

Textually Produced Landscape Spectacles? A Debordian Reading of Finnish Namescapes and English Soccerescapes

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*In this article, a critical attempt is made to read the language of contemporary urban boosterism – its eulogistic adjectives and slogans, escapist evocations in nomenclature, nostalgic narratives, etc. – through the lens of *The Society of the Spectacle* (1995, orig. 1967), Guy Debord’s controversial theoretico-political manifesto. Through discussion of empirical examples, the authors shed light on different types of in-situ landscape texts in Finnish and English cities. In the former national context, culturally escapist and non-native names given to leiscapes and technoscapes have mushroomed over the last quarter century. While this process represents a semi-hegemonic rather than hegemonic trend, many developers’ reliance on the “independent” representational power of language has substantially reshaped naming practices in the non-Anglophone country. The analysis of different types of promotional texts at England’s major soccerescapes evinces the co-presence of nostalgic evocations of local history amidst the hypercommodification of space. Arguably, the culturally self-sufficient, tradition-aware representational strategies in current English football stem from pressure from fans, the country’s status as the cradle of modern football, and a privileged possibility to promote the game’s “native” meanings via a globally-spoken language. Finally, this article addresses the pros and cons of using the spectacle theoretical framework to analyse critically language-based urban boosterism and branding under the current conditions of neoliberal urbanism.*

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Introduction

Any closer look at today's "superlative cities" (Beauregard 2003) suggests that not only eye-catching sights in the strict sense, but also various types of textual, aural and participatory elements and messages (from exotic evocations and memorial texts to drama-enhancing music and orchestrated cheers) count as the spectacularisation of space.¹ However, preoccupation with the issues of visibility has characterised spectacle theory and its urban applications until today (e.g. Pinder 2000; Kellner 2003). Following Guy Debord (1995; orig. 1967) and other Situationists, the concept of spectacle has been most (in)famously used as a rubric for the "totality" of (visual) enticements in capitalist-consumerist societies. In this line of critical theory, commodification, advertising and mass-mediatization are seen as forces that colonise people's everyday wants under the ceaseless stream of the images of idealised bodies, activities and spaces. By the same token, the analysts of post-industrial urban spectacles have been characteristically preoccupied with mega-size events and architectural landmarks created for spectators (Ley & Olds 1988; Harvey 1989, 66–98; Kearns 1993; Gotham 2005; Davis 2006; Hetherington 2007; Frank & Steets 2010). Marxist critics absorbing insights from Debord's (1995) *The Society of the Spectacle*, in particular, have emphasised the nature of contemporary capitalist developments as the visually enthralling expressions of a profit-hungry neoliberal attention economy that are regularly "accompanied by a sort of spatial gentrification, with the expulsion of the poorest people from the intervention areas" (e.g. Fessler Vaz & Berenstein 2009, 249–250; Krupar & Al forthcoming).

While the aim of this article is not to question the significance of visibility in urban spectacle-making, its approach differs considerably from the aforementioned research orientations by re-focussing attention on the language of contemporary urban boosterism and, specifically, its textually evoked thought-images (cf. Barthes 1980; Benjamin 1999; Weigel 1996, 49–60). It is suggested here that spectacle theory can open conceptually fruitful and empirically applicable tools that combine critical insights from social and spatial theory with the study of the concrete power-related workings of language in contemporary cities. Debord (1995, 15) himself held that "to analyze the spectacle means talking its language to some degree", and by way of a linguistic metaphor, saw "the monologue of self-praise" as a defining feature of the spectacle (ibid., 19).² In the current neoliberal context of advanced spectacularisation (Debord 1998, 3) and professionalised place branding

1 On a generalised theory of spectacularisation as attention-seeking, see Cray 2000.

2 In fact, for the avant-gardist art movement, Letterist International, to which Guy Debord belonged in 1952–1957, and somewhat less specifically for its politically radicalised heir apparent Situationist International, too, experiments with anti-spectacular language-uses were among key concerns (see e.g. Sadler 1999: 95–103; Khayati 2006; Murray 2008). More recently, Giorgio Agamben has also ruminated on the spectacularity of the "words [that] work on behalf of the ruling organization of life" from a Debord- and Heidegger-influenced philosophical angle (Murray 2008, 173–175; see also Murray 2010).

practices (e.g. Eisenschitz 2010; Krupar & Al forthcoming; Kolamo & Vuolteenaho forthcoming), there are well-grounded reasons to assume that marketers and other powerful urban actors, increasingly calculatedly, deploy language to “imagineer” (in some cases more plausibly and successfully than in others) local landscapes as global magnets for consumption, tourist flows and investments. Arguably, what is at issue is an acute but under-explored cultural ramification of the neoliberal commodification of space, with profound consequences for the symbolic construction of places as well as people’s everyday language-based meaning-making in today’s image-dominated world.

To analyse the processes and contexts of textual spectacularisation, and simultaneously to critically interrogate the significance of language as a promotional tool, this article distils relevant conceptual notions from *The Society of the Spectacle* and applies these to the study of in-situ landscape texts in Finnish and English cities. After Debord (1995, 19), we insist, first of all, on the monologues of self-praise as indispensable components in the textual spectacularisation of space. In this direct mode of touting a landscape as a “saleable” commodity, place promotion takes advantage of exaggerations, superlatives (the “newest”, the “largest”, etc.) and otherwise straightforwardly boosterist language to proclaim the high status of a location. Secondly, by taking its cue from Debord’s (1995, 120) provocative terminology on the “interchangeability” of places, the article analyses the language-based weaving of semiotic associations as a spectacularisation strategy that is closely akin to cultural theming (see Gottdiener 2001). As former studies on “themed environments” conducted especially in North America have shown (ibid.; Hopkins 1990; Sorkin 1992), the associative-semiotic means to enhance the recognisability and market-appeal of landscapes fall into several subcategories. Inter alia, this spectacularisation strategy can operate through the spatio-temporally escapist evocations of better-known and better-esteemed places (see on the landscapes of elsewhere: Hopkins 1990) and times (fabulous pasts, futuristic visions) or more abstract or ethereal ideals (e.g. “cultural universals” such as power, richness, speed, happiness and authenticity), not forgetting that the medium is a crucial part of the message; some languages are more credible than others in the global market place (e.g. Crystal 2004; Shohamy & Gorter 2009). Thirdly, this article probes into the seemingly contradictory temporal characteristics of spectacularisation. Intriguingly, spectacularisation has been equated both with “global simultaneity” (based on the instant circulation of the same spatio-temporal representations on the planetary scale) and “the break with historical time”, on the one hand, and on the other, the commodified and ceremonial staging of heroicised pasts (e.g. Debord 1995, 42–46, 120; Augé 1995; Pinder 2000; Hetherington 2008).³ Lastly, inspired by the well-known Debordian distinction (e.g. Debord 1995, 41, 46; 1998, 8)

3 Debord’s (1995) own equivocalness on the issue is telling: while he saw spectacularisation as a process for which “nothing is stable” (ibid., 46), on other occasions he nostalgically noted, for instance, a paradox of the destruction of the old city centres and the turning of “the same ancient sections... into museums” (ibid., 42–43; see also Pinder 2000; Bonnett 2006).

between the ideologically and symbolically diffuse and concentrated forms of the spectacle, this article traces both multi-voiced and univocal manifestations of the spectacularisation of space across textualised landscapes.

