

Reading street names politically

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Naming and nominating belong to J.L. Austin's classic list of performatives within the class of exercitives. This concept is defined by him as follows:

"An exercitive is the giving of a decision in favour of or against a certain course of action, or advocacy of it. It is a decision that something is to be so, as distinct from a judgement that is so; it is advocacy that it should be so, as opposed to an estimate that it is so; it is an award as opposed to an assessment; it is a sentence as opposed to a verdict." (Austin 1962, 155).

In other words, names cannot be found in the object to be named, they must be given, that is invented and accepted. The decision aspect renders to the act of naming a political dimension: names could always be different and they are a subject of potential conflicts, often of actual controversy. Naming is the contingent act *par excellence* and as such it can be understood as a paradigm for politics.

A comparison with voting is illustrative. In both cases an open question is posed, candidates for action are presented and a selection of them completes the act. In this sense, voting can be understood as a special case of naming in which the selection and the presentation of the candidates is explicit. Although questions of how and by whom a candidate is named, are subject to controversy, in an actual voting situation these questions have already been resolved. Voting subjects a question, or the choice of person, to a contingent decision instead of finding some extra-political 'reasons' for a standpoint or an appointment of a person (cf. Weber 1917). However, diverse attempts to 'normalize' voting, to diminish, neutralize or control the contingency, can also be used in studying the politics of naming.

Despite the obvious political significance this kind of research is hardly ever conducted at all in political science, while traditional onomastics has been afraid of politics (cf. e.g. Nicolaisen 1990), although a growing interest to street names is visible in the journal *Names* since the seventies (e.g. Algeo 1978, Baldwin and Grimaud 1989). More interest has been shown by cultural historians (e.g. Agulhon 1984; Milo 1986; Ferguson 1988), by the Israeli historian Maoz Azaryahu in particular (1986, 1990, 1991), who has written valuable contributions to both the denazification and communist politics of street naming in Germany.

In this article, I will apply the perspective on politics sketched in my *Introduction* above to naming. If the contingency of naming appear overwhelming, it may be appropriate to consider the opposition between stability and movement in the politics of naming with the pairs **policy-politicking** and **polity-politicization**. I will discuss this theme with the paradigmatic case of street naming, always a

problem of invention and selection. I attempt to demonstrate the practices and the possibilities of naming politics through a historical sketch of the politics of naming in Helsinki, read in the context of the politics of street naming in European cities in general.

Dimensions of street naming

The dimensions of space, time, language and subject are constitutive of all politics, including street naming. This is obvious in the spatial and linguistic dimensions. In the spatial horizon of a city, a street forms a unit of transition and division in addition to a space of acting and being: a street in the city is built consciously and it rearranges the space around it. In this sense, a street is a paradigm for open and public places in the city, for squares, parks, stations and so on. Street names form a key dimension of a 'city text' in general (cf. Ferguson 1988). In a modern city, naming is a necessary condition for a street, too. Today, names are given to new streets before they are built and naming is an inherent part of street planning.

Reading street names as a city text allows the reader to question the temporal dimension: looking at the map of a city the street names may be, for a competent reader, sufficient to get a first glimpse of the history of the city in the terms of changing political climates in the city. According to Azaryahu, street names belong to the 'media of presentation' of a selective remembrance: "Mit ihrer Hilfe wird die 'Vergangenheit' zu einem untrennbaren Bestandteil der 'Gegenwart'" (1991, 9).

This aspect of the temporal dimension is closely linked to the subject dimension of the politics of naming. Here, however, it is often less interesting to ask for the actual subjects of street naming than to look at the streets and ask who is commemorated by street names: "C'est en tout temps une décision hautement politique que celle d'attribuer un nom de personne à une voie publique" (Agulhon 1984, 93). With Benjamin we can speak of an act of 'municipal immortality' (*Das Passagen-Werk*, 643), with Arendt we can see in it a manifestation of having been somebody rather than nobody (1958/1960, 169-171). But it may also be asked why some obvious 'somebodies' are excluded from the city text.

Street names are always 'bestowed' and do not 'evolve'. Paradigmatic cases are commemorative (referring to persons and events in the manner of *rue 20 novembre* etc.), commendatory (à la *Freedom street*) and manufactured (e.g. containing acronyms and other verbal jokes) street names (for the terminology cf. Stewart 1975, esp. 87). A highly profiled city text is one which is dominated by these constructed types of street names, that appeals both to the presence of history and the deciphering imagination of the readers of the city text.

Furthermore, we can speak of different political street cultures. If street names are only a means of distinguishing streets from each other for traffic or postal

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purposes, the names could be replaced, in the American style, by numbers. However, in many European cities the streets are also a place of being and acting, walking, looking, sitting in the cafés, etc.: "Die Pariser machen die Straße zum Interieur" (Benjamin *Das Passagen-Werk*, 531). For the *flâneur*, the names of streets are inherent in the experience of a city as a human construction referring to other phenomena. They can even create a second degree of reality, when for example the names of cafés or underground stations refer to street names (*ibid.*, 643, 647)¹.

Street naming policy in the city

In the city politics of today, the regulation of naming practices by a naming policy is inevitable. A street naming policy aims at regulating the contingency of naming and thus normalizing the final act of naming into an undramatic or even ritualistic event. It contains procedures, authoritative agents and criteria for the proposal and acceptance of street names.

