

Signals of onomastic capital: From transhistorical roots to the contemporary globalized trend of sponsored names

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Abstract: Proposing and elaborating upon the concept of *onomastic capital* as a multidisciplinary lens for socio-onomastic research, this article considers some of the historical underpinnings that contribute to onomastic capital, before focusing specifically on the recent dramatic growth in the phenomenon of selling naming rights to (semi-)public spaces. This marketization of names has been especially visible in sports and entertainment venues. To examine emerging naming patterns and practices resulting from such name sponsorship activity, the article explores a database of onomastic material from a variety of European contexts: England and Wales, Finland, Germany, Italy, Norway and Scotland.

Keywords: onomastic capital, naming rights, commodification, sponsorship, philanthropy, commemorative naming, onomastic theory, football stadiums, indoor arenas

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1. Introduction

1.1 Sponsored place names

Over the last three decades, a global boom in sales of naming rights to event venues, transportation infrastructure and other elements of the urban environment has shown that the names of these places – in addition to conveying symbolic, social, political and psychological meanings or values – can also be directly used to generate economic capital. Colossal signs evoking corporate or other brands on the facades of such facilities bear witness to the willingness of the business sector to pay for an opportunity to capitalize on names used by wide groups of people and various media (see Figures 1 and 2). With sports and entertainment venues, in particular, it is striking that the main purpose of these places, for the spectators who form the majority of visitors, is to provide joy, spectacle and strong emotional responses. Accordingly, sponsors buying into the naming of these structures may expect to buy into the enjoyable experiences that take place there, which have themselves been transformed into acts of consumption.



Figure 1: The Tony Macaroni Arena, Livingston, Scotland. This football stadium has had six official names since it was opened in 1995, including five different sponsored names (see Section 4.2). Photograph by Guy Puzey, June 2017.

The marketing scholar John Fortunato (2013:66) argues that ‘certainly no signage opportunity is as significant as the naming rights to a stadium or arena’. While the globalized name sponsorship trend as we know it today is a form of advertising, it is also, at its core, a form of naming. It is the act of exchanging money, or the promise of money, for the right to determine or influence a choice of name, whether the name of a new referent – for instance, a newly built stadium – or a modified or additional name for an existing referent. As an act of naming, it is conditioned to some degree by established naming conventions in the society in question, although sponsored names often break traditional patterns, typically by tapping into more ‘global’ lexemes, or by using a distinctive syntactic structure. By comparing onomastic material relating to 339 spectator sports and entertainment venues in European contexts, this article will consider onomastic patterns that have emerged from this sponsorship trend, what these pat-

terms indicate about name use and capital in society, and the attitudes that such names may inspire.



Figure 2: Anti-capitalist protests at the opening of what was then called *O2 World* in Friedrichshain, Berlin, Germany. This indoor arena was known as the *Berlin National Arena* during initial planning, but had already taken on its first sponsored name by the time the foundation stone was laid in 2006. It was later increasingly referred to as *O2 World Berlin* to differentiate it from a similarly named venue in Hamburg. After a new sponsorship deal in 2015, it became the *Mercedes-Benz Arena* (see Section 4.3). Photograph by Kinra, 10 September 2008. Wikimedia Commons, CC-BY-SA-3.0.

In a previous study, we analysed an earlier version of this data set (Vuolteenaho, Wolny & Puzey 2019). In that article, our approach was firmly in line with the definitions of the naming rights boom by geographers, political scientists and others within critical toponymic scholarship as a manifestation of the corporate sector's enhanced influence in naming matters in contemporary neo-liberal cities (Rose-Redwood, Vuolteenaho, Young & Light 2019; see also Vuolteenaho & Berg 2009). For property owners or tenants, name sponsorship is a novel contract-based practice of converting the symbolic capital embedded in places and their names into economic capital, while,

vice versa, for sponsors it means investing economic capital in return for enhanced symbolic capital through an onomastic connection with a place (Giraut & Houssay-Holzschuch 2016:9–10; Rose-Redwood, Sotoudehnia & Tretter 2019:849–851; Vuolteenaho forthcoming; see also Bourdieu 1986). Due to its social-scientific emphasis, that previous article did not focus heavily on the transformation of onomastic patterns from a linguistic point of view.

Most sponsored names contain an embedded commercial name as a specific element. Indeed, since sports and entertainment venues are increasingly marketed as destinations in their own right, their names could also be considered commercial names.¹ In many places, stadiums or indoor sports halls are municipally owned property intended to benefit the common good, and not necessarily to generate profit. There is thus a paradox in categorizing the names of many such venues under a commercial banner, but this is a consequence of the monetization of names, and in recent years naming rights have been sold in relation to numerous publicly owned properties. As a confluence of commercial naming and place naming, sponsored names need to be looked at from multidisciplinary perspectives.