Concisely stated, a common thread in different textual modes of the spectacularisation of space is arguably their “independent existence” as representations (Debord 1995, 17). At the same time, whether a directly eulogistic or associative spectacularisation strategy is in question, the aim of developers is to make a landscape’s sign-value (see also Lash & Urry 1994) imaginatively “bigger” by means of language – an inclination which we refer to here as “bigness fetish”. Equally crucial for this article’s methodological design, the above-referred forms of textual spectacularisation are not deployed indiscriminately, but as context-specific tools of place marketing. In actual urban settings, variable combinations of language-based tools can be used by developers to facilitate the attractive appearance of landscapes in the eyes and minds of targeted groups. Here, the focus will be on three basic repertoires: (i) superlative words, slogans and depictions; (ii) names, narratives and other elements of language through which different types of spatio-temporal and cultural motifs are conjured up and associated with a promoted place; and (iii) linguistic choices in favour of specific globally and/ or locally spoken languages.

To analyse tentatively the functions of spectacular textuality in two different geographical settings, and pave the way for case-specific and more systematically comparative analyses on the subject in other national and urban contexts, this article re-interprets material collected in two separate research projects. The former examined the politics of urban place naming in Finland (Vuolteenaho & Ainiala 2009) while the latter examined spectacle-making in English football (Kolamo & Vuolteenaho 2011a; Kolamo & Vuolteenaho 2011b). In the comparatively economically-peripheral and non-Anglophone Finnish context, we focus on paradigmatically spectacular instances of place naming and associated marketing statements (logos, slogans, etc.) across the different types of consumer- or business-targeted urban developments. In the context of England, characterised by stronger economic and linguistic ties to North America and other hubs of the world economy, we examine a broader range of promotional texts (from advertisements and stadium names to nostalgic evocations) found at the stadiums of prominent football clubs. Importantly in both study contexts, we remain simultaneously alert to co-existing textual practices that seem to run counter to the aforementioned hallmarks of textual spectacularisation. On the basis of associated media reports, advertisements, Internet-pages, photographs and above all observation data collected in each country (in Finland on a continuing basis since 2007; in England during two week-long fieldwork periods in 2009 and 2011), our explorations in both case studies revolve around the following research questions:

- To what extent does superlative self-praise characterise the promotion of the analysed landscape-types in Finland and England?
- What types of escapist associations with “other” places, times, fictional worlds and cultural externalities are favoured in the two contexts? What roles, if any, do the historically rooted representations of localness play in the spectacularisation of the analysed landscapes? What kinds of textual forms of diffuse/concentrated spectacularisation are found in the two countries?
- What kinds of linguistic choices dominate the textual practices of spectacle-making in the analysed countries? As regards of Finland, do the so-called global languages override major native tongues (Finnish 90%, Swedish 5%) in newer spatial nomenclature? In more general terms, how is the non-Anglophone/Anglophone context reflected in the language of spectacular place promotion?

Throughout the article, we present our observations in relation to the above-outlined spectacle theoretical framework. In the concluding section, we draw together factors that seem to explain the (un)popularity of specific types of spectacular textuality in the two national contexts. We also query the limits of the “independent” representational power of language-based boosterism and discuss the article’s findings from the wider point of view of neoliberal place-branding practices.

Finnish Namescapes: Extremities and Variations in the Spectacular Theming of Leisurescapes and Technoscapes

If a place has a name like Paradise, you obviously are going to have a different attitude towards it.

Kostanski (2009, 157)

Increasingly, the naming of landscapes is used as a deliberate place-marketing instrument along with more well-trodden promotional tools such as advertising, “wow” architecture, sleek office towers and “high-tech” industrial estates, entertainment and sport megastructures, heritage precincts, cultural events, and the like. Although still a less systematically studied promotional practice, the role of naming in the revamping and spectacularisation of cities and their flagship developments has not gone unnoticed in urban research (e.g. Vuolteenaho & Ainiala 2009; Berg 2010). In his much-read *Postmodern Geographies*, Edward Soja (1989, 245) portrayed the namescape of Los Angeles as a collage of “outlandish representations of urban locality” – a spectacular namescape of global simultaneity in which “the ‘once’ and the ‘there’ are packaged to serve the needs of the here and the now”. In a similar

vein, analysts have depicted Las Vegas as the pacesetter in the escapist theming and naming of landscapes ever since the opening of Bugsy Siegel's *Flamingo* casino-hotel in 1946 (e.g. Gottdiener 2001, 105–116; Raento & Douglass 2001; Douglass & Raento 2005). Thus, according to Mark Gottdiener (2001, 111–113), the Las Vegas Strip – with its tens of mega-size casino-hotels like the New York–New York, the Tropicana, the Sahara, the simulated Egyptian pyramid of the Luxor and the medieval fantasy castle of the Excalibur – epitomises “the new themed economy” in which the accumulation of all sorts of borrowed signs within a single landscape can become a world-class attraction in itself.

The spectacular theming of landscapes and spatial nomenclatures has more recently exploded well beyond the United States, “the spiritual home of place marketing” (Ward 1998, 236). Variably in different national and local settings, the last few decades have witnessed a range of instances of the spread of “the wildly associative logic of commercial naming” (Sjöblom 2007) across the hitherto non-commodified domains of place naming. Moreover, the neoliberal practice of selling of the naming rights of sports and entertainment venues, in particular, to corporate sponsors has accelerated worldwide (Boyd 2000). In what specific ways have these global tendencies taken place in the non-Anglophone context of Finland? In this section, we first concentrate on blatant cases of escapist spectacularisation, and subsequently contextualise these findings vis-à-vis extant naming practices that deviate from the hallmarks of spectacular textuality as defined in the introduction.