A definite procedure distinguishes the authoritative character of street naming in modern cities from the slow and spontaneous practices in older cities (for the constitution of the naming monopoly in France cf. Milo 1986, 287-289). The first inhabitants do not create or vote on the street names in the area, but rather the names are given without knowing who will be the inhabitants. Street naming is, as a rule, understood as a merely administrative measure (for a critique cf. Flierl 1991, 9). In the stage of actual naming hardly anyone has a personal interest to be engaged with it. Still, there have been attempts from below both to remove names from the city text as well as to introduce them, but in West-Berlin, for example, they have hardly been a success (cf. *Sackgassen*, 46-55, 89-100).

The establishment of an authoritative, formal procedure is a measure to regulate contingency by excluding unofficial naming, which may sometimes be an ingenious act of resistance². However, the authoritative street naming also can be a source of conflict, for example between career officials and naming

¹ One link between the politics of streets and the politics of names lies in the correspondence between them in relation to the position, length, width, etc. of the streets. The monumental centres cannot have simple names referring to nature or agriculture, and commemorated persons or concepts of first rank cannot be located to the suburbs or to 'bad neighborhoods' (cf. e.g. Milo 1986).

² Cf. e.g. the following example: "Der 'Rotarmistenplatz' vor der Philosophischen Fakultät wurde über Nacht in 'Jan-Palach-Platz' umbenannt, das Schild am UMPRUM, der Kunsthochschule, wurde ausgewechselt, die Straßenbahnschaffner riefen den Namen aus, nach ein Paar Wochen hat es wieder aufgehört. Aber der schönste Platz Luxemburgs heißt heute noch Jan-Palach-Platz." (Moniková 1987, 184-185) After the 'Velvet Revolution' of 1989 the place in Prague is now officially named for Jan Palach, a student who burned himself in protest in 1969.

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experts, while the city council and the magistrate hardly have more than a veto power over decisions (for Helsinki cf. Terho 1979, 19-20).

Among the normative criteria for street names, the most important is the stability principle: for unlike firm or product names, street names are intended to be 'timeless' (Närhi 1979, 26) and the change of them is regarded as exceptional. Name changes are highly interesting politically, not only when a regime changes (cf. Azaryahu 1991) but also in the more prosaic situation of municipal reforms, etc. Linked to stability is the one street-one name principle, which prohibits the plurality of used names so typical of many other situations of naming. Both of them may be justified by the principle of names as 'rigid designators' (Kripke 1972).

Street names are supposed to be accepted by the inhabitants, which excludes pejorative names. Street names are hardly ever subjected to a referendum, but naming experts claim to know the opinion of their special auditories and prefer even a colorless and harmless city text to names which could provoke protests and quarrels. Compared with some other names, like book titles, rock bands or feminist bookstores, a provocative rhetoric has less chances in street naming.

Especially commemorative names which refer to persons, events and concepts are always potentially controversial and correspondingly are subject to explicit policy regulations. The Nazi and Stalinist practice to naming streets (and cities, etc.) after their own leaders was experienced as a particularly unlucky version of the 'cult of personality'. Thus, the death of a person has become, as a rule, a minimal criterion for conferring a street name, but even in western countries the criterion of death is not followed without exceptions.

Another criterion for street names is that the 'greatness' of persons to be commemorated must be generally recognized. The French Ministry of the Interior categorically stated in 1946: "... l'oeuvre de ces personnalités doit être à l'abri de toute polémique" (Quoted from Touillon 1946, 11)³. A dilemma for naming policy is to balance the administrative criterion of incontestability with a political majority's claim to draw its own profile by the street naming. Another dilemma concerns the political traditions of the city: should they be prolonged or can the actual majority impose its will, even at the cost of the requirement of stable street name: in the Parisian suburbs the former communist majorities are still visible in street names.

³ Daniel Milo (1986, 306-307) has, from the practice of street naming in France, made a list of persons who are not contested (Vergingétorix, Saint Louis, Jeanne d'Arc, Hugo, Pasteur, Jaurès, Clemenceau, Blum), who are highly contested (Napoléon 1er, Louis XIV, Richelieu), and who have a bad reputation (e.g. Danton, Marat, Robespierre, Talleyrand, Napoléon III, Thiers).

Street names as means of politicking

A street naming policy with its procedural, personal and normative dimensions can only limit the acceptable and maybe give paradigms for 'good' names. A normal politics appeals, whenever it is possible, to policy procedures, principles and authorities, not actively using the range of freedom permitted by them. In this routinized case, the autonomy of the decisions and the superiority of politics over administration (cf. Weber 1918) are absent and the significance of street names as a medium of politics is not realized. I exclude from politicking this marginal case and will look for manifestation of virtuosity.

Street name politicking can be oriented towards proposing new names, changing the old ones or re-interpreting the political in the existing names. Virtuosity may well be already manifested in single cases as well as in turning street names into a playground of one's own politicking in general. Politicking does not have an immediate interest in the general profile of the street names.

A change of street names as an exception always needs special grounds. Of course, street names have been changed even there, where no revolutions or other regime changes have happened⁴. Perhaps research has compromised the role of a person in history or an event does not appear any longer as glorious as it was once thought to be. Sometimes even an older street name has been compromised by becoming a metonymy to a pejorative name, say e.g. *rue de Vichy* or *Braunauer Straße*. And conversely: e.g. in the cases of Dag Hammarskjöld or John F. Kennedy, the assassination has spread the name to the streets all over the world: in France in 1978, for example, Kennedy was present in 49 of 95 *préfectures* (Milo 1986, 307). It has not been difficult to find some common and boring street names which have suddenly been replaced by that of the hero.