The structure of sponsored names, typically with an embedded name-within-a-name, often resembles that of commemorative names, but the major distinction between these two types of naming lies in the rationale underpinning the naming process. Commemorative place names express recognition for people, events, organizations or other places, and typically stem from efforts to memorialize and immortalize, or indeed to create ‘a putative narrative’ (Azaryahu 2009:66) that may or may not have organic cultural and historical roots (Vuolteenaho & Puzey 2018:92). Name sponsorship, on the other hand, implies a transaction involving the explicit right to choose a name or to heavily influence naming decisions. A financial benefactor such as an individual or company could also be the subject of

¹ The names of these venues could be categorized as *ergonyms*, alongside names of shops, companies and various other organizations or communal objects, but that terminology is problematic, especially since it does not differentiate between the concrete and the abstract, as noted by Sjöblom (2016:454–455).

commemorative naming acts distinct from name sponsorship per se, and sometimes the distinction is blurred (see 2.3 and 4.2 below). Specifically, the focus here on agency, motivations and processes is key to studying names as components of ideological and social structures (Vuolteenaho & Puzey 2018:79).

1.2 Onomastic capital

To enhance the breadth of toponymic analysis, in the present article we aim to show that distinctive forms of *onomastic capital* are also at play in the ongoing name sponsorship trend. We propose to apply this term in a dual sense: firstly to imply the capacity or potential for any existing or future nameable referent to be commodified or mobilized through naming acts or processes for conversion into some (other) form of capital, and secondly to encompass the implicit perceived properties inherent in an existing or emergent name that may increase its value in capital terms. These properties may include, for example, symbolic power, fame, recognition, heritage, toponymic attachment value, and socioculturally derived connotations of components within the name (e.g. as an index for tradition, modernity, fashion or prestige). All these factors are particularly conditioned by cultural and linguistic capital and linguistic habitus (see Bourdieu 1986; 1991). In this article, the emphasis is on the naming of specific categories of places, but the notion of onomastic capital can also be applied to other types of names, including personal names (Schmitt 2019), and even names in literature (White 2002:224).

The focus of onomastic capital is on the value of names themselves, not on the value of their referents as land or buildings. At the same time, however, the value of property in terms of its location, size, architectural merits, or sociocultural attributes associated with it may have an impact on onomastic capital. In the case of newer buildings, for instance, the financial outlay of construction is often a key motivating factor in the sale of naming rights. In the context of sports and entertainment facilities, the performance of resident sports teams or the calibre of entertainment acts that venues are able to attract may

be more relevant for onomastic capital than the monetary value of the land or buildings themselves.

This article's objective is, therefore, to expand on the European naming rights data, using it to analyse the following questions in relation to onomastic capital:

- How transparent is the sponsored nature of names when observing onomastic patterns in general, and generic and specific elements in sports and entertainment venue toponymy in particular?
- To what extent do sponsored venue names reflect linguistic context and local naming traditions, and do the structures of sponsored venue names follow similar patterns to more traditional venue names in the cultures in question, or are entirely new structures emerging?
- What are the consequences of the mobilization of onomastic capital for popular attitudes to sponsored names?

The analytic approach to answering these questions with the European venue name data comprises three perspectives (see Section 3 below). The first perspective looks at broad patterns and structures in the sponsored and non-sponsored venue toponomasticon. Is the very act of non-conformity with traditional patterns, which could be seen as 'rule-breaking', a signal that onomastic capital has been mobilized? Delving further into these patterns, the second perspective focuses on semantic and functional aspects of naming elements, while the third reflects on naming practices, including the reception of names, colloquial use, and unofficial variant names, that might shed light on popular naming attitudes. Each of the selected European contexts will then be discussed in turn, comparing data sets of sponsored and non-sponsored names to explore ways in which onomastic capital has been mobilized.

As already noted, the specific element in sponsored venue names is often the name of the sponsor, so it may in itself be a fairly transparent signal that onomastic capital has been mobilized, but what about other components of these names? A cornerstone of our analysis lies

in the discussion of *function-related generic elements* (see Section 3 below). We will consider whether certain elements might be used in sponsored names precisely due to those elements' implicit onomastic capital. As we argue that much of that capital is derived from path-dependent characteristics that are historically transmitted through political, ideological, economic, cultural and linguistic processes, we will first trace some of the roots of onomastic capital through two critical junctures in history that are of particular relevance.

2. Historical roots and applications of onomastic capital in the Roman Empire and the Second Industrial Revolution

Before analysing this article's corpus of present-day sports and entertainment venues in European countries, it is useful to investigate cases from onomastic history that form part of the background to current developments: firstly naming processes associated with archetypal event venues in the ancient world, and secondly the link between naming and philanthropy in the Industrial Age. These select insights from two influential phases in the history of building and naming public-use infrastructure are valuable for our analysis due to the similarities and differences they exhibit in relation to contemporary practices of venue naming, including the present-day mobilization of onomastic capital through the selling of naming rights. Furthermore, the historical periods to be discussed here were of major significance for the general development of the built environment in the European context and are of ongoing significance in terms of onomastic capital. Via these historical illuminations, we will in this section elaborate definitions for name sponsorship as analysed in this article.