Let us commence with Finnish indoor waterparks, representing a relatively early wave of unabashedly escapist-spectacular coinages. In his book, *The Theming of America*, Gottdiener (2001, 177, 187) traces the origin of the promotional use of the motif of “tropical paradise” to Rio's Copacabana Beach in the 1920s. Since then, usages of this motif have appeared in diverse settings including “third world places desiring a tourist industry” and innumerable “tropical” indoor worlds with winter- and wind-protected conditions, irrespective of geographical location. In Finland, the first “real” waterparks were created in the “yuppie years” of the 1980s. Ever since, their construction has been accompanied by the evocations of a tropical paradise: names like *Tropiikki*, *Caribia* and *Eden*, all indisputably exotic epithets from a north European perspective, have become commonplace across the country. As a recent example, the entertainment and spa complex in Vantaa, on the northern outskirts of Helsinki, is dubbed *Flamingo* after a (sub-)tropical bird species. Besides this name's familiarity from the history of Las Vegas Strip (e.g. Douglass & Raento 2005; see below), this “oasis of sensations” also boasts a logo whose design is virtually identical to that of the “original” *Flamingo* hotel-casino. In the spirit of “places' interchangeability” (Debord 1995, 120), its waterslides such as *Jungle River*, *Maya Kamikaze* and *Magic Maya* further enhance the feeling of outlandish extravaganza, as if promising visitors an imaginary journey to “anywhere, anywhen, safely and right now” (Raento 2009). Undoubtedly, “the biggest entertainment

centre in Scandinavia” is a prominent Finnish instance of how superlative rhetoric and spatio-temporally escapist naming practices, often in tandem, contribute to the spectacularisation of space in the context of contemporary place promotion.

Nor have other types of leiscapes in the country remained resistant to “parasitic” names akin to the simulated Vegasian streetscape. Some grandiloquent names of shopping malls, for instance, are paradigmatic in this regard (but cf. Table 1 on page 143, with examples of both recognisably escapist and non-escapist mall names). Opened in large numbers over the last quarter century, relatively many of these variants of the “signifying edifices” of the globalised consumer culture (Langman 1992, 40) carry appellations devoid of any conceivable connotations to inherently local or national imageries. To take the mall *Zeppelin* as an example, despite its name being suggestive of the world-famous German airships, these historic technological marvels never visited the region of the provincial capital of Oulu, where the eponymous shopping complex was opened in 1992. Neither did the Cristobál Colón navigate on the shores of eastern Helsinki, where, after a half millennium, the local *Columbus* mall dallies textually with the legendary south-European seafarer and discoverer of the Americas!

At this point, it is pertinent to pay closer attention to the qualities of the names *Zeppelin* and *Columbus* as “independent” representations in the Debordian sense. As implied, both names – reproduced in innumerable logos on facades and interiors of the malls as the key constituents of their place identities – have been derived ex nihilo in geo-historical terms (cf. Debord 1995, 123). Equally noteworthy, only a few cues in the built environment correspond to the textuality of the landscape: while a sail-shaped mock construction on the roof of the *Columbus* mall might be read as a far-fetched association with its eponym, the interior of *Zeppelin* is modestly decorated by a few cloud-shaped pendants and prints of early-twentieth century airships. Whether due to the lack of imagination or insufficient resources for the more thorough-going theming of space on the part of the developers, the textual signification of space functions in these spaces almost without support from architectural-symbolic statements. The contrast is striking in comparison to more thoroughly themed megamalls, theme parks and other “landscapes of elsewhere-ness” in which physical design substantially assists, in the words of Jeff Hopkins (1990), to “surpass the associative attributes of specific words”, or even succeeds in “the near duplication of the characteristics and uses of other places or times” (see also Gottdiener 2001; above on the climate-controlled waterparks). In a word, the reading of the interplay between the language of architecture and literal in-situ textuality at *Zeppelin* and *Columbus* demonstrates that their globally recognisable names border on representational independence in a double sense of the Debordian concept.

However, it needs to be underscored that the above types of unabashedly escapist name-loans represent only a specific type of spectacular naming strategy deployed across recent developments in the country. A broader look shows that the spectacularisation of the national namescape has progressed through coinages based on one or more of the following thematic and linguistic repertoires:

- spatio-temporal escapism
- power, money, centrality, (big) size
- speed, technological advancement
- positively valued cultural universals (happiness, good fortune, sunshine, etc.)
- English & other global languages

Notably, many if not all of the above-listed “motifs of appeal” have been perennials in the legacy of urban boosterism, especially in North America (e.g. Room 1982; Holcomb 1994; Short 1996; Ward 1998; Norris 1999). For their part, the list’s second, third and fourth bullet points tally with prestigious English-language “trade name power words”, catalogued by the name scholar Adrian Room (1982; see also Raento & Douglass 2001). One extreme Finnish example is the motor sports and entertainment complex *PowerPark* which opened in the mid-2000s. Very overtly, it has inscribed various references to power and speed onto a landscape in the middle of rustic Ostrobothnia (Fig. 1). Simultaneously, this development is an example par excellence of a symbolically diffuse spectacularisation strategy (cf. Debord 1995; 1998): its amenities and attractions perplexingly also incorporate direct name-loans from world-famous American landmarks (*Rio Grande Camping*), central European regions (*Tirol Cabins*), and tele-familiar cities and circuits associated with Formula One motor-racing (*Silverstone Cabins*, *Hotel San Marino & Monza*, *Pitlane Cafe*) as well as futuristic motifs (*Future Cabins*). In all, namescape comprises a multi-voiced mix of “macro- and micro-simulations” (Soja 1989, 244) until recently more typical of all-American leisurescapes.

Figure 1. An entrance of the amusement park *PowerLand* in *PowerPark*, South Ostrobothnia – probably the ultimate in Disney-style architecture and make-believe namescape of global simultaneity in contemporary Finland. Photo: J. Vuolteenaho.



Some other Finnish namespaces, in which the motifs of wealth and fortune have been combined, come close to Roberts' (2003, 66) notion of the spectacle as the wishful projection of "unimaginable riches and wonders". In this regard, a notable case of a concentrated spectacularisation strategy is found in Tuuri (fortuitously meaning "fortune" in colloquial Finnish), where the village lent its name to a modest cluster of shops in the early 1970s. Ironically, a subsequent explosion in local trade has been accompanied with the semiotic multiplication and re-imagining of this native settlement name. Nowadays, via its horse shoe-shaped monuments and logos, themed attractions and stores, and the disproportionately gigantic *Lucky Star* hotel, the formerly quiet village (to quote one of its marketing slogans) boasts of being "the wild statue of liberty in the Finnish retail". While turning a blind eye to the village's rural history and less spectacular etymological aspects behind its name, the architectural and textual "brandscape" of the Tuuri retail complex is thick with presentist representations of chance, wealth and fortune-making as anchors of its place identity.

As many of the above instances have already implied, the favouring of words and linguistic elements from specific languages of "world-class-credibility" – preponderantly from English and to a lesser degree from languages such as German and Italian – has been a further aspect in the symbolic revamping of

Finland's leiscapes.⁴ Unmistakeably, however, the valuing of the hegemonic *lingua franca* of global economy as more seductive than native Finnish or Swedish has reached its zenith across the country's high-tech industrial estates. Indeed, borrowings from English, incorporating terms of classical Latin and Greek derivation with a protracted usage in the Anglophone world, seem to have been the only plausible options for the developers, wishing to inscribe their ambitious business schemes onto the landscape. In both major cities and smaller municipalities, dozens of clusters of high-tech industry have been bestowed with trite spatial brand names such as *DataCity*, *Digipolis*, *EuroCity*, *EastKey Business District*, *Micropolis*, *Portaali Business Park*, *Technopolis Oulu* – virtually all of them compiled out of a limited range of commercially credible “power words” (cf. Room 1982: 4–5).