Because new names are always needed, a more promising strategy to have a singular name introduced into the city text lies in the first naming of the streets. In this soft way the profile of the city text could slowly be altered, e.g. by increasing the number of streets named for women. This kind of 'compensatory naming' has also been used as a means of preventing the return to the old names after the fall of pro-Soviet regimes (for East Berlin after 1989 cf. Flierl 1992). But it is difficult

⁴ According to *Ausführungsvorschriften zu § 5 des Berliner Straßengesetzes – Benennung* – from 1985: "Umbenennungen mit einem neuen oder dem vorherigen Straßennamen sind zulässig, um aus der Zeit von 1933 bis 1945 stammende Straßennamen nach aktiven Gegnern der Demokratie und geistig-politischen Wegbereitern der nationalsozialistischen Gewaltherrschaft zu beseitigen. Das gilt auch für Straßen, die in der Zeit von 1933 bis 1945 aus politischen Gründen anderwertig benannt oder umbenannt worden sind (nach Orten, Sachen, Ereignissen)." Quoted from *Sackgassen*, 82. A proposal of the Senate declares: "aus der Zeit von 1945 bis 1989 stammende Straßennamen nach Verfechtern der stalinistischen Gewaltherrschaft" are to be replaced. (Quoted from Flierl 1991, 13)

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to imagine compensating the military names – West Berlin, for example, has ca. 250 of them (cf. *Sackgassen*, 21) – for example by introducing pacifist names such as *Pacifist's Square*, *Civil Disobedience's Avenue*, *Conscientious Objector's Street*, or *Deserter's Boulevard* would probably be too provocative for any regime.

Especially in France and Germany, the streets named after persons usually also give a presentation of the person. A soft way of politicking by the street names is to change only the reference person, not the street name itself: in West Berlin the presentation of *Petersallee* was changed, to avoid more radical changes, from the imperialist Carl Peters to the CDU local politician Hans Peters (*Sackgassen*, 122-123). In Besançon Pierre-Joseph Proudhon only got half of *rue Proudhon* named after him, while the other half remained named for an older, conservative relative of his⁵.

It is obviously more difficult to explicitly revise the policy principles of street naming than to add new ones to them. In single cases of street naming, politicking by means of simply neglecting the principles is often possible: the bureaucrats and the experts usually do not protest publicly. It is easy to refer to prejudicates, for example that living persons have got a street, and an ad hoc suspension of a principle can also be accepted without controversies. In these cases, the city council can manifest its sovereignty and show the limits of guidance by policy principles.

Re-interpreting a principle and opposing the policy criteria together form the most simple means of politicking by street names in singular cases. A paradigm is set by the famous but controversial 'sons and daughters' of a city. By granting a street to them, an opposition of the inhabitants is to be expected but not doing so would show the city to be afraid of an original person: a Besançon without a street dedicated to P-J. Proudhon would manifest the narrow-mindedness of the local politicians. Especially if there are some local historic reasons, a consciously provocative rhetoric for introducing controversial figures into the city text can be considered as a kind of proof in the mastery of politicking.

In politicking, the commitment to a definite name is instrumental to the

⁵ Cf. the following story of the local historian of street names: "La rue qui porte le nom de Proudhon est en réalité dédiée à deux personnages distincts: Jean-Baptiste-Victor, juriste (1758-1838), Pierre-Joseph, sociologue (1809-1865).

A l'origine existait seulement la partie allant de la rue Bersot à la rue de la République, et qui portait le nom de Jean-Baptiste-Victor Proudhon. En 1928, pour honorer aussi le sociologue, on décida d'attribuer la rue à la fois à Jean-Baptiste-Victor et à Pierre-Joseph; cette décision provoqua les réclamations des descendants du juriste qui soulignèrent que les idées opposées des deux Proudhons ne permettaient pas d'associer leurs noms sur une même plaque indicatrice... Pour tout concilier, cette voie venant d'être prolongée jusqu'à la rue Gambetta, on décida de donner le nom de Pierre-Joseph au nouveau tronçon créé." (Toiullon 1984, 143)

manifestation of virtuosity in the naming situation. In this sense, alternatives to name changes are to be understood as tentative and liable to be altered if a suitable compromise name is found. Politicking transcends the interest in naming and in streets as a political space and is rather related to alternative media of politicking.

The naming polity

A naming polity mediates between policy and politicking, between making street names and acting by means of them. It constitutes a name regime for the city, shapes its profile and regiments its changes. If naming policy is analogous to legislation and politicking by names to the election process, naming polity is an analogy to a 'name political system'. As an instance of that which has already been politicized concerning the street names, the naming polity preserves the existing modes of the politicized as well as regiments them to 'ordinary' forms. The profile of the name regime in a city is shaped both by the content of these aspects and by the links which try to hold them together.

The maintenance of the politicized aspects of naming consists, above all, in the defense of the autonomy of the name decisions in the city council and magistrate over the expert's attempt to universalize the policy rules or to use them as if they were quasi-natural. A name polity exists only where at least some *Spielraum* for politicking is manifested over the imperialist claims of making the street naming a merely administrative or police question.