2.1 Ancient event venues, their modern counterparts, and onomastic capital

Amphitheatrum Flavium incorporates the name of the gens *Flavia*, the family of the rulers who commissioned, inaugurated and completed this building best known in English by the later name *Colosseum*. This archetype of grand constructions built for public spectacle was a venue for the violent part of the *panem et circenses* central to the populist display of power in ancient Rome, and was also intended as a symbol of power and wealth in itself due to its monumental scale and connection with colonial exploitation and imperial plunder. Unlike its forerunner, Pompeii's *spectacula*, which was funded by two local civil servants, Rome's amphitheatre was a quintessentially imperial project. There are, however, no contemporary sources that prove the people of Rome actually used the full name *Amphitheatrum Flavium* as early as the period it was constructed (Elkins 2019:22). Instead, a short-form dedicatory inscription, as reconstructed from dowel holes in a marble block, suggests that bronze lettering on the marble originally spelt out: IMP·CAES·VESPASIANUS·AUG | AMPHITHEATRUM·NOVUM | EX·MANUBÌS [...] FIERI·IUSSIT [Emperor Caesar Vespasian Augustus had this new amphitheatre erected with the spoils of war] (Alföldy 1995:212). Apart from the less specific name of the 'new amphitheatre' – if indeed it can be considered a name in this form – this proposed reconstruction of the inscription is significant as, if accurate, it underlines that the construction was financed by booty from the sack of Jerusalem in 70 CE (Claridge 1998:278). Moreover, holes on the same marble block suggest an extra letter and interpunct were inserted at a later stage so the first line would read: IMP·T·CAES·VESPASIANUS·AUG (Alföldy 1995: 210). This attributed control of the building work specifically to Titus over his father Vespasian, under whose reign the construction had begun. As it was the only building of its kind in Rome when it was built, it is quite likely that citizens at that time merely referred to the building as *amphitheatrum* (Elkins 2019:22), so this may not be a case of naming per se. Still, that one added letter suggests the intention of an emperor, of a sycophantic

architect, or potentially of enslaved metalworkers to associate Titus more closely with the structure.

The name *Amphitheatrum Flavium* eventually emerged and can be seen as an accumulation of onomastic capital for its founding emperors, albeit a name that has been eclipsed by *Colosseum* (in Italian: *Colosseo*). The more popular name most likely referred to its location near the colossal statue originally dedicated to Emperor Nero and rededicated by Vespasian to the deity Sol (*Colossus Neronis* then *Colossus Solis*). This name came to be widely used in all contexts for the amphitheatre by around the year 1000 CE (Richardson 1992:7), but quite possibly several centuries earlier as a nickname (Colagrossi 1913:138). Classical historians have remarked on the irony of this onomastic transformation:

The irony is, then, that the standard modern name for Vespasian's great amphitheatre is one that makes it more of a memorial to Nero than to the dynasty that replaced him. [...] For us the Colosseum must offer more than a political message about the Roman people's stake in the city and its empire. It embodies an important lesson in the ambiguities of memory, obliteration and amnesia. Wiping an emperor out of the landscape was more difficult than it may seem; as always, the harder you try, the more you risk drawing the attention of history to what you are trying to remove. (Hopkins & Beard 2005:35.)

The implications of this lesson for politically motivated commemorative naming – or indeed commercially motivated sponsored naming – are clear, and similar ironies can be found in place naming in our own times.

There are certain aspects in common between Rome's most famous amphitheatre and the modern sports and entertainment venues that will be the focus of this study. Factors such as the connotations of the spectacular, the size of venues, opportunities for ostentatious displays of status, and possibilities for popular outreach – and populist exploitation – are now driving companies, organizations or individuals to seek closer associations with modern event facilities by adding their own names or brands to the venue name through name sponsorship deals. The impact of mass media and the potentially global reach

of the modern sports and entertainment industries incentivize this to an even greater degree as the scope for visibility increases far beyond the reach of *in situ* signage.

Today's practices of name sponsorship do, however, feature ingredients that make them different from the naming of the Amphitheatrum Flavium, as well as earlier modern event venues. As distinct from more conventional forms of commemorating owners or sponsors in venue names, the selling of spatial naming rights is typically based on two-party contracts that create legally binding reciprocal responsibilities for both parties (Madden 2019; Vuolteenaho forthcoming). Through such contractual acts of usually fixed-term name allocation, a toponym is explicitly put at the centre of a formal market relationship, in which the seller garners additional income from its property and the purchaser gains publicity or other related benefits. This institutionalized and essentially commercialized logic of rendering toponyms as tradeable items is a recent invention (Rose-Redwood, Sotoudehnia & Tretter 2019; Vuolteenaho forthcoming). The earliest pure occurrences of explicit contractual sales of naming rights in this sense came in the latter half of the twentieth century, although venue names have undergone revisions in much earlier periods, as shown by the example above.

2.2 Capitalizing on classical name heritage in venue name generics

In transhistorical terms, a salient aspect in the mobilization of onomastic capital concerns the continuing use of classical naming elements in modern venue toponymy, both in Europe and elsewhere. To paraphrase Wilbur Zelinsky (1967:463), the lasting currency of ancient Greek and Roman naming elements in venues for spectator sports and entertainment springs from the 'pursuit of things classical that began in the Renaissance and has not fully subsided even now'. The event spaces of antiquity – still connoting spectacle, drama and grandeur – have inspired countless sports and entertainment venues up to the present day, not only in terms of their architecture, but

also onomastically. Generics of ancient, especially Greek origin (very often with a detour via Latin) are still productive today in the naming of publicly used venues in general, and spectator sports facilities in particular. The following, non-exhaustive examples of such generics are of particular relevance for the categories of venue discussed in this paper.

