and institutions, cannot be clearly classified into these three categories and thus is discussed separately). Nevertheless, attention is paid to the dominant groups of subjects (public authorities and business) and to the main strategic toponymic practices as well (use of existing toponymy, creation of new toponymy and acquisition or lease of toponymy).

The employed research methods have their limitations. In the research, we leave aside the estimation of quantitative proportions, which are undoubtedly important, for future in-depth studies of certain aspects of toponymy. In this paper, we aim to identify and describe primarily the qualitative explanations of commercial use of place names in Ukraine, to study them within the existing conceptual framework, and to outline the future research agenda.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Place names as brands

The most common form of place name commodification in Ukraine is the use of local geographical names for marketing purposes, including branding of goods and services, names of legal entities (enterprises and organizations), mass events, political projects, etc. The names of many well-known Ukrainian brands come from the places where the production facilities or manufacturer's headquarters are located (e.g., Torchyn, Rohan, Obolon, etc.).

A widespread type of toponymic commodification in Ukraine is the use of names of informal historical regions for the naming of legal entities, branding of industrial products and services, mass events and political projects. In particular, names of enterprises and organizations, directly derived from the names of historical regions, have been studied as a marker showing the symbolic reproduction of historical regions and simultaneously demonstrating the transformation of their perceived territorial shapes (Melnychuk et al. 2014 and Gnatiuk and Melnychuk 2019). Although these studies did not directly consider the names of historical regions as a commodity, they give an idea of the scale of their use to brand businesses or products. In particular, hundreds of ergonyms came from the names of Podolia (456), Tavria/Taurida (341), Polesia (294), Donbas (357) and Galicia (186) (Melnychuk et al. 2014).

Commodification of the name of historical region was directly addressed by Homanyuk (2016, 2017, 2019 and 2020), who highlighted the role of Tavria/Taurida in politics and in the goods and services market. The name of the region is reflected in hundreds of names of enterprises and companies, settlements and neighbourhoods, brands and trademarks, beauty contests and universities, media and sports clubs, political parties and NGOs. An ordinary resident of Kherson, a city in South-eastern Ukraine that currently develops a brand of an informal Taurian Capital, may wake up in a residential block in Tavriiskyi ("Tavrian") neighbourhood, drink tea with a Taurian loaf, fry potatoes in Tavria Gold sunflower oil, take the Tavria Lines bus to work, read the news on the Tavria Daily website, build a summer house of bricks from Tavrian Construction Company and cement from Tavria-Klinker, and in the evening, after visiting Tavria Barvohrai artistic contest, relax with Muscat Tavria wine and treat the kids to Tavria Meteorite sweets (Homanyuk 2017). In this way, the toponym Tavria turned out to be "pleasant in all respects – it is convenient for communication and for decommunization, for medicine and for harming health, for children and for adults, for patriots and for non-patriots" (Homanyuk 2017). At the same time, the results of the sociological survey do not confirm the formation of a strong Taurian identity among the residents of Kherson and adjacent regions, and thus Tavria is now more of an intellectual product, a kind of marketing marker, rather than the name of a small homeland (Homanyuk 2016). It seems that the key reason for such popularity of historical

regions is the possibility of belonging to something ancient, eternal, and apparently something more than just an administrative unit (*oblast*). A name, appealing to a historical region, symbolically brings business or institution to the interregional level and artificially makes it older (Homanyuk 2017).

Remarkable examples of an attempt to use geographical names of different scales as commodities are stories of naming and renaming the Ukrainian universities (the names are approved by the university administration and agreed with the government). In particular, there are Podolian State Agrarian Technical University (Khmelnytskyi), Tavrian State Agrotechnological University (Melitopol), Vernadsky Tavrian National University (until 2014 in Simferopol, then – in Kyiv), Viacheslav Chornovil Galician College (Ternopil), Bukovynian University (Chernivtsi); all these names arose (or, in the case of Tavriya National University, have been restored) during the Ukrainian independence. In 2012 – 2014, there was an attempt to merge three higher educational establishments in Kharkiv into Slobozhanian State Agrarian University. In 2020, Zhytomyr National Agroecological University was rebranded to Polesia National University, thus substituting the reference to the *oblast* centre with the reference to landscape/historical region. This change confirms the hypothesis of growing identification of Zhytomyr *oblast* with the region of Polesia, known from the previous studies of ergonyms (Gnatiuk and Melnychuk 2019).