The power to decide on names is, in a naming polity, also connected with the right to the actual majorities in the city council to draw its own lines into the city text, to contribute to the street naming profile of the city. Too strict policy regulations would leave the city without a singular profile, leaving no room to political imagination. But a naming polity would also temper sudden changes in street names, by the will of an actual majority, in the name of the political traditions of the city.

The depoliticizing aspects of a street name regime sets limits to politicking, for example by preventing an over-extended use of the 'obviously political names' of persons, events and concepts. The tendency towards the autonomization of the street names from their original political references leaves them only known to the insiders, who could read out of them the city's dominant political color and its tolerated nuances. The polity may also contain moves against the practice of using unauthorized names⁶.

⁶ "Wir sind in einer Kneipe an der Straße der Belagerung von Stalingrad, aber kein Mensch nennt sie so: ihr alter patriotischer Name, Straße des 11. November, hat alle Umtaufen überstanden; er erinnert an die Zweite Republik der Vorkriegszeit." (on Lodz in Enzensberger 1987, 372)

Paradigmatic name types form the 'positive' core of a street naming polity. They can always be used, if occasionally new names or name changes are urgently needed, and they may give a specific profile to the city text. The opposition between the politicizing and the depoliticizing moment within the name regime can concern both the content and the character of the paradigmatic names.

At least in the capitals of Europe we can detect **three classic paradigms for street naming: clerical, monarchic and military names** (cf. e.g. Ferguson 1988, 387). The decline of them can be interpreted as a diminishing politicking in so far as they are replaced by names from nature, local history, 'culture' and other harmless areas. Those overtly 'apolitical' names may be made to neglect the elective and controversial character of street naming and by granting it willingly to experts and specialists.

The dilemma of creating a singular profile of street names in modern Europe lies just here: should the decline of clerical, monarchic and military names be achieved at the cost of lowering the possibility of politicking by street names in general or should the rudimental and oppressive form of the presence of the political be retained and only compensated by names with opposite connotations? The same dilemma is faced in Eastern Europe today in relation to communist name culture.

Politicization of street naming

Like the polity, the politicization of street names concerns the profile of a city's street names and not single cases of naming. The politicization of naming does not attempt to get specific names introduced into the city text. Its goal is, rather, an opening of the naming situation in a manner which advances the chances for politicking by names. It de-regiments the naming situation, signifies a deconstructive move by reverting the naming situation from its submission to a regime, and creating a distance towards regimentation. But how the situation is used and by whom the openness can be used is not a question of politicization but of politicking.

The primary temporal dimension of politicization is the past. It is directed towards street names, which canonize a certain selected past, and which should be eliminated or re-interpreted. Politicization proceeds against the inevitable partiality in favor of the history of the winners, so typical both to the unreflected and to the consciously partial street naming. The decanonization proceeds by compromising either the value or the significance of a canonized reference in a street name.

The decanonization of street names is by no means necessarily replaced by rehabilitating persons *post mortem* through street naming – this is rather a move in politicking. In its formality, politicization has nothing to rehabilitate. Constitutive for a politicizing reading of street names is rather an obstinate refusal of

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constructive alternatives: if they are presented, they are only instruments for getting rid of the compromised names. The politicization of street names may be strategically concentrated on eliminating some key canonized names, knowing well that the chances are normally minimal in such cases and therefore a concentration of efforts in selective campaigns may be wise.

A minimal decanonization does not even attempt to change the street names but aims at improving the competence and interest in reading the existing street names politically. Learning to give attention to the partisan and regimented character of the city text, for example to the dominance of clerical, monarchic and military names, may sometimes be an effective means for opening the situation to politicking. Even the replacement of the communist name culture in Eastern Europe by 'apolitical' names may be a politicizing move as the deconstruction of a regime, which renders the naming both less ritualistic and more open to invention, as compared to a replacement by opposite 'heroic' names.

The city's profile in commemorating persons, events and concepts in its streets may be rendered higher and thus the requirement for using street names as means in politicking more central. By such means the presence of history, the actuality of past struggles and conflicts, the invocation the significance of past events and persons for the present may be manifested. The problem with this variant lies both in the conventional, sectoral view of politics and in not understanding the relative, situational, margin oriented character of politicization. Furthermore, even a temptation to establish a new regime of street names may be imminent.

A subversive politicizing strategy of street naming gives opportunities to diverse inversions and modifications in the name by using nicknames or altering the content and compromising the original reference. At least the use of the history of winners canonized by dates does not require much research and imagination in finding events from another years with opposite political significance. Opening the naming situation by politicization may also result in making the naming appear to be more playful than a canonic event. Besides inversions, playing with names through verbal jokes is always possible, e.g. using ironic names (For both self-irony and the rehabilitation of commonly pejorative names by the German feminist naming culture cf. Pusch 1990). It is possible to invent ingenious acronyms from the initials and in general using manufactured names, which do only indirectly refer to words in common language or which attempt to create new words.

Politicization by these means may also introduce supplementary names for the streets, as is common practice in personal names. If a writer for example uses a pseudonym, why couldn't she/he also do the same thing for the address: it would require ingenuity also in the post office. This would deny the monopoly of one authorized name for streets and abandon the principle of one street-one name, by allowing the streets to concur with each other in the number of nicknames.

Related to the plural experience of the street itself by its inhabitants and users, this would be a simple means of politicization. Not only cities but also streets could have a name profile of their own, instead of a single name.