In the terminology of Marc Augé (1995), the linguistically and thematically concentrated naming strategy (cf. Debord 1995) in question illustrates how the need for “a generalised vocabulary” generates “linguistic enfeeblement” in the presentist, ahistorical “non-places” (Augé 1995) such as technoparks. What is the lure behind the continuing blossoming of such “overworked globalisms” in the nomenclatures of business and high-tech spaces across Finland and much of the rest of the world? Certainly, part of the explanation lies in making these namespaces as easy to read as possible by desired overseas partners, investors and professionals. At the same time, one cannot but infer that the choice of language also relates to the increasingly stratified labour markets on the national scale. In more precise terms, the use of English in our “non-Anglophone” national context arguably functions as a heroising social index of professionals employed in the technoscapes, allegedly standing out from the rest of population by their overwhelming expertise, hypermobility and worldwide business connections (see on “reflexivity winners and losers”: Lash 1995). Illustrative of the sociolinguistically concentrated spectacularisation strategy at issue, in the marketing of *Aviapolis* (“Flight City”) around the Helsinki-Vantaa Airport, the district's superiority as “a community where motion never ceases” is put on a pedestal through representations of it as the stronghold of “internationally operating businesses in Finland” as well as a living space for “people who travel a lot” (Brand Book 2011) (Fig. 2).

4 In this connection, it is pertinent to note that lexical borrowing and the use of non-native lettering – exemplified by the aforementioned malls *Columbus* (in standard Finnish orthography the name would read *Kolombus*) and *Zeppelin* (with its non-Finnish initial Z adopted to a key graphic element in the mall's logo) – has become a subtle way of investing developments with international flavour.

Figure 2. A street view in “the only real edge city⁵ in Finland”, as one the superlative marketing slogans of Aviapolis has gone. In the photograph, a hierarchy between the spectacularised world of globally connected businesses and the mundane functionality of urban space is actualised as a dichotomous landscape of non-native language (in this case English and Italian) brand names (e.g. *Gate 8*, *Vivace* [“Vibrant”] and *Allegro* [“Joyous”]) and much more modest-looking native-language street signage (*Perintötie* [“Inheritance Road”])
 Photo: S. Vuolteenaho.



In all, the above cases demonstrate that variable associative ways of spectacularising space via naming and related textual practices have been exploited by urban developers in Finland in the last quarter century. Before making any definite interpretations, however, it must be remembered that the discussed cases do not represent a panoptic layer in the national neo-nomenclature. In reality, alongside names that conjure up thematically escapist and/or non-native associations to “other” places, times or cultural externalities, more conventional or otherwise non-spectacular names still play a role in the naming of the country’s urban landscapes. To exemplify this bifurcation within the national namescape, Table 1 (below) lists the current (and when relevant, former) names of Finland’s top-ranking shopping malls, high rise buildings (the newest of which typically represent office towers occupied by technological companies) and ice hockey and skating venues (ice hockey being the most popular and lucrative sport in Finland):

⁵ On the concept of edge city, initially used in the North American context of decentralised urbanism, see: Garreau 1992.

Table 1. Fifteen leading shopping malls (by annual visitors in 2009), high rises (the tallest office and residential buildings completed by 2011) and ice hockey venues (maximum capacity in 2012) in Finland. Interpreted in line with the article's theoretical framework, and against the backdrop of more conventional post-war urban nomenclature in the country, an asterisk indicates a name's affinity with spectacular characteristic(s). When relevant, the literal English translations of Finnish names are given. Main sources: Kauppakeskukset 2010. Finnish Shopping Centers. <<http://www.rakli.fi/kky/attachements/2010-03-17T23-25-0465.pdf>>; Emporis.com Commercial Real Estate Information and Construction Data. <<http://www.emporis.com/application/?nav=index>>.

Shopping malls (city, year of [re]naming)	High rises (city, year of [re]naming)	Ice halls/multi-purpose venues (city, year of [re]naming)
Kamppi (Helsinki, 2006)	* Cirrus (Helsinki, 2006)	* Hartwall-areena (Helsinki, 1997)
Itis (Helsinki, 2012) - formerly: <i>Itäkeskus</i> 'East Centre'	* Fortum (Espoo, 1976)	* HK-areena (Turku, 2010) - formerly: * <i>Typhoon</i> , * <i>Elysée</i> , <i>Turkuhalli</i> 'Hall of Turku'
Sello (Espoo, 2003)	* Maamerkki 'Landmark' (Helsinki, 1987)	Helsingin jäähalli 'Helsinki icehall' (Helsinki, 1966)
* City Forum (Helsinki, 1985)	* Panorama Tower (Espoo, 2008)	Tampereen jäähalli 'Tampere icehall' (Tampere, 1965)
Hansa (Turku, 1984)	Kone Building (Espoo, 2001)	* Barona-areena (Espoo, 2009) - formerly: * <i>LänsiAuto-areena</i>
* Jumbo (Vantaa, 1998)	* Pitäjänmäki Tower (Helsinki, 2010) - formerly: * <i>SysOpen Tower</i> , * <i>SysOpen Digia Tower</i> , * <i>Digia Tower</i>	* Oulun Energia -areena (Oulu, 2006) - formerly: <i>Oulun jäähalli</i> 'Oulu Icehall'
* Iso Omena 'Big Apple' (Espoo, 2001)	Hotel Tornii 'Hotel Tower' (Helsinki, 1931)	Porin jäähalli 'Pori icehall' (Pori, 1971)
* Columbus (Helsinki, 1998)	Meritorni 'Seatower' (Espoo, 1999)	Kouvola jäähalli 'Kouvola icehall' (Kouvola, 1982)
* IdeaPark (Lempäälä, 2006)	Leppävaaran torni 'Leppävaara tower' (Espoo, 2010)	* Isku-areena (Lahti, 2005) - formerly: <i>Lahten jäähalli</i> 'Lahti icehall'
Myrmyrni (Vantaa, 1994)	Reimarinortorni 'Spar buoy tower' (Espoo, 1990)	Kokkolan jäähalli 'Kokkola icehall' (Kokkola, 1988)
Malmintori 'Malmi square' (Helsinki, 1987)	Itämerentori 'Baltic Sea square' (Helsinki, 2000)	* Kivikylän Areena (Rauma, 2010) - formerly: <i>Rauman jäähalli</i> 'Rauma icehall', * <i>Lännen</i> <i>Puhelin Areena</i> , * <i>DNA-areena</i>
* Malmin Nova 'Malmi Nova' (Helsinki, 1987)	Hotel Ilves 'Hotel Lynx' (Tampere, 1986)	* Ritari-areena 'Knight-arena' (Hämeenlinna, 2010) - formerly: <i>Hämeenlinnan jäähalli</i> 'Hämeenlinna icehall', * <i>Ritarihalli</i> , * <i>Patria-areena</i>
* Trio (Lahti, 1977)	* Micro Tower (Kuopio, 2004)	Kuopion jäähalli 'Kuopio icehall' (Kuopio, 1979)
Koskikeskus 'Rapids Centre' (Tampere, 1998)	Haapaniemenkatu 7-9 ⁶ (Helsinki, 1974)	Kisapuiston jäähalli 'Kisapuisto icehall' (Lappeenranta, 1972)
Mylly 'Mill' (Raisio, 2001)	* Innova (Jyväskylä, 2002)	Mehtimäen jäähalli 'Mehtimäki icehall' (Joensuu, 1982)