Colosseum, as discussed above, can be viewed as a transferred simplex name, and together with its alternative spelling *Coliseum*, it represents a case of a name depropriated into a generic over the centuries. One definition of its most modern sense in English reads: ‘A large public building or arena; [especially] a theatre, exhibition hall, or sports stadium. Now chiefly U.S.’, supplemented by a note: ‘Frequently in the names of such places’ (*Oxford English Dictionary* 2011).² Indeed, although they lie outwith this study, the many venues in the United States using *coliseum* show that the onomastic capital associated with the nickname of the largest amphitheatre of the ancient world has anything but worn thin, even though the most iconic of these, the *Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum*, first opened in 1923, took on the controversial sponsored name *United Airlines Field at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum* in 2019. In its modern use as a generic, *coliseum* is also used for indoor venues like the *Arizona Veterans Memorial Coliseum* in Phoenix, Arizona, inaugurated in 1965.³

Of even older origin are two very common generics in our data: *stadium* (with the special case of *Olympic stadium*) and *arena*, together with their different linguistic forms such as *stadio*, *Stadion*, *stadion*, *stadiwm* and *areena*.

² The definition as cited here was a modernization of this sense as defined in the second edition: ‘Frequently given as a name to theatres or other large places of amusement or resort’ (*Oxford English Dictionary* 1989).

³ The venues in Los Angeles and Phoenix were effectively named as war memorials or in honour of veterans, which may also have influenced the choice of generic, in keeping with the original Roman amphitheatre’s martial background. In fact, they are not merely *coliseums*, but *memorial coliseums*, of which there are many more in the United States, alongside *memorial fields*, *memorial gymnasiums* and *memorial stadiums*.

The generic *stadium*, with its analogous forms in the languages included in our corpus, seems to be an enduring, relatively non-marked generic for outdoor sports venues. Derived from the Greek *στάδιον*, originally a measure of distance equal to the length of track, the Latin form *stadium* has been especially productive and found its way into many languages, sometimes via intermediary languages. In fact, while the word for this type of structure and its use as a generic date back to the Hellenistic period, the architectural form was later transferred to imperial Rome, where its functions and forms were adapted to the Roman style of spectacle (Schweizer 2006). In modern times, the generic became popular especially with the emergence of the Olympic movement. With a further transformation into the default generic for larger football venues in many, but not all, countries, the basic architectural design has often moved away from the oval, athletic-inspired form to the rectangular shape of the football pitch. *Olympic stadiums* are a special case, since their function in commemorating a specific edition of the modern Olympic Games effectively elevates them to a distinct category of generic for a particular, exclusive subcategory of venues. These venues' heritage connecting them to the classical Greek Olympic tradition, as well as to the modern Olympics, is expressed in part through their names, and Olympic stadiums, sites and monuments are significant signals of symbolic, architectural, cultural and onomastic capital in many former host cities. Often this combination of material heritage in the built environment and highly valued onomastic capital has prevented such venues from being renamed after corporate sponsors, at least for the time being (Vuolteenaho, Wolny & Puzey 2019).

The generic *arena*, together with some orthographically adapted or compound forms, is the second major generic to be found in our corpus. Etymologically, *arena* comes from a Latin word for sand, in turn likely to be a loanword from Etruscan, which came to describe the sandy combat space in an amphitheatre (Valpy 1828:31). Now it has certainly acquired quite an extended meaning, ranging from the building that houses the competition space as a *pars pro toto* to its broadest metaphorically derived meaning in English, which equates

to ‘any sphere of public or energetic action’ (*Oxford English Dictionary* 1989). As will be seen below, it may be acquiring a new sub-sense in connection with name sponsorship.

The tendency to use classically inspired generics in the naming of modern sports venues, and in connection with sponsored names, draws on the onomastic capital of these naming elements themselves.⁴ The historical prestige of these generics, with their origins in antiquity and centuries of use, conceivably gives them connotations of pedigree and permanence, not to mention the aforementioned links with ancient notions of glory that echo in their modern-day use. However, the tendency to use loanwords as generics for such venues is not purely a modern-day phenomenon; all of the Latin generics mentioned above are in turn loanwords or adaptations from Greek or Etruscan.

Finally, the presence of pseudo-Latin/pseudo-Greek names, or Greek/Latin-derived elements in compound names, shows that onomastic capital is not limited to generics actually used in antiquity, but seems to be perceived as residing in the Greek and Latin languages themselves. Both within and beyond this article’s data set, suffix-based Latinate venue names testify that the onomastic capital associated with such time-honoured evocations is still present in the contemporary world. Built and named before the naming rights trend began in Europe, for instance, the major multipurpose indoor arena in Gothenburg called *Scandinavium* is associated on its website with the aforementioned monument: ‘Rom har sitt Colosseum – vi har vårt Scandinavium’ [Rome has its Colosseum – we have our Scandinavium] (Got Event 2020).

⁴ A hybrid example from our data of a modern generic drawing on inspiration from antiquity is *velodrome*, a loan construction from the French *vélodrome*, combining the short form of *vélocipède* ‘bicycle’ and the second element of the classical Greek *ἵππόδρομος* ‘racecourse for horses and chariots’, wherein *-δρόμος* signifies ‘course’.