Still, a type of limit for politicizing street naming may be found both in the singularity and in the stability requirements. Without some definite singularity and rigidity in designating an object, it would hardly be possible to speak of proper names at all. But this does not necessarily mean that all streets should have only one authorized name, which always remains the same.

From forenames to surnames: street names in Helsinki⁷

A brief look at the map of the inner city of Helsinki is enough to show a predominance of forenames, which gives the city text a singular profile. Of course, forenames are a common resource of street naming, and the calendars of the saints are classic source of street naming, like the names of the royal families. Both of them are also present in Helsinki, but key forenames are secular and non-dynastic. To read them politically requires recourse to the history of the country, of the city, and of the practices of street naming themselves as well as comparisons with some other European capitals, mainly with Paris and Berlin.

Using street names for commemoration is an ancient practice, but as a system of nomination, related to the idea "d'adopter des noms qui n'eussent pas de rapport direct avec le lieu auquel ils étaient imposés" (Milo 1986, 287), it is quite new. It can be located in Paris as a paradigm city and dated back to the construction of *place de l'Odéon* 1779; it was then radicalized during the Revolution especially in the context of the project of Abbé Gregoire from 1794, and continued again by Napoleon Bonaparte (cf. Milo 1986, 286-301).

Helsinki⁸ was founded by King Gustaf Vasa of Sweden in 1550, but it remained a provincial town in the Swedish province of Finland. In the war between Sweden and Russia the city was largely burned down in 1808, and by the Peace Treaty of Hamina in 1809, Finland was transferred to Russia with a status of a diffusely autonomous Grand Duchy. Helsinki was made the capital of Finland in 1812 – it was both closer to St. Petersburg and farther from Stockholm than Turku. The city was re-built as a capital of Empire style, according to the city plan of J.A. Ehrenström with C.L. Engel as the architect. In the context of Ehrenström's city

⁷ The following discussion is based on the commentaries (Aminoff & Pesonen 1971; Pesonen 1971; Närhi 1979; Terho 1979) and name directories in *Helsingin kadunnimet* (1971) and the supplementary volume *Helsingin kadunnimet II* (1979).

⁸ Swedish was then, of course, the official language of Finland and of the capital. Finnish street names were introduced unofficially in the 1860's and officially only after 1900, when Finnish had become the majority language of the city. For the sake of simplicity, I will call the city by the Finnish name Helsinki, but use the Swedish street names for the period until ca. 1900 and the Finnish names for the later period.

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plan, the naming of all of the streets arose, for reasons of fire prevention.

Ehrenström and the Governor General for Finland, Fabian Steinheil, formed the first committee for street naming in Helsinki, submitting their proposals to Alexander I who visited Helsinki in 1819. In the new Fire Order of 1820 only a few old local names referring to the context – the church, the market, the harbor – and in two cases – *Esplanaden* och *Bulevarden* – to the streets themselves were retained, otherwise new names were introduced. For them the new French system of using non-natural and non-local references was practiced consequently, as if as a mark of distinction for a capital. With the new system an **original politicization of the city text in Helsinki was introduced and a street name polity created**. Even today the street names in the city are to be related to this politicizing and polity-creating act.

In a wider political context, creating a capital for the Grand Duchy of Finland was a measure of nation-building, balancing the Russian requirements and the attempt to create a specifically Finnish system of administration and 'government', with reference to the Estate Diet, called after 1809 into its first session in 1863. The key political figures were the **Governor General**, the trustee of the Czar in Helsinki, and the **Ministerial State Secretary**, as a trustee of 'the Finns' in St. Petersburg, while the **Senate**, 'the internal government', only later gained a key place in politicking⁹.

The composition of the street naming committee and the procedure, with the veto-power of the Czar himself, are indices of the key role of the street naming in the capital as the subject matter of this bureaucratic-diplomatic style of politicking. Another point is that no normative or procedural naming policy was created: naming partly followed some general paradigms, but to a large extent required inventions, using the skills of politicking by the committee members which established the singularity of the nomenclature of street names in Helsinki.

An extraordinary space for politicking was created by the inapplicability of the common paradigms of street naming in Helsinki. In a Lutheran country saints were not honored, the clerical element was presented by a few names of Russian, Greek Orthodox saints (St. Anna, Andreae, Georg, Helene, Vladimir), but there could not be too many. Some central streets were dedicated to the Romanov family, namely to Alexander I's wife Elisabet, his mother Maria, also with her maiden name of princess Sophia (of Württemberg), and his brothers Konstantin and Mikael – all of them living in 1820. The Czar himself did not accept a street: *Alexandersgatan* was named only after his death (1833). A recourse to Swedish monarchic names would also have been an inappropriate sign, and Finland did

⁹ Transferred from Turku to Helsinki in 1828 the university became another place of politicking, and the formation of factions in the Estate Diet largely had their origins in student and university politics (cf. Klinge 1989). For street naming the university did not, however, play an immediate role.

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not have a nobility or a military of its own. The presence of military names like *Kaserngatan* and *Manègegatan* referred to actual military establishments.