6 After a street address.

A couple of remarks based on the table suffice to illuminate the broader national context of this section's findings. Along with recognisably spectacular coinages, the table incorporates more traditional types of Finnish urban names (most of them presumably incomprehensible for non-Finnish readers). At the same time, considerable dissimilarities between naming practices in the three landscape categories are exhibited. As regards mall names, mundane locational evocations like *Itis* (a folksy abbreviation of the mall's former name *Itäkeskus*, "East Centre"), inter alia, exist side by side with the spatially extroverted (e.g. *Iso Omena*, literally "Big Apple", with an obvious hint at the nickname of New York City), ethereal (*IdeaPark*) and bigness-connoting (*Jumbo*) appellations. Moreover, nostalgic signifiers such as *Kamppi* (a name of centuries-old autochthonous derivation), *Mylly* ("The Mill", harking back to legacy of the town Raisio as a hub of food industry) and *Hansa* (a reference to the Hanseatic League) represent aberrations from a definition of the spectacle as the break with historical time (Debord 1995; Hetherington 2008; on malls as contrived heritage sites: e.g. Shields 1992, 49; Judd 1995).

The table also shows that the newer high-rise nomenclature given since 2001 – pregnant with non- or semi-native brand names commemorating corporate owners (*Kone Building*, *SysOpen Digia Tower*) and "sky-soaring" appellations (*Cirrus*, *Panorama Tower*) – is largely compatible with the "internationally suitable" names of the Finnish technoscapes discussed above. Last, the newly built or re-named ice halls (some of which are actually multi-purpose entertainment facilities) have been invariably named "are(e)nas", utilising an internationally fashionable generic term not used in the naming of the built form in Finnish cities until recent decades. Moreover, specific terms in the venue names echo another American-originated naming fad: the neoliberal practice of using name sponsorships as a means of generating income for the owners of sportscares (e.g. Boyd 2000; Rose-Redwood 2012). Compared to the tersely descriptive traditional venue names such as *Porin jäähalli* ("Pori's icehall"), the burgeoning naming right deals have inevitably facilitated the commodified signification of space in many Finnish cities. However, it is less clear whether this particular trend has been in line with the "bigness fetish" of spectacularisation: characteristically, sponsors found for the country's sportscares have been relatively "unspectacular" firms and institutions, operating nationally or regionally, and definitely not globally acknowledged corporate giants and brands.

In sum, the language-based spectacularisation of urban space through naming models, adopted from the Anglophone world in particular, has been a prominent but not universal trend in contemporary Finnish cities. In the exemplary cases scrutinised in this section, spectacular appellations for landscapes were composed via thematic associations to foreign places, distant times, generic motifs of cross-cultural appeal, and the prestige of the so-called world-languages. The culturally escapist naming in line with "new themed economy" (Gottdiener 2001) seem to have achieved a semi-hegemonic status across Finnish leiscapes, whereas

the hegemony of the English language in the naming of the country's technoscapes is currently dominant. Given Finland's relative marginality on the global map of capital flows and linguistic power relations, these naming strategies – along with the superlative self-praising techniques documented here – have arguably grown in prominence as cost-efficient substitutes for more capital-intensive promotional tools. Seemingly drawing on the belief that language possesses the independent representational power (Debord 1995, 17) to “liberate” places imaginatively from their inherited ties, many Finnish developers have engaged with escapist and non-native naming in order to create a “global appearance” for their promoted landscapes.

In the next section, we will turn to a broader range of promotional texts exploited in the spectacularisation of England's football landscapes.

English Soccerscapes: Amalgamations of Commercial Spectacle-making with Heritage Production

If a professionally-based economy of sport was first established by the enclosure of sport grounds and charging for attendance at matches against visiting teams, then the capacity to carry sports action, advertising, and promotional messages enabled that economy to take first a national and then an inter- and transnational character, as the game was transformed from a practice to a spectacle.

Miller et al. (2001, 16)

By all standards, the last few decades have seen a dramatic, market-led reshaping of English football and its venues. As an influential milestone, the implementation of the so-called Taylor Report (an authoritative response specifically to the tragedy of Hillsborough in 1989), stipulating that clubs modernise their stadiums, triggered a break with the game's traditional working-class affiliations in many regards (Taylor 1990; Bale 1993; King 1998; Boyle & Haynes 2000). Arguably even more importantly, the establishment of the Premier League in 1992, coupled with the selling of its televising rights to BSkyB, a satellite pay-TV company owned by the media baron Robert Murdoch, set in motion the mutation of English football into a fully-fledged, globally marketed branch of a spectacle-producing entertainment industry. Inevitably, all this has had fundamental ramifications for the textual spectacularisation of the venues of the world's most famous sport, in its country of origin. Reminiscent of sponsor-named ice hockey venues in Finland (discussed above), for instance, a substantial share of major English soccerscapes have been lately (re-)textualised as “landscape advertisements” in their own right via naming right deals – characteristically for sums that exceed many times the value of name sponsorships in Finland and other remoter corners of the world-economy.

As much as the spectacular novelties in the Finnish namescape have echoed the American-originated fad of theming space and underline the hegemony of English as the global business language, so have the quantum leaps at English soccer-scapes been manifestations of market-led transformation of sports-scapes taking place on a global scale. Right from the start, however, it has to be stressed that the current hubs of English football also feature a plethora of locally-grounded and time-honoured motifs that cast doubt on the view of the “spectacle” as a break with historical time (e.g. Debord 1995; Pinder 2000; Hetherington 2008). In this regard, the country’s soccer-scapes considerably differ from the analysed Finnish namescapes, where sporadic nostalgic signifiers were dwarfed by the number of escapist and non-native coinages. How do we interpret the salient presence of memorial spatial texts in the midst of hypercommodified English football venues from the point of view of spectacle theory?