2.3 Philanthropism and naming in the Industrial Age: The Carnegie case

As Rose-Redwood, Vuolteenaho, Young & Light (2019:748) argue, two realms that grew in prominence from relatively early in the Industrial Age paved the way to the selling of naming rights for urban landmarks: the commercialization of professional sports and the rise of philanthropic gifting. As regards the latter, ‘there is a long history of naming places after wealthy philanthropists as a symbolic gesture of gratitude for a significant gift or donation’ (Rose-Redwood, Sotouhdenia & Tretter 2019:848). In some cases, these acts of naming or renaming may have been a choice offered to patrons or benefactors, or indeed a condition of the funding, while other times it may have been the decision of beneficiaries, or a posthumous commemoration, potentially many years later.

Particularly since around the turn of the twentieth century, increasing numbers of industrialists and associated companies began to be commemorated in the names of institutions, buildings, halls of residence, and also sports-related event spaces (Burton 2008). In Europe, for instance, *Philips Sportpark* in Eindhoven, opened in 1910 as a sports facility for the electrical company’s employees, bore witness to this trend. In the US context, the renaming of Chicago’s *Cubs Park* (home of the Chicago Cubs baseball team) to *Wrigley Field* (after the chewing gum producer William Wrigley Jr as the team’s and its ball-park’s owner) in 1926 is held by many scholars to be a close forerunner if not the kick-off to the current naming rights phenomenon (Bezold 2013:122; Fortunato 2013:67). This name change did not, however, involve a contract-based monetary transaction between a venue owner and an unrelated sponsor. It also remains unclear whether Wrigley’s exact motive at that time was to name the park after himself or after his company (Voigt 2004:328). In this subsection, we turn to the earlier pursuits of Andrew Carnegie (1835–1919) as a lens into the (dis) similarities between philanthropy-related commemorative naming and naming rights deals in their present-day guise.

Carnegie was one of the most prolific philanthropists of all time, with his trusts funding the building of 2,811 public libraries around

the world, among many other projects (Tweedale 2012). This Scottish-American industrialist's donations led to onomastic commemoration of multiple kinds, including at many of the libraries he founded, educational institutions, concert halls, museums, and an artificial lake made for recreational purposes (*Princeton Weekly Bulletin* 2006), in addition to inspiring less directly connected street names and settlement names. Even the commemorative naming of the dinosaur species *Diplodocus carnegii* secured the presence of Carnegie's name in many museums around the world. The sheer scale of Carnegie's donations made an enormous contribution to culture, education, and even efforts for world peace in the prelude to the First World War, with the Peace Palace he funded in The Hague now constituting the seat of the International Court of Justice.

Through such vast donations for the public benefit, Carnegie called on the rich to use their wealth to improve society, and he succeeded in stimulating a wave of philanthropy. In his 'Gospel of Wealth', Carnegie (1900:33) commented specifically on the possibility of commemorative naming as a consequence of philanthropy, seeing that the community cannot 'pay a more graceful tribute to the citizen who presents [a park] than to give his name to the gift'. Unlike with name sponsorship deals, this exemplifies how in more traditional acts of philanthropy, any associated naming or renaming acts are typically seen as a tribute to the donor – as expressed by Carnegie – instead of constituting the central motive for making the donation, even though naming may cross the minds of many philanthropists, as it did for Carnegie.

However laudable Carnegie's donations were, during his own lifetime there were nevertheless challenges about his motives, especially after the violently suppressed strike at the Homestead Steel Works in Pennsylvania (Gangewere 2011:10). His proclaimed high-minded values and desires as a donor were not always compatible with the ways in which he earned his fortune, becoming for a time the wealthiest individual in the United States. The role of naming in philanthropy did not escape contemporary satirists. As the Chicagoan writer Finley

Peter Dunne's fictitious bartender character Mr Dooley stated in his distinctive variety of Irish-American dialect:

A Carnaygie libry is a large, brown-stone, impenethrible buildin' with th' name iv th' maker blown on th' dure. [...] Th' most cillybrated dead authors will be honored be havin' their names painted on th' wall in distinguished comp'y, as thus: Andhrew Carnaygie, Shakespeare; Andhrew Carnaygie, Bobby Burns; Andhrew Carnaygie, an' so on. [...]

I r-read [Carnaygie's] speech th' other day, whin he laid th' corner-stone iv th' libry at Pianola, Ioway. [...] 'Th' way to abolish poverty an' bust crime is to put up a brown-stone buildin' in ivry town in th' counthry with me name over it. [...] All I ask iv a city in rayturn f'r a fifty-thousan'-dollar libry is that it shall raise wan million dollars to maintain th' buildin' an' keep me name shiny [...].' ([Dunne] 1906:178–180)

In this case, Dunne was evidently lampooning the prominence of the donor's name in many of the projects he supported (see more examples of satire in relation to sponsored names for instance in 4.2 and 4.5 below). More broadly, commemorative names arising from donations can be a source of controversy if a person, company or other organization recognized through the name falls into disrepute or is re-evaluated in a light that is incompatible with the prestige implied by the act of naming.