Inapplicable in Finland, especially after the Vienna Congress, were the republican or revolutionary conceptual names, moreover names glorifying Russia and the Empire also did not appear to be suitable. In the city center, *Unionsgatan*, proposed by the emperor himself, refers to the union of Finland with Russia in 1809 and *Fredsgatan* refers to the Peace Treaty of 1809. To them may be linked *Senatsgatan* (1820-1836), later changed to *Nikolaigatan*, according to the church – and the new Czar – which ran north to the *Senatstorget* (1836), the key square of the city. *Regeringsgatan* (1836), a street which referred to the government, runs to the west of the *Senatstorget*. All of these manifested a strong **loyalist bias**.

However, there still remained a need for new names. As a curious but ingenious act of politicking, the committee **transferred the forenames of the leading bureaucrats of the Grand Duchy and of the capital to the streets of the city!** It was a self-legitimatory measure commemorating the effects already done for the benefit of the country and the city, but in doing so discretely, often even using only the second forename, made them appear both as normal forenames for outsiders and as a subtle reference for insiders. All of this well corresponds to the bureaucratic style of politicking, which has no need for popular support and it made all names look relatively harmless to the Russian authorities, who were usually not so well acquainted with Finnish affairs. Perhaps street names also functioned as an *Ersatz* for a proper Finnish nobility.

Only a few of the people who 'got a street' in Helsinki in 1820 or 1836, were already dead. Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt (1759-1814), the first Ministerial State Secretary, got *Mauritzgatan* dedicated posthumously. The others who 'got a street' in Helsinki in 1820 or 1836 were still alive. To Armfelt's follower Robert Henrik Rehbinder (1777-1841) was dedicated *Stora* and *Lilla Robertsgatan* (1820) and even *Henriksatan* (1836), and the naming committee members Fabian Steinheil (1762-1831) and Johan Albrecht Ehrenström (1762-1847) also themselves got a presence in the streets (*Fabiansgatan*, 1820, *Albertsgatan*, 1836), as well as Carl Ludwig Engel (1778-1840), who got *Ludwigsgatan* in 1820. Other streets named in 1820, 1836 or 1842 were also named for city or state officials, most of whom were still alive (*Abrahamsgatan*, *Bernhardsgatan*, *Eriksatan*, *Fredriksatan*, *Kristiansatan*, *Rikhardsgatan*, *Simonsatan* and *Vilhelmsgatan*). Along with them a woman may be added: *Kajaniemi* park (1842) was named according to Kajsa Wählund (d. 1843) who ran a restaurant there. The dedication of a street to these persons was both a sign of gratitude and a recognition as 'somebody' in the Arendtian sense.

Most of these names are still used in the inner city of Helsinki. But in the early years of the 20th century a **transition from a forename regime to surname regime** is visible. Forenames were still used, but they were introduced into the city text only as mere forenames, using the Bible (women's names) and the

national epic, the *Kalevala*, as the main sources. In some cases, the older style of using forenames of local (in new boroughs the names of the former proprietors and their relatives) and national heroes was still practiced, but the historian and story-teller Zachris Topelius (1818-1898) for example got *Zachrisgatan* – *Sakarinkatu* only after his death (1901) – and *Topeliuksenkatu* (1906) already manifested the paradigm shift.

However, unlike the cabinet style-politics of the bureaucrats, the victory of Finnish nationalism in the latter half of the 19th century produced national heroes and appealed to popular support. By manifesting that the Finns could also create 'somebodies', a **'triad of great men' was canonized** (cf. Klinge 1982): the folklorist and compiler of the *Kalevala*, Elias Lönnrot (1802-1884); the poet J.L. Runeberg (1804-1877); and the philosopher, fennoman ideologist and senator J.V. Snellman (1806-1881), with Topelius as the fourth wheel. Lönnrot and Runeberg got only 'their' streets in 1906. Even Snellman, the most political of them, had streets proposed for him outside the center, but only in 1928 was the presence of Czar Nikolai in the very center replaced by *Snellmaninkatu*. The special canonization of these heroes is also manifested by supplementary dedications of small parks as well as a number of names relating to the *Kalevala*, several referring to Runeberg's epic on the 1809-1809 war (esp. *Vänrikki Stählinkatu*) (also making the use of Swedish military names possible) and also to the title of Topelius' national stories (*Välskärinkatu*).

Additionally, a number of 'smaller national heroes' of the 19th century obtained streets in the first years of the new century: the 'national author' Aleksis Kivi (1906), as well as his critic, the linguist August Ahlqvist (1906); the jurist Mathias Calonius (1906); the Fenno-Ugrist M.A. Castrén (1901); 'the father of Finnish elementary school' Uno Cygnaeus (1906); the painter Albert Edelfelt (1906); the natural scientist J.J. Nervander (1906); the polar explorer A.E. Nordenskiöld (1906); the orientalist G.A. Wallin (1901), and the poet J.J. Wecksell (1908). The most obvious sign of the paradigm shift in commemoration is that in 1908 Armfelt, Engel and Rehbinder got all even their surnames printed on city map! A transition from a cabinet-style to a more public-style of politicking required more singularized heroes.

Remarkable for the new names after the turn of the century was also the introduction of heroes from the Swedish period, including both kings and queens (Carl, Gustaf, Kristina, Adolf – not removed as a compromised forename in 1945, Ulrika was present already in 1842, related to the *Ulrikesborg's* baths), also the Sture family of Swedish regents in the 15th century, the Lutheran reformer Agricola, the governors Brahe and Fleming, the economist Chydenius, the admiral Ehrensward (the builder of the fortress before Helsinki), the poet Franzén, and the historian Porthan. The practices of a nationalist historiography were transferred to the city-map. This tradition spoke of Sweden-Finland and separating the Finns from others in the Swedish kingdom and, conversely, introduced

continuity into 'Finnish' history beyond the divide of 1809.