In searching for explanations for this seeming incongruity, let us first concentrate on advertising texts as the most pervasive textual ingredient in today’s English soccer-scapes. Irrespective of their prestige or size, the stadiums are blanketed with “advertising spaces”, from those on players’ kits to electronic scoreboards and tiers of advertising panels. On closer inspection, however, differences in the make-up of advertising between the grounds of higher and lower prestige conjure up Debord’s (1995) distinction between the diffuse and concentrated forms of the spectacle as an apt interpretative framework. On the one hand, essentially diffuse forms of all-visible commercialism characterise the stadiums of lower-league and many smaller Premier League clubs, too. There, the abundance of all sorts of ads of locally, nationally and transnationally operating corporations and their products typically borders on the chaotic. On the other, the number of advertised non-football commodities is severely reduced in favour of a limited range of advertised brands at the elite stadiums of the relatively few clubs. In the latter spaces, needless to stress, the concentrated spectacle-making is not aligned with totalitarian political ideologies à la Nazism or state-socialism (e.g. Debord 1998, 8), but with commercial univocality that allows merely the symbols of a club itself and a privileged group of its prevailing partners to figure in the landscape.

Already in the immediate proximity of venues, the distinction between the concentrated and diffuse forms of commodified spectacularity is striking. During our field work periods in 2009 and 2011, we found commercially univocal stadium exteriors in the extreme, inter alia, in the pedestrianised Chelsea Village around Stamford Bridge (where the monologue of self-praise focused on Samsung and Adidas along with the club itself) and within the plot of Old Trafford (an area strictly cleared not only of the signage of non-partner corporations, but also of the ‘Love United, Hate Glazer’ -stickers, directed against the club’s American owners, that otherwise littered the neighbourhood). In differing combinations, the textual hallmarks – touted with large-size letters and big initials – of such spaces

included the superlative marketing of the game's upcoming highlights, variously dubbed "mega"-stores, grandiloquently-labelled entrances for VIPs (such as the *Diamond Club* at Arsenal's Emirates Stadium), themed kiosks and eateries with club logos and liveries, and hoardings in which a club's star-players advertised specific "star-commodities" (see Debord 1995, 38–42). Diffuse commercialism in which football-related ads and window displays sporadically interpenetrated the blend of non-commercial and commercial signs of the mundane streetscape (see e.g. Cronin 2010), typical in the vicinity of smaller stadiums, was strikingly absent at the aforementioned professionally-branded soccer-scapes.

Across stadium interiors of differing prestige, the gap between diffuse and concentrated forms of commercialism was equally manifest. As a rule of thumb, state-of-the-art digital scoreboards and perimeter signage systems heightened the sense of the spectacle in the stadiums of current and former Premier League clubs only. During Premier League matches, the electronic rapid-fire on the pitch-side media consists of messages of a dozen or so advertisers, repeated over and over again in roughly 5–15 second cycles. In essence this is a self-laudatory "genre" of textual spectacularisation, as a sample of televised messages from White Hart Lane's pitchside in January 2012 illustrates: "Autonomy. The Proud Sponsor of Tottenham" ... "Don't Just Look. Book at www.thomascook.com" ... "Carlsberg – Official Beer of Spurs" ... "Barclays Spaces for Sports". Also in other Premier League stadiums, the digital stream of ads during matches concentrate on the Premier League and Barclays bank as its current sponsor, Sky Sports pay-tv packages, betting firms, airlines and travel agencies, sportswear giants, automobiles, high-tech gadgets, beverage brands, occasional club-specific partners, and of course, the promotion of the club itself.

Speaking of in-stadium printed ads, the gulf between top clubs and more impecunious ones is, if possible, even more startling. In the grounds of the Championships and lower-league clubs, and even in smaller Premier League venues, dozens of advertisers maintain a high presence. At the other extreme, the most luxurious stadiums are exclusively embroidered by stylised references to a handful of brands. Crucially, the concentration of advertising mirrors a shift from the opportunistic quest for revenue streams by the enterprise sector to professional "co-branding" strategies adopted by the elite clubs' marketing machineries (Ross 2004; Edensor & Millington 2008; Bridgewater 2010; see also Kolamo & Vuolteenaho forthcoming). Increasingly confident about their attractiveness as world-class business partners, the leading clubs nowadays prefer close-knit alliances with a few multinational or nationally-prestigious non-football corporations, with a fundamental impact on the symbolic spectacularisation of space. Analysed through this article's theoretical framework, this doubled elitism has led to the amalgamation of the bigness fetish with the principle of "less is more" across the most prestigious English soccer-scapes. A concomitant spatial outcome has been that the

streamlined “textual appearances” of the most distinguished English soccerstapes considerably differ not only from the country’s smaller grounds (Figures 3a–b), but also from the thematically exorbitant spectacularisation strategies à la Las Vegas and many Finnish leisurestapes alike.

Fig. 3a–b. Commercial polyvocality vs. univocality – Crystal Palace’s Selhurst Park vs. Chelsea’s Stamford Bridge, two stadium interiors in metropolitan London in 2009. The diffuse, recognisably more old-fashioned textual look of the former soccerstape is characterised by a near-chaos of miscellaneous commercial messages and strident colours. Instead, alongside the harmonious design of blue and white, the concentrated make-up of few but all the more salient texts in the latter stadium aims at the stylistic co-branding of Chelsea and its major sponsors. Photos: S. Kolamo.



At this point, it is appropriate to address the relative scarcity of blatantly escapist messages in the cultural sense within the English soccer-scapes – a characteristic that applies to both diffusedly and concentratedly commodified stadiums. It is true that some advertising representations in these contexts carry recognisably “non-English” denotations or connotations. To take an obvious example related to the recent selling of a considerable share of England’s football clubs to overseas investors (e.g. Giulianotti & Robertson 2009), Manchester City’s newly re-named Etihad (a transliteration from the Arabic *داحاتا*, meaning “union”) Stadium, eponymous with a super-rich airline from the United Arab Emirates, is self-evidently meant to conjure up the club’s overseas patron. Ethereal advertising slogans such as *The Real Thing* (Coca-Cola) and *Impossible Is Nothing* (Adidas) – apparently trumpeting the “universal” virtues of authenticity and the omnipotence of everyone’s wants and wills – also feature as commonly at English soccer-scapes as at prestigious sports arenas all over the world. Moreover, generic fantasy motifs have gained some ground in the make-believe representations of the bigger stadiums as the consumer-centric dream worlds of football culture: the marketing moniker of Old Trafford, *The Theatre of Dreams*, for instance, promises nothing but a vacation from everyday reality (cf. Morse 1990). In spite of these types of instances of commercial escapism,⁷ however, spectacularisation strategies based on deliberate cultural borrowing à la Finnish leisure-scapes have remained comparatively rare within English soccer-scapes. Rather, it is symptomatic that occasional attempts to wittingly market the game via “global” icons of non-football-oriented popular culture have provoked loud protests among the clubs’ tradition-aware fans.⁸

By contrast, and as accentuated in the beginning of this section, the second ubiquitous spectacularisation strategy in today’s English football is the tradition-aware, culturally introverted praising of the game’s organic rootedness in English cities, towns and neighbourhoods. In and around both history-rooted and newly-built stadiums, visitors are virtually besieged by the evocations of club history and place-rooted community emblems, from large-size slogans (“The People’s Club” at Everton’s Goodison Park) and sentimental pavement engravings (“SAFC till I die” at Sunderland’s Stadium of Light) to purpose-built exhibitionary spaces. In the museum of Chelsea, for instance, it is boasted that the inherited magnetism of the club’s “ancestral home”, Stamford Bridge, “has not worn off”, although the “cosmopolitan philosophical tribe down in West London ... accepts change, knowing that nothing remains static”. Even in cases where a club has moved to an ultramodern stadium, narrative links with organic football culture are invariably

7 Further instances of connotatively “escapist” advertising messages include, inter alia, the presence of the sportswear giant *Nike* – originally derived from the name of the Greek goddess of victory – at many stadiums, although the brand name’s etymology is hardly acknowledged by average stadium visitors.