Philanthropy constantly 'raises fundamental questions about the nature of society, of its sustaining moral values, and of the role of government and every citizen in seeing to the welfare of all' (Pater-son 2018:236). If such questions are raised by philanthropy, inevitably similar questions are raised by modern commercial sponsorship of publicly used infrastructure, where the benefits to the sponsor are openly acknowledged alongside the benefits to the sponsored party. In the latter context, partly reminiscent considerations have regarded the concept of 'sponsorship fit'. The essence of this concept is a congruence of values between the name-leasing sponsor and the entity that is selling the naming rights: a good 'functional', 'image-based' or 'geographic' sponsorship fit is more likely to generate mutual benefits and positive associations in the eyes of sports fans or other target audiences (Gillooly et al. 2020; see also Woisetschläger, Haselhoff & Backhaus 2014). By contrast, if the values of name sponsorship part-

ners appear to clash, if the public perceives efforts at image laundering embedded in sponsorship, or if ‘one of the parties gets in financial or image trouble’, there are negative effects for the other party as well, as was the case with the Enron scandal that led to the Houston Astros baseball team buying back the naming rights for their stadium (Voigt 2004:330). Alongside lengthy technical specifications for the use and visibility of a sponsored venue name, controlling such potential reputational damage has fed into a tendency for naming rights contracts to contain termination clauses, enabling a party to ‘exit an agreement in cases of financial, reputational, or performance problems of the other’ (Voigt 2004:331).

The above notions concerning philanthropic pursuits and associated place-naming acts illustrate how, in many societies, benefactors funding or making donations to institutions such as libraries, universities and religious institutions have long been recognized in the names of the structures themselves, of spaces within them or of outdoor areas nearby. Naming rights agreements of the sort that has developed in connection with the deepening commercialization of professional sports should not, though, be seen as a simple continuation of commemorating donors like Carnegie through naming. Carnegie’s secretary, James Bertram, ensured local governments made financial commitments to the ongoing running and annual maintenance of sponsored libraries (Van Slyck 1995:23). This procedure was, however, very different from naming rights deals that render toponyms in themselves subject to contractual, and most often time-limited, market relationships.

Name sponsorship is now a phenomenon in its own right, with an open focus on the goal of influencing name choices in exchange for funds, and with names themselves commodified (Light & Young 2015; Rose-Redwood, Vuolteenaho, Young & Light 2019). Moreover, names that have been the subject of modern name sponsorship deals are frequently more ephemeral than those that emerged through traditional philanthropy. Name sponsorship is contributing to fundamental shifts in perceptions of capital, property, and public vs private spaces. It is today being carried out in different parts of the world by corpo-

rate entities, property owners, custodians and public authorities. Acts of name sponsorship entail mobilizing onomastic capital to monetize the names of spaces such as parks, paths, schools, transportation facilities and university buildings, as well as sports and entertainment venues. It is in the last two categories that this trend towards the marketization of names has been particularly visible in society at large, hence the selection of these locations for the onomastic material to be studied in this article.

3. Data set and analytic approach

Underpinning the empirical research in this article is a database of the current and former names of football grounds and indoor arenas in six European contexts. The data is drawn from England and Wales, Finland, Germany, Italy, Norway and Scotland.⁵ These cases allow us to consider a mixture of different societal circumstances, such as language, population, economic situations, public finances and, crucially, different timelines and political-ideological tendencies in terms of marketization more generally, not to mention variations in the types of venue that exist, and which sports dominate. There are also disparities in approaches to property ownership and to the relationship between these facilities and the public or private sectors. In many cases, local authorities have a role in maintaining some sports facilities, but this varies considerably.

Specifically, our data set includes the home football grounds of the clubs in the top two national leagues in the three seasons spanning 2016–19 (or the three summer seasons from 2017 to 2019 in Finland and Norway), plus the national football stadium, where applicable. This is then supplemented with the twenty largest indoor arenas by spectator capacity in each context (or in Scotland the top fifteen, due

⁵ The countries of England and Wales are considered together for this study due to their partially integrated top football leagues, but of the football grounds in the sample, only two are actually in Wales, while only one of the twenty indoor arenas in the study is in Wales.

to a relative lack of such venues), counting those with a permanently defined seating capacity that are at least occasionally used for sporting events. Therefore, the analysis to follow covers 339 venues (224 football grounds and 115 indoor arenas). Names of the venues continue to change in line with new sponsorship deals, so for consistency the statistics given are based on venues' names as of June 2019, although qualitative analysis will include some more recent developments.

Building on an earlier social-scientific analysis of the chronological and geographical diffusion of name sponsorship (Vuolteenaho, Wolny & Puzey 2019), this study seeks to delve more deeply into an onomastic analysis of the spread of venue naming rights in the same European countries by taking into account linguistic context and national naming traditions. In order to explore how onomastic capital is generated (drawing on other forms of, for example, linguistic capital), activated, mobilized, utilized or transformed into other forms of capital, we will analyse sponsored and non-sponsored venue names' structural and semantic features, as well as their varying popular reception. Specifically, we will be interpreting the data from three analytic perspectives.