The paradigm shift, as well as the rehabilitation of the Swedish period, is remarkable when placed into the context of a russification policy, especially in the years from 1898 to 1904, when Governor General Bobrikov was assassinated – the assassin Eugen Schauman got a park in the suburb of Kulosaari in 1958 – and again from 1908 to 1914. Street naming by surnames may be interpreted as a massive measure of commemorating 'great Finns' from the past, not so easily to be eradicated by the simple administrative means of russification. Even the Russians, who get a name in this period in the streets of Helsinki, Galizin and Speranski (the councillor of Alexander I, responsible for the autonomy of Finland) were pro-Finnish, like the widow of Alexander III, who got a street by her name as a Danish princess (*Dagmarinkatu*, 1906).

In the context of mass actions, even a general strike during the Russian Revolution in the autumn 1905, and of the introduction of the unicameral Parliament with universal suffrage in 1906, the abolition of 'national' street names would not have been easy for the Russians, but they did not intervene in the capital's internal affairs in this respect. However, the democratization and parliamentarization of Finnish politics did not result in an introduction of conceptual street names from the republican or revolutionary tradition – the proposal concerning *Frihetsgatan* (Freedom Street) in 1900 was not accepted.

In the twenties, there was a great discussion on re-naming the streets, based on the work of an expert committee, but the results remained rather small. The eradication of Russian names was conducted moderately, removing Nikolai but not Alexander, and leaving out only the too Russian names of Konstantin and Vladimir as well as the surnames Kulneff (a hero from Runeberg's epic), Galizin and Speranski. Even *Unioninkatu* was finally not replaced by *Yliopistonkatu* (University Street), although the independence of Finland undid the union of 1809. Snellman, Lönnrot and Aleksis Kivi now got 'better' streets than earlier, the senator Leo Mechelin (1838-1914), suspect to the Russians, got a street already in 1917, and otherwise the nationalist commemoration continued.

The independence of Finland as a republic did not bring street names from the republican nomenclature into the streets of Helsinki. Freedom, equality, brotherhood, republic, democracy, and even independence are still absent from the capital's streets. Proposed names referring to Europe, England and America were never introduced. This may be related to the procedural change: street naming was to become a question of municipal politics and even there one of naming experts rather than of a parliamentary committee. The only quarrel over names concerned the Finnish name of *Jägaregatan*: a Social Democrat opposed the change of *Metsästäjänkatu* (Hunter's Street) to *Jääkärinkatu*, referring to the *Jäger*, a conspiratory battalion of Finnish youth trained in Germany during World War I and who took part in the Civil war on the side of the Whites.

In the post-war period, the city's area was considerably extended and new

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suburbs were built within its administrative boundaries: many names were needed, and naming was left to an increasing extent to expert committees and naming officials. As a general tendency, commemorative naming has been diminished at the cost of local or nature names, and even those commemorated are poets, actors, musicians; now even businessmen and local leaders of the suburbs rather than politicians. Notable exceptions are the streets that were dedicated to the presidents (Ståhlberg, Relander, Svinhufvud, Kallio, Ryti) in the upper class suburb Kulosaari in the late fifties.

In three cases a street name was given as a birthday present: Field Marshall Mannerheim (1867-1951) got a main street in the western part of the city during the war in 1942, replacing the second forename of Reh binder (*Heikinkatu - Henriksgatan*) and another long street; the composer Jean Sibelius (1865-1956) got a park in 1945, but his former home street was named after him only after his death (1966)¹⁰; President Urho Kekkonen (1900-1986) 'got' his former home street in 1980, whereas the same was done with President Paasikivi (1870-1956) only posthumously (1959). The post-war presidents – Mannerheim was president from 1944 to 1946 – were thus not located to the Kulosaari ghetto of presidential streets but obtained a place in the city. Paasikivi also obtained a square with a statue opposite to Mannerheim's mounted statue near the Parliament.

But who are not commemorated by street names in Helsinki? As elsewhere (for West Berlin cf. *Sackgassen*, 56-57, 83-88) the history of winners written by street names has also been a male history in Helsinki: there are queens and princesses, daughters of former proprietors¹¹ and biblical women's names, but dedications to women based on their own merits have been few: Kajsa Wahlund, the philanthropists Aurora Karamzin (who got *Aurorankatu* in 1906 and *Karamzininkatu* in 1967) and Alli Trygg (who got a park in 1939) and the writer Minna Canth (1844-1897), who got a street in 1917, were the only ones before World War II to get a street. The early feminists, for example, who contributed to the first women's suffrage in Europe have not been commemorated by a street.

The city council in Helsinki has always had a 'bourgeois' majority and even moderate 'leftists' have only seldom been commemorated by a street. The street in which the Social Democratic party office is located in Siltasaari was, however, named *Paasivuorenkatu* (1938) according to the moderate Social Democrat trade union leader Matti Paasivuori (1860-1937), during the first coalition of Social Democrats and bourgeois parties. A leftist female poet, Katri Vala (1901-1944), was commemorated by a park (1953); and even a former commissar of the Reds

¹⁰ Another great hero of the Finns, the athlete Paavo Nurmi (1897-1973), obtained a street near the Olympic stadium only after his death in 1977. Otherwise sportsmen and -women are, surprisingly enough, hardly ever commemorated by street names.