It is worth mentioning the failed attempt to change the symbolic status of a university through geographical rebranding. In 2012, Volyn National University, located in Lutsk (Western Ukraine) was renamed to East European National University. In this way, the identity with a historical region of Volhynia, well known only in Ukraine and bordering countries like Poland and Belarus, was changed to the identity with the Eastern Europe as a better-known macro-region of the world. According to the university administration, the new name was intended to reflect the aspirations to establish real and symbolic ties with educational institutions in Europe, to receive EU grants, as well as to raise the status of the university and create a suitable brand in the international market of high education. In brief, the administration believed that applicants and investors will easier respond to the name containing the word “European”. However, these hopes and expectations were shattered by the reality. Simultaneously, the new name, containing the attribution of “eastern”, was somewhat confusing for Ukrainian audience since the university is located in the city of Lutsk, in the extreme west of Ukraine. Moreover, the toponymic brand of Eastern European was already appropriated by another smaller private university in Cherkasy, Central Ukraine. Consequently, in 2020, the rector’s initiative to return the previous name was supported by the staff and officially implemented with a common agreement that a name of historical region is also a good tool for branding and promotion, and worth to be used as the university name.

#### Infrastructural commodification

Commodification of toponymy is closely related to the right of power structures to name and rename elements of the public infrastructure, which is used by official government bodies as an additional source of replenishment of local budgets (Basik 2018). Given the lack of funding, the authorities of some cities and regions resort to corporate toponymic (re)branding of public infrastructure as a short-term economic strategy and an additional source of filling local budgets (Light and Young 2015). The most famous examples are Dubai, where many metro stations

have been named after corporate sponsors who bought the rights to the names for 10 years (Rose-Redwood et al. 2019a), and Seoul, where more than 30 metro stations have dual names – including the original and sponsored names (Basik 2018)

Neither national nor regional legislation in Ukraine provides for possibilities for the sale or lease of rights to name key objects of urban infrastructure, almost completely being in the state or municipal ownership. This especially refers to the street names that are “sacred cows” due to their use as an instrument of the memory policy and therefore are hardly accessible for commercial use. The naming and renaming of streets, squares, etc. in Ukraine during the last decades has always been a scandalous topic, as shown, among other things, by the implementation of compulsory streetscape decommunization after 2015, accompanied by heated public debates (Males 2016 and Males and Deineka 2020). Moreover, the possibility of commercial use of infrastructure names is often blocked by local toponymic rules. E.g. in the city of Kyiv the priority is given to the names compliant with historical and geographical criteria, reflecting local traditions, location, style of architecture, etc., and new names, wherever possible, should be based on the existing names of settlements, tracts, hills, forests, rivers, streams, lakes, and ponds (Kyiv City Council 2013). These rules regulate the naming of Kyiv metro stations as well. Naming of land public transport stops is less regulated and therefore more dynamic and open to innovations. However, even here proper names of private facilities face an invincible obstacle, even though such toponyms would be rather useful for the everyday life of ordinary people. E.g., in 2019, the names of land public transport stops in Kyiv included words and phrases like “Shopping Mall” (14), “School” (12), “Kindergarten” (12), “Medical Centre” (12), “Supermarket” (7), “Shop” (6), “Parking” (6), but without specifying the proper name of the facility (Nahornyi 2020). In this sense, street naming in Ukraine still follows the modernist name-planning rather than the neoliberal geo-branding practices (Vuolteenaho and Ainiala 2009).