Firstly, our country-specific readings concentrate on the onomastic structures, from occurrences of simplex names (with or without a definite article, as with *The O2* or *Olympia*, both in London) to varyingly complex compound names that range from standard two-part toponymic constructs (usually a 'specific + generic' structure in most of the cases to be considered here, or in Italy 'generic + specific') to more idiosyncratic multi-part onomastic structures. This level of analysis may also identify cases where sponsored names deviate from more established local conventions regarding the structure of names of this kind.

Secondly, we focus on the semantic and functional aspects of naming elements, with a particular emphasis on generic elements, especially what we have termed *function-related generic elements*. These are those generics that are intended to be key indications of a referent's class and/or characteristics as a given type of event venue, typically indicating the main use of the venue or the type of activi-

ties carried out there. Function-related generics are a characteristic traditionally shared by the types of facility in the corpus, and this term is important to distinguish from generics that no longer refer to the actual present-day function of the venue in question. This can be illustrated with some examples from Sweden, which lies outwith the current data set. If we were to look at the home ground of Uppsala-based IK Sirius Fotboll, *Studenternas idrottsplats*, we would count *idrottsplats* ‘sports ground’ as the function-related generic. Meanwhile, if we were to consider the main football stadium in Gothenburg, *Gamla Ullevi*, we would say it has no function-related generic. *Ullevi* does mean a holy place of the Norse god Ullr, and it contains the generic element *-vi*, but we would not see this as a function-related generic for a stadium. As will be seen, when function-related generics exist in the names of these venues, they are overt and transparent in their meaning, belonging to the category of lexemes that Van Langendonck calls *classifiers* (2007:206). This perspective is at the core of much of the discussion to follow, since it covers ways in which sponsored naming may be reinforcing or modifying the implicit onomastic capital of pre-existing generic elements.

Within this semantic and functional perspective we also consider the use of specific elements in venue names. These are an important structure aspect of sponsored names, as they are characteristically used as a dedication to the sponsor and may, therefore, be the most obvious signal that the name is sponsored. We are also interested in investigating whether corporate signifiers related to sponsoring brands are simply added to existing names, or whether they replace the latter in the case of renaming existing venues. The way that these specific elements are used may also differ from more conventional types of commemoration in names.

Finally, as the third level of analysis, we reflect upon the popular reception of names, colloquial use, and variants of sponsored and non-sponsored venue names. With sponsorship-based renaming, in particular, we identify stances and associated nicknames related to the ways in which name changes have been challenged and accepted by the local population. The range of data that could be gathered on

this aspect is too vast to cover in full detail in this article, but we will, for instance, comment on examples of widespread colloquial naming practice in relation to these categories of names, and we will reflect on causes of resistance to the explicit mobilization of onomastic capital for sponsorship purposes.

At all three levels of analysis, an integral part of the article's methodological approach is to compare how the onomastic patterns yielded by the recent name sponsorship boom differ from the more conventional or traditional venue toponymy in the national contexts in question. For instance, we will consider whether novel structures are being employed in sponsored names, or whether there are particular generics that are more likely to be used for sponsored venues; trends that might be accounted for in terms of onomastic capital. If certain structures or generics have been more frequently used in sponsored names compared to traditional venue names in the contexts to be considered here, that may suggest they operate as effective signals of onomastic capital in sponsored names.

4. Onomastic analysis

The six contexts will be analysed in three geographical sets, starting with the 'insular' cases from England and Wales (4.1) and from Scotland (4.2), followed by the large continental cases from Germany (4.3) and Italy (4.4), and finally the Nordic cases from Finland (4.5) and Norway (4.6).

In our previous study based on the same countries, we explored the diffusion of name sponsorship (Vuolteenaho, Wolny & Puzey 2019). Of the 308 venues considered in that study, 38.0% had at some point carried the name of a sponsor. The trend for sponsorship was strongest in Germany, followed by Finland, and then by England and Wales. In terms of the chronological development of this phenomenon in the types of venue in question, the earliest example in our database was found in Finland (see 4.5 below), while there was a conspicuous peak in naming rights deals in Germany in the first decade of the twenty-first century. The latter was largely connected with the con-

struction of many new venues for the 2006 FIFA World Cup, which gave sponsors the opportunity to attach their brand to completely new facilities, strengthening the bond between the stadium and the brand, and providing ongoing income for these expensive structures.

It was also clear in that previous study that the figures for Italy, Norway and Scotland were far below the average. Hardly any Italian football grounds are named after a sponsor, for a variety of reasons, including the relative lack of newer venues that might require sponsorship, the prevalence of stadium-based incidents of violence that might deter potential sponsors concerned about tainting their brands, and organized fans strongly influencing clubs' decisions. In Norway, the comparative health of public finances may suggest there is less need for sponsorship, but at the same time the existing sponsors there do include several public-sector bodies.⁶ In Scotland, meanwhile, the larger stadiums are quite old, and hence the toponymic attachment factor comes into play, as will be discussed below, although a number of smaller venues have entered into sponsorship deals.