8 See e.g. on the statue of the late American pop singer Michael Jackson at Fulham’s Craven Cottage: Ronay 2011; also see on local resistance to the re-naming of the stadiums below).

underscored. Witness how the visitors are addressed in Arsenal's museum next to its Emirates Stadium, again named after an airline from the United Arab Emirates:

It was with the same pioneering spirit of the men who developed Highbury, that the club nearby a century on in 2006, took the short but bold journey to Emirates Stadium, a modern home steeped in the values and spirit of the club where Arsenal can continue to progress.

If anything, the co-existence of sentimentally nostalgic “topophilic” texts amidst plain commercialism casts doubt on views of spectacular landscapes as the “antitheses of the places of memory” in the context of English football (cf. Augé 1995, 55; Bale 1993). For one symptomatic textual category, dialectal or otherwise autochthonous linguistic markers frequently play a role in the self-sufficient underscoring of the contributions of specific clubs to the glorious continuum of “England's game”. “*Ha'way lads into the light*” appears in the local dialect on a retro-designed gate to Sunderland's Stadium of Light, allegedly lending its spectacular name at once to a closed colliery (memorialised around the stadium via authentic mining equipment) and the brighter future of the locality. By the same token, the club legend Dennis Wise's “language courses” are celebrated in Chelsea's museum as an unofficial academy through which the members of the club's multi-ethnic squad became fluent Cockney-speakers. In the terminology of Coupland (1995), specific narratives, words and other native language-elements function in these cases as “rich points of culture” through which the idiosyncrasies of club history are brought into discursive existence and made part of the spectacularisation of space.

Why this emphasis on history- and community-bound symbols? As Bélanger (2000, 380, 388) has suggested with respect to North American sportscares, at least part of the rationale is to earn acceptance for the game's thoroughgoing market-led transformation. It appears that top-level Premier League clubs, in particular, are trying their best to disqualify claims on the loss of the authentic spirit of football through all sorts of monuments, heritage items, memorial tablets and obituaries. *Vis-à-vis* accusations criticising the stadium's fake and dull atmosphere, an “Arsenalisation” campaign at the Emirates was launched in 2009. Equally tellingly, while many smaller clubs have embarked on naming stadium compartments with sponsor-names like Tesco East Stand (Coventry) and West Toyota Stand (Derby), the bigger Premier League clubs have avoided this novelty that is at odds with the custom of naming stands after cardinal directions, adjacent streets or legendary players and managers (Football Grounds 2008; see also Adams 2007). One can also surmise that in England, in particular, the organic markers of football heritage are simultaneously co-opted to enhance the historic sign-value of the nation's soccercares as the primordial stages of the now globalised game – an analogy to how “the greatness of a past era” is celebrated in the country's countless industrial

heritage sites does not, therefore, seem far-fetched at all (Bélanger 2000, 387; Hewison 1987; Harris 1989).

Even so, the double-edged promotion of the game – at once celebrating its lucrative marriages with the corporate world and its place- and community-rootedness – has not occurred without tensions. At this point, it is particularly relevant to re-address the issue of selling sportscape naming rights in the present English context. In fact, hardly anywhere has the dilemma between trading off and sticking with the tradition been more acute than in this regard. On the one hand, an incrementally growing number of corporate name sponsors have become “more than merely names on advertising boards” (Miller *et al.* 2001, 107) especially in the most recently-built stadiums. Clubs in lower national divisions have neither remained immune to the revenue-generating novelty. Moreover, even the replacement of time-honoured stadium names with sponsored ones is a budding trend. On the other hand, the majority of clubs have stuck by their inherited stadium names at least for the time being: at the time of writing, seven out of twenty Premier League stadia bore corporate names eponymous with leading sports equipment trademarks, airlines, etc. On rare occasions, even the de-commodification of sponsored stadium names has occurred in the face of fan pressure and potential negative consequences of blatant commercialism – the rehabilitations of St. Mary’s Stadium in *Southampton* and St. James Park in Newcastle are cases in point. However, counter-currents like this are anomalies in the present time. As naming rights deals are currently cherished by a number of clubs, it is likely that the proliferation of name alliances within the corporate sector will continue to enhance the symbolically concentrated manifestations of commodified spectacle-making in English football for the foreseeable future.

In sum, current English soccer-scapes are rife with straightforwardly commercial messages, but they also embrace characteristics incommensurable with Debord’s (1995, 46) view of spectacularisation as a process for which “nothing is stable”. Remarkably, from this article’s comparative perspective, this emphasis on localness has largely taken place at the price of the culturally escapist thematic strategies of place promotion in the fashion of many Finnish namescapes and American theme parks (e.g. Hopkins 1990; Gottdiener 2001). Ultimately, however, this devotion to local history should not lead us to think that the spectacular inclination towards the theming of urban space, per se, would be an alien promotional strategy in contemporary English football. Quite the contrary, the self-sufficient, historically-aware representational strategies documented in this section appear to rely precisely on an inherent cultural motif of worldwide recognisability: it is the globalised but England-originated game that is played in the stadiums. In a word, if contemporary football, as a spectacle-producing entertainment industry,

forms a global “subsystem”⁹ – comprised of its own economic, institutional and performative hierarchicity as well as distinctive textual repertoires – then England undeniably enjoys a privileged standing within it. Based on this section’s findings, both historical causes (the country’s status as the cradle of modern football) and an intrinsic possibility to promote the game’s “native” meanings through a readily international vocabulary (via English, the modern-day lingua franca) likely explain the at once increasingly concentrated and culturally self-sufficient strategies of textual spectacularisation peculiar to major English soccer-scapes.