However, in Ukraine there are some cases of infrastructural commodification practices. One of them is the case of the Roshen embankment in Vinnytsia. In 2011, a part of the Southern Bug river embankment was reconstructed with installation of Roshen Multimedia Fountain in the river bed, which quickly became one of the key city’s symbols and tourist attractions (Melnychuk and Gnatuk 2019). The project was funded by Petro Poroshenko Charitable Foundation and cost approximately EUR 70 million. The embankment and the fountain are located directly close to the confectionery factory owned by Roshen Corporation, controlled by Poroshenko (the corporation name comes from the last name of the owner without the first and the last two letters). Part of the visitors began to spontaneously call the renovated part of the embankment as Roshen Embankment, and soon afterwards, the city council adopted the official decision to name the embankment in honour of the corporation (Fig. 1). According to Volodymyr Groysman, the city Mayor (later, in 2015 – 2019, he was Ukrainian Prime Minister), this act of naming effectively perpetuated the good deeds that Roshen Corporation had done for the city. Certainly, the investment project significantly improved the tourist attractiveness of Vinnytsia and therefore became a real gift from Poroshenko to the city. However, at the same time, the names of the embankment and the fountain became a free advertisement of Roshen Corporation as an economic actor and a personal advertisement of Poroshenko as a politician. The audience of such advertising counted hundreds of thousands of people, both local residents and tourists from the whole Ukraine

coming to enjoy the fountain show or just hearing about the new attraction from the media. In fact, the opening ceremony of the renovated embankment and the fountain marked a start of the Poroshenko's campaign to return to big politics, which culminated in his presidency in 2014 – 2019. Since then, in 2019, Ukraine has undergone a radical change of ruling political team, but the Roshen embankment remains on the city map, representing research interest in terms of toponym's public perception and mundane use.



Fig. 1. Street sign to the Roshen Embankment (top) and tourist information board nearby (bottom) in Vinnytsia

Photo by Oleksiy Gnatyuk (2021).

Other examples of commodification that comes close to the infrastructural type are attempts by some private developers to perpetuate their name on a city map by inscribing it in a name of public infrastructure associated with a residential complex (here the developer has legal rights for naming). Typically, such an inscription

has a rather cryptic form. For example, residential complex Liko-Grad is constructed by Liko-Holding, where Liko actually means “Lisov i Kompanija”, lit. “Lisov and Company”. In this way, politician and businessman Ihor Lysov (Lisov in Russian), the company owner, has inscribed his name not only in the name of his own business, but on the map of Kyiv as well. In the similar way, the owner’s name is inscribed not only in the name of the residential complex, but in the names of the key infrastructure within the complex, in particular Liko-Med (medical centre), Likodent (dentistry), Liko-Shkola (secondary school) and Liko-Svit (kindergarten). In rare cases, developers directly advertise their name in the streetscape, thus symbolically appropriating public space. E.g. in the residential complex Sofia, located in Sofiivska Borschahivka suburban village of Kyiv, the most prominent coffee-shop there is titled Martynov’s Coffee, both to embody the developer’s name (Andrii Martynov), and one of the inner streets (within the fencing of the residential complex) is called Prospekt Martynova (“Martynov’s Avenue”) – virtually rare but symptomatic case for Ukraine (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Martinov’s Coffee (top) and street plaque “Prospekt Martynova” (Martynov Avenue) (bottom) in the suburb of Kyiv

Photo by Oleksiy Gnatiuk, 2021

### Gentrification-led commodification

Place names may be used as a tool to re-organize the structure of cities in the interests of corporate power. In particular, developers have long used the practice of naming to create a thematic urban landscape and promote their own commercial interests in order to increase demand for real estate (Basik 2018). The name of a residential complex (or district, quarter, etc.) acts as a symbolic capital, which sometimes affects the value of the real estate no less than its objective characteristics. A common set of thematic and linguistic repertoires is used, including self-praising, spatio-temporal escapism; addressing ideas of power, money, centrality etc., referring to technological advancement, inscribing positively valued cultural universals and linguistic choices in favor of specific globally and/ or locally spoken languages (Vuolteenaho and Kolamo 2012). Such toponymic practices, on one hand, are generated by neoliberal place making and gentrification, on the other they may contribute to it by symbolic stigmatization of certain parts of urban space (Vuolteenaho and Berg 2009, Yurchak 2000, Giraut and Houssay-Holzschuch 2016 and Spocter 2018).