4.1 England and Wales

In the sample from England and Wales, non-sponsored major football grounds ($n = 35$) have a variety of generics, but more than half of those in our sample (18/35) are *stadiums*.⁷ The remainder is made up of *parks* (6/35), one *ground*, and a relatively high number (10/35) that have no function-related generics at all, typically because they are well-established venues, many over a century old. Names such as *Old Trafford* in Manchester, or *Stamford Bridge* in London, carry enough

⁶ One example is the home ground of Norwegian football club Odds BK, in Skien, where power company Skagerak Energi AS, partly owned by the local municipality, reportedly paid NOK 60 million to name the stadium *Skagerak Arena* for ten years (Hagen & Røkeberg 2006). In 2017, the deal was renewed for another five years, at a cost of NOK 4 million per year (Omnes 2017).

⁷ One non-sponsored football ground, *Cardiff City Stadium*, also has a Welsh name (*Stadiwm Dinas Caerdydd*), but only the English name is used on the venue's main entrance sign and monolingual website, although there are many other bilingual signs at the stadium.

onomastic capital that their function as football grounds barely needs to be spelt out with a sports-related generic element. This category of names most frequently entails a secondary use of a street name or a local area, as in *Anfield*, which as a local place name in Liverpool actually commemorates a place in Ireland named *Annefield* (Ó Muirithe 2010; Townlands.ie 2016). Among this group there is also a case of a football ground where a non-function-related generic has been proprialized to form a simplex name: Millwall's home ground *The Den*, partly a reference to the club's symbol of a lion (Jägerskiöld Nilsson 2018:42).

As for the sponsored football grounds in the English and Welsh sample (n = 14), they are all referred to as *stadiums*.⁸ Among these is Bolton Wanderers' home ground, which since 2018 has been known as the *University of Bolton Stadium* in a deal described by the university's president and vice-chancellor as 'incredibly exciting' (cited in Bolton Wanderers FC 2018). The local university is already the third sponsor to apply its name to that particular venue, after sportswear companies Reebok (1997–2014) and Macron (2014–18).

When it comes to the twenty largest indoor venues in England and Wales, those with sponsored names (n = 11) are most commonly called *arenas*, except for two cases. One is the *Ericsson Exhibition Hall* in Coventry (formerly the *Jaguar Exhibition Hall*), while the other is *The O2* in London (alternatively styled as *The O₂*), which was originally known as the *Millennium Dome*. This is a particularly unusual example, as the name of the sponsor has become the name of the venue, with just the addition of a definite article to help it stand out. *The O2* is technically the name of the whole complex, while the indoor arena itself is called *The O2 Arena*, but there is some overlap between the use of the two names, with *Arena* often being omitted, as an implied generic. This process is possibly encouraged by the

⁸ The home ground of Swansea City AFC bears the sponsored name *Liberty Stadium* in English and *Stadiwm Liberty* in Welsh. The venue's bilingual logo reads *Stadiwm Liberty Stadium*, and the logo is also used as the main entrance sign, but the predominantly monolingual websites of the stadium and its key tenants refer to it using the English name only.

non-standard lower-case initial letter of *arena*, as used in the venue's own branding and communications, which typically style it as *The O2 arena*, or alternatively *The O₂ arena*.

Among the more complicated sponsored names was the temporary, vehemently opposed moniker *sportsdirect.com @ St James' Park Stadium*, given in 2009 to the historic home ground of Newcastle United FC, which after a period as *Sports Direct Arena* (2011–12) reverted to the original *St James' Park* when loan company Wonga.com bought the naming rights. The *American Express Community Stadium* (also known as the *Falmer Stadium* due to its location in the eponymous village) is the home ground of Brighton and Hove Albion FC, and its name has been more successful, even though sponsorship consultants claim that long names impede marketing communication (see, for example, SponsorPitch 2011). Despite the stadium's globally operating sponsor and the length of its name, several coinciding factors seem to have paved the way for its acceptance. In addition to the local football club's improved performances on the pitch, American Express is a major local employer in Brighton. As the *Community* element insinuates, the sponsor has also invested in community projects within the locality, enhancing the believability of the 'sponsorship fit' (see 2.3 above). Furthermore, the stadium is semi-officially and colloquially also known as the *Amex* or the *Amex Stadium* after the sponsor's abbreviated name, which has helped to circumvent the problem of an excessively convoluted onomastic structure in this case.

4.2 Scotland

There are fewer indoor arenas as a whole in Scotland compared to the other contexts in this study, but those in the sample that are sponsored ($n = 3$) are called *arenas*, with one notable exception. The largest arena in Glasgow is called *The SSE Hydro*, reflecting sponsorship by the energy company SSE (formerly Scottish and Southern Energy), which also sponsors *The SSE Arena, Wembley* and *The SSE Arena, Belfast*. When the Glasgow deal was signed, the plan was to call it the *Scottish Hydro Arena* (Clyde Waterfront 2011), after the Scottish

Hydro brand the company was using to sell electricity in Scotland. The company stopped using that brand, in favour of SSE, but decided to keep the *Hydro* in the arena's name, while also dropping the generic *Arena*. This was apparently intended to incentivize the public to make stronger associations with the brand. As SSE's branding consultants noted, 'Glaswegians have a propensity to give a nick name [*sic*] to everything' (Material_UK et al. 2014). But dropping *Arena* made sure that the shortest form of the name would be *The Hydro*. It made some sense topographically, as the venue is adjacent to the River Clyde