Conclusions

Notwithstanding the qualified comparability of the article’s case studies, it is safe to argue that the Finnish namescapes and English soccer-scapes under examination feature certain points of resemblance in broad spectacle theoretical terms. In line with the bigness fetish peculiar to the spectacular signification of space, unabashed “big talk” about landscapes’ grandness, pre-eminence, world-class quality, imagineered ties to places of global repute, authenticity, brave history, or any other “superlative” quality, has proliferated in both national contexts. The more intensively marketed a development, the more unhesitating the self-encomiums. In this regard, we identified pertinent instances across Finnish leisure- and technoscapes, from the tropically themed Flamingo water park (“the biggest entertainment centre in Scandinavia”) to Tuuri shopping village (“the wild statue of liberty in the Finnish retail”), the PowerPark entertainment complex (epitomising the Las Vegas-type of semiotic excess) and Aviapolis “edge city” (“the only real” one in Finland) marketed for the hyper-mobile elites. Meanwhile, there were two foci in the laudatory spectacularisation of space, especially at the richer end of the spectrum of English soccer-scapes: representations through which the professionally branded elite clubs’ concentrated alliances with corporate giants reigned over the landscape, on the one hand, and accolades with an emphasis on club history and community spirit, on the other.

At the same time, our analyses demonstrate that context matters a great deal in the spectacularisation of space through language-based means. In terms of the prevailing types of semiotic associations and uses of native languages in textual spectacle-making, dissimilarities between the two national settings were paramount. A distinctive feature in the naming of Finnish leisure-scapes was the semi-hegemony of escapist motifs à la the American-originated themed economy (Gottdiener 2001), mirroring developers’ reliance on apparently “global” language-based recognisability as a widespread promotional strategy. Conversely, taking pride in and spectacularising the globalised game’s local roots gave a distinctive

9 On the concept of subsystem, see: Lefebvre 2000, 99–101.

flavour to the promotion of the hypercommodified stadiums of English football clubs. In part due to fan pressure, emphasis on the soccer-scapes' "inherited magnetism" reflected the marketers' will to avoid their labelling as purely profit-motivated cash machines, or even worse, the clichéd stages of global popular culture in the generic sense. Inevitably, the intrinsic possibility of promoting football's "native" landscapes via a globally accessible lingua franca has bolstered the culturally self-confident marketing of the game in England. Conversely, a perception of the inferiority of native Finnish (or Swedish) as a language of entertainment and business has led to it being increasingly shunned, in the naming of the non-Anglophone country's newer leisure-scapes and technoparks, in particular.

Eventually, it is pertinent to reflect upon advantages and problems in the applicability of Debordian spectacle theory as a critical tool for analysing urban place promotion in the light of this research. For such an assessment, it is necessary to bear in mind the very nature of *The Society of the Spectacle* as a vehement theoretico-political manifesto, rather than as a robust empirical study. Although many of the ideas that Debord expressed nearly half a century ago seem today utterly prescient, it is not inconsequential that the intent behind his unorthodox Marxist-humanist theorisations was to "do harm to spectacular society", where appearances reign over all aspects of human life and where "a fallacious paradise... is no longer projected onto the heavens but finds its place instead within material life itself" (Debord 1995, 7–18). Indeed, Debord's politically uncompromising and context-levelling theory has been often criticised for its "totalism" at the expense of historical and analytical differentiation (e.g. Roberts 2003; Bonnett 2006). In our research, the ideas distilled from the book did not always prove readily applicable for deciphering the spectacularity of actual promotional language. In this regard, we feel that commenting upon two specific conceptual difficulties may be useful in paving the way forward for the applications of spectacle theory in studies of place boosterism in other national and urban settings.

On the problematic side, the first major interpretative conundrum faced in our research stemmed from Debord's reluctance to differentiate contextually between the contrasting temporal characteristics of spectacularisation (Pinder 2000; Bonnett 2006; see also footnote 3 above). Our solution for circumventing this problem was simply to accept the empirical plurality of history-rooted and history-negligent place marketing approaches, and instead seek conceivable contextual explanations for them. Indeed, it proved that both the salient staging of place-bound history and its virtually thorough-going obliteration – as well as intermediate strategies between these extremes – are prevalent strategies in the spectacular signification of today's urban landscapes (see also Augé 1995: 110). For one thing, the rationale behind the pervasive cultural distinction (branding) strategy based on heritage-centred messages at English soccer-scapes amounted to an exact antithesis of Debord's (1995, 120) view of spectacularisation as a process that facilitates the worldwide

“interchangeability” of places. No less intriguingly, our observations from across Finnish leiscapes and technoscapes insinuated that “historically purified”—leaning towards globally “readable” symbols and linguistic choices – strategies of textual spectacle-making may be more widespread in urban and national settings that are otherwise less strongly connected to transnational media infrastructure and capital flows.

Second, another type of conceptual tension concerned the Debordian conviction about the “independent existence” that representations allegedly take in spectacle-making. Both in a historical sense and in terms of the spectacle’s inaccessibility “to any review or correction” by human activity (*ibid.*, 17), the heritage-oriented branding of the English football stadiums, and the impact of fan pressure on their marketing, cast doubt on the full empirical validity of this notion. Conversely, the developers’ reliance on the representational power of spatio-temporally free-floating signifiers was often apparent in the Finnish namescapes analysed above. Even in escapist leiscapes such as Zeppelin and Columbus, however, the “language” of physical design tended to underpin (even if sometimes in very modest ways) the textual production of the landscape. This observation raises thought-provoking questions on the interplay between language-based and extra-linguistic representations in the promotional imagineering of place identities, hopefully to be more systemically scrutinised in future research.

On the positive side, we contend that the article’s translation of Debord’s (1995) overwhelmingly generalising and provocative notions into empirically researchable questions nonetheless opened up a valuable, social theoretically informed lens for studying the enhanced role of language-based boosterism in urban transformation. Until today, the multifaceted complicity of language in the symbolic commodification of space has been all too rarely systematically and critically addressed. With the exception of a few promising research fronts such as linguistic landscape and critical place name studies (e.g. Shohamy & Gorter 2009; Berg & Vuolteenaho 2009), even drastic “revolutions in language” (Benjamin 1999, 522) still tend to be taken for granted – despite their profound ramifications for the ways in which urban landscapes on the leading edge of local change are re-imagine(ere)d, and in turn influence the everyday lived realities of people across the social classes. Precisely because language easily becomes “just” an unreflected communicational medium – “as indispensable to human life as the air we breathe” (Gadamer 1977, 68) – the sudden intensification of market-led “language-engineering” on the global scale should not go unnoticed as a “natural” exigency of our times. Rather, we argue, the proliferation attention-accumulating strategies by linguistic means ought to be brought under scrutiny as an “actually existing” cultural manifestation of neoliberal urbanism and its professionalised (place) branding methods, in particular (Brenner & Theodore 2002; Vuolteenaho & Ainiala 2009; Krupar & Al forthcoming; Kolamo & Vuolteenaho forthcoming). In the light of this article’s inquiries, the spectacular

logic of language – with its monologues of self-praise, evocations of different sorts of earthly paradises and obsession to value big over small – is already thriving in contemporary cities. Whether grasped through Debordian or any other theoretical framework, burning questions related to the language of contemporary urban place promotion should not bypass critical scholarly attention.

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