The naming of housing development in Ukraine is not regulated legally, and therefore occurs at the discretion of the developer. The most common values sold in the residential real estate market of Ukraine are: (1) the ideas of status, including elitism, prestige, success, primacy, aristocracy; (2) attractiveness of the natural environment, environmental friendliness, and proximity to green recreational areas or water bodies; (3) comfort, safety, happiness, cosiness, close-knit community values; (4) smartness and modernity of the habitat. Quite common are replicas of the names of the most famous and prestigious urban areas. For example, the name of the Kyiv neighbourhood of Lypky has become a symbol of luxury, power and aristocracy, and is used in the names of residential complexes not only within the city of Kyiv (Novopecherski Lypky, Obolonski Lypky and Lypky Island), but also in the Kyiv's suburbs (Sofijski Lypky, Hostomelski Lypky and Irpinski Lypky) and other parts of the country (Lypky in Ivano-Frankivsk, Western Ukraine; and Lypky in Donetsk, Eastern Ukraine, now controlled by pro-Russian separatists). Many residential complexes get their names from the names of other geographical objects: countries, regions, cities, especially those economically, socially and culturally developed (Tab. 1). In particular, 80.8% of the foreign-originated toponyms refer to places in Europe (see Fig. 3).

Such naming practices represent a kind of place spoofing – creation of artificial thematic spaces that make replicas of other places or specific socio-cultural contexts (Hopkins 1990, Gottdiener 1997 and Zhao et al. 2019). The greatest effectiveness of place spoofing is achieved by combining its linguistic (including names) and non-linguistic (e.g., imitation of the architectural appearance) instruments (see Fig. 4). Such names are intended to connect the real or imaginary merits of these locations with the respective residential complexes, symbolize both elitism and globalism (Basik 2018), reflect local public stereotypes of perception of Europe and the Western world (Yurchak 2000 and Orlova 2017). In particular, in the city of Kyiv and its suburbs, the vast majority of names of residential complexes of this kind (over 75%) appeal to locations within developed European countries. Such “geographical” names in the service of private developers contrast with the “geographical” names of streets in the service of public authorities, reflecting memory policy and geopolitics (Gnatiuk and Melnychuk 2020a). In this way, the symbolic space of Ukrainian cities represents an arena where two different topo-

nymic practices and systems – modernist and neoliberal – coexist and collide – like in the other global contexts (see e.g., Vuolteenaho and Ainiala 2009).

**Tab. 1. Foreign places that gave names to residential estates in Kyiv and its suburbs (2020)**

Country	Geographical units (country, region, city, district, etc.)	Number of toponyms
United States of America	Boston, California, Chicago, Philadelphia, Manhattan, New York, Richmond, San Francisco, Stanford, Washington,	11
United Kingdom	Bristol, Britain, Chelsea, England, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Sherwood, Soho, Whitehall	10
France	France, Marseille, Montville, Provence, Riviera	7
Germany	Bavaria, Edeldorf, Munich, Rothenburg	6
Czechia	Prague	5
Poland	Poland, Warsaw	4
Italy	Italy, Venice, Riviera	4
Switzerland	Switzerland, Geneva	3
Bulgaria	Bulgaria	1
Canada	Montreal	1
Denmark	Denmark	1
Egypt	Alexandria	1
Finland	Finland	1
Greece	Hellas	1
Luxembourg	Luxembourg	1
Netherlands	Amsterdam	1
New Zealand	Auckland	1
Norway	Fjord (general name)	1
Russia	Barvikha	1
Spain	Barcelona	1
International	Alpes, the Baltics, La Manche, Scandinavia	5

Elaborated by the authors based on LUN.ua real estate directory.



Fig. 3. Places in Europe that gave names to residential estates in Kyiv and its suburbs  
Elaborated by the authors based on LUN.ua real estate directory.



Fig. 4. Residential estate Nova Anhlija (New England) in Kyiv Tourist commodification  
Photo by Anatoliy Melnychug (2021).