¹¹ *Hertankatu* from 1909 is e.g. due to Hertha Kronqvist, a daughter of J.W. Kronqvist, a former proprietor of Pasila, by no means due to Hertta Kuusinen (1904-1973), a famous communist M.P.

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from 1918, Oskari Tokoi (1873-1963), who, however, soon broke with the Bolsheviks and emigrated to the United States, 'helping Finland' from there, posthumously obtained *Tokoinranta* in Siltasaari in 1968.

The exclusion of foreigners is an official policy of the city (cf. Terho 1979, 18; Närhi 1979, 28), allegedly on the basis on the difficulty of writing and pronouncing the names. Still, proposals for such dedications have been accepted in some cases: to Henry Ford on the basis of a factory 1945; to Dag Hammarskjöld on the basis of a UN recommendation (1963); to Lenin on the occasion of his 100th birthday in 1970 (behind the headquarters of the communist party) and for Copernicus for his 500th birthday 1973. *Lutherinkatu*, however, was given already in 1906, without even a mention that Martin Luther was a foreigner! Finally, a committee of the city in 1992 decided with a one-vote majority to remove even *Lenininpuisto* from the city text.

Street naming in Helsinki during the period of Finnish independence has the politicizing idea of commemorating persons: the forenames have already declined to mere forenames and even the surnames are doing so, when new names are seldom introduced. When neither controversial persons nor republican concepts are used as new street names, the naming polity has become more like one of a provincial city rather than one of a capital in Europe.

All of this is probably connected to growing power of naming experts and officials, with an intellectual background in local history and linguistics, and who mostly fear controversies and politicking¹². The policy aspect of street naming has depoliticized the original polity, leaving space for politicking only as an exception. The specific profile of a capital created by Ehrenström's committee of street naming contained an element of representation, viewing the names from the perspective of visitors rather than of inhabitants, while the modern expert-based name policy is more closely related to the interests of homes, cars and post offices, holding *flâneuring* as suspect, something alien to the protestant work ethic.

The application for EC membership has re-organized the political conflicts in Finland: the divide between the isolationists and the Europeans has become more important than the traditional party lines or the conventional left-right dimension. The development of street naming in the capital in the period of Finland's independence can be interpreted as a victory for the isolationists, in the name of a depoliticizing form of politicking, conducted by name experts.

The name of Helsinki is, after 1975, used as a political metonymy, like Yalta or, today, Maastricht. Aspirations of becoming a European metropolis connecting the east and the west are rising today in Helsinki. One condition for doing this is to break with the depoliticization profile of street naming, not necessarily by

¹² Also in the United States: "...new names are decorative. They are chosen for their pleasant associations and hence for the commercial value." (Algeo 1978, 93)

counter-commemorating but rather by appealing to the linguistic imagination by word-playing of all kinds. A politicizing approach would make the inhabitants ask for the origins and the acceptability of the present street names an integral part both of city politics as well as of everyday life.

The rhetoric of street naming

Aristotelian rhetoric with its distinction between the past-oriented forensic, the future-oriented deliberative and the present-oriented epideictic rhetoric (*Rhetorik*, 1358b-1359a), has a heuristic value for the politics of street naming. As oriented towards a future use, street naming is always deliberative, but it can have different links to forensic and epideictic rhetoric. Taking my suggestions on the temporality of the politicking and politicization aspects from the Introduction as starting points my hypothesis is that politicking and policy are deliberative-epideictic, while politicization and polity are deliberative-forensic operations.

Advocating the introduction of a street name always contains a deliberative, future-oriented dimension. Politicking with street names can be understood negatively, as opposed to the functionalization of singular acts of naming for policies and names regimes. In this sense, it manifests the autonomy of the present by opposing pre-decided policies to become the future fate of street names in the city. But even policy has an epideictic dimension in the requirement of 'beautiful' or otherwise 'pleasant' street names.

In a name polity, the epideictic rhetoric of names is functionalized to a combination of forensic and deliberative rhetoric. In this case, the forensic rhetoric bound with the formation of stable paradigms for the name polity has an obvious priority but, like other regimes, the street name polity is open to change, mediated by singular, but functionalized decisions on new street names. Additionally the politicizing rhetoric of street naming is above all forensic, oriented towards the chances of decanonizing the past, but it is also deliberative in opening new playfields for contingency, for politicking with names in general.

The paradigm shifts and slow transformations in the street name politics of Helsinki can be interpreted by this apparatus. The politicizing creation of a name polity around 1820 used both a specific forensic rhetoric oriented towards a very near past and combined it with an epideictic rhetoric of forenames, experienced as pleasant street names. The paradigm shift after 1900 to a commemorative regime of surnames used nearly exclusively forensic rhetoric oriented both towards a recent and to a more distant past. The slow transition to a regime dominated by policy experts combines a change towards the epideictic rhetoric of pleasant names with a provincial turn in forensic commemoration. A break with this depoliticizing practice is, to some degree, possible by a de-provincializing counter-commemoration of women, foreigners, etc. Re-interpreting the epideictic, by rejecting the conventional and constructive rhetoric of naming experts, in favor

of a more playful rhetoric of irony appears, in the present European political context, to be a more promising rhetorical strategy, both for Helsinki and for other cities.

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