Tourist commodification is the most widespread type of commercial use of toponyms in the global scale – it consists of the use of place names by municipalities and corporate businesses as tourist attractions, attracting consumers and converting the symbolic capital of place names into economic capital (Basik 2018). However, tourist commodification of place names in Ukraine still rarely goes beyond the ordinary and globally known practices of place branding. In particular, dozens of Ukrainian cities have already developed and approved their visual identity aimed to attract tourists and/or investors, which typically includes a name of the city combined with a graphic logo, representing local specific features, and a motto or a slogan. The use of a city name as a tool for branding private businesses is especially typical for already known tourist destinations (e.g. Lviv). Another trend is materializing a toponym via creating numerous contextualized replicas of the “I-Amsterdam” sign in different cities, typically in the form “I love [name of the city]”, the globally-known practice, in Ukraine is often quite successful but sometimes it is contested by the local residents (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5. “I love Vinnytsia” installation in the city of Vinnytsia  
Photo by Oleksiy Gnatiuk (2021).

Against this background, a commercial use of both official and folk-originated toponymy to create thematic cultural landscapes, following the example of the Canadian Vulcan (Mair 2009) or the Russian Myshkin (Yudin and Koloshenko 2014), may be yielding for scientific understanding and promising in terms of practice. E.g., in the city of Vinnytsia the administration recently (in 2018) renamed a square in the city centre to Liverpool. Also, a sculptural composition depicting the Beatles on a yellow submarine was installed and the band’s songs are transmitted on the square. The band’s songs are periodically broadcast from the installed loudspeakers (Fig. 6). The square was unofficially called Liverpool since the 1970s because, according to the urban legends, (1) locals often gathered on the square to sing songs of the famous Beatles from the city of Liverpool, and/or (2) a closely-spaced canteen sold quite tasty liver cakes (Gnatiuk and Melnychuk 2020b). In this way, the use of a well-known toponym together with relevant local narrative allowed creating a thematic urban place that attracts visitors, including tourists, and to grow the profits of local businesses.



Fig. 6. Liverpool Square in Vinnytsia

Photo by Oleksiy Gnatiuk (2021).

## CONCLUSIONS

The article reflects the results of a pilot review study on commodification of place names in Ukraine. All three types of place name commodification, proposed by Basik (2018), namely infrastructural, gentrification-led and tourist, have been found in this post-Soviet country. At the same time, patterns and repertoires of toponymy commodification are rather simplified compared to those known in the Western world or certain rapidly growing economies like South Korea or Dubai. The reason for this is probably twofold. On the one hand, in the time of political regimes change and in the heat of decommunization, toponyms are given special symbolic weight, and thus are largely considered to be ‘sacred cows’, serving for the needs of ideology, geopolitics and memory policy. On the other hand, naming policies with respect to public infrastructure are still over-regulated, making it virtually impossible to create and use artificial/corporate place names for commercial purposes.

This substantially limits the possibilities of infrastructural commodification, in particular vending the rights to name infrastructure objects. However, in recent years private businesses and political actors made visible attempts to control the public spaces symbolically via the newly created toponyms and convert this symbolic power into economical and/or political benefits, widening the spiral of the commercial use of place names. Tourist commodification is currently reduced to ordinary repertoires of place branding realized by both public and private actors using already existing place names. At the same time, creating thematic toponym-inspired cultural landscapes is an emerging and novel practice. Gentrification-led commodification, driven predominantly by the private developers of residential estates, together with a tacit consent of the authorities to the free creativity of private actors in the field of naming practices, seems to be the most prosperous against this background. Here, we observe either the use of existing toponyms or artificial creation of new toponyms. To summarize, with regard to toponymic actors and strategies, the commercial use of toponymy in Ukraine remains almost the exclusive prerogative of the private sector, while the role of the public sector (including public authorities and local governments) is more than modest.

It should be admitted that some naming practices visible in Ukraine do not fit into the tripartite classification. In particular, the use of names of historical regions and macro-regions of the globe to enhance the competitiveness of private businesses and public institutions has not been properly addressed in critical toponymics literature and deserves more attention in terms of motifs, values, perceptions and consequences. The further research agenda should seek to focus in more detail on such not adequately investigated topics, as well as on more precise analysis of different kinds of toponymy commodification and their impact on the cultural landscape and socio-spatial structures.

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## NÁZVY MIEST NA PREDAJ: MIESTO UKRAJINY VO SVETE KOMODIFIKÁCIE TOPONÝM

Štúdium komodifikácie geografických názvov, ako samostatný perspektívny smer v rámci kritickej toponomastiky, sa začalo približne okolo roku 2010. Jeho hlavnou myšlienkou je využívanie miestnych názvov ako nástroja na rast kapitalizácie priestoru, ako aj snaha o jeho symbolické privlastnenie. Napriek narastajúcemu množstvu literatúry, konceptualizácia a popis kommerčného využitia toponým, štúdium privatizácie toponým, právo na pomenovanie a ich súvislosť s transformáciou geografického priestoru v rôznych regionálnych a národných kontextoch sú v humánnej geografii ešte stále nedostatočne rozvinutou tému. Najmä kommerčné využitie geografických názvov na Ukrajine (ako aj vo zvyšku intenzívne sa transformujúceho, sporného a mnohovrstvového postsovietského priestoru) zostáva takmer nepreskúmanou oblasťou. Postsovietsky priestor je vhodnou oblasťou na štúdium kommerčného využitia názvov miest, ako aj jeho dôsledkov pre kultúrnu krajinu a spoločnosť – od miestnej úrovne až po medzinárodnú komparatívnu perspektívu.

Príspevok predstavuje prehľad praktík a spôsobov komodifikácie toponým na Ukrajine, ktorý vychádza z nasledujúcich zdrojov údajov: 1) analýza existujúcej akademickej literatúry, ktorá priamo alebo nepriamo popisuje postupy kommerčného používania názvov miest na Ukrajine; 2) analýza toponymických komodifikačných praktík v médiách na Ukrajine (najmä v oblasti turizmu, infraštruktúry a používania geografických názvov ako obchodných značiek); 3) databáza názvov obytných komplexov v Kyjeve a jeho zázemí; 4) terénny výskum v mestách Kyjev a Vinnyčja; 5) národný a miestny právny rámec oblasti pomenúvania a premenovania verejnej infraštruktúry. Analýza sleduje najmä tri typy komodifikácie názvov miest: infraštruktúrne, gentrifikačné a turistické.

Zjavne najbežnejšou formou komodifikácie názvov miest na Ukrajine je používanie miestnych geografických názvov na marketingové účely, vrátane brandingu

tovarov a služieb, mien právnických osôb, masových podujatí, politických projektov, atď. Špecifickou črtou je tiež využívanie neoficiálnych historických názvov regiónov. Možnosti komodifikácie infraštruktúry, najmä predaj práv na pomenovanie objektov infraštruktúry, sú dosť obmedzené, pretože sa v krajine, ktorá prechádza dekomunizáciou a prehodnocovaním politiky pamäti, pripisuje príslušným miestnym názvom v krajine osobitná symbolická dôležitosť a politika pomenovania verejnej infraštruktúry je príliš regulovaná. V posledných rokoch sa však súkromné organizácie, ako i politickí aktéri viditeľne snažia symbolicky kontrolovať verejné priestranstvá a premieňať túto symbolickú silu na ekonomicke a/alebo politické výhody. Týmto sa rozširujú možnosti kommerčného využívania miestnych názvov. Aj komodifikácia v oblasti turizmu je v súčasnosti redukovaná na bežné praktiky používania názvov miest ako obchodných značiek (branding miest). Na druhej strane, vytváranie pomenovaní tematickej kultúrnej krajiny, ktoré by boli toponymicky inšpirované, je len objavujúcou sa novou praxou. Komodifikácia v oblasti gentrififikácie podporovaná developermi rezidenčných projektov spolu s tichým súhlasmom úradov a slobodnou kreativitou súkromných aktérov v oblasti pomenovania je najviac prosperujúcou oblasťou využívania miestnych názvov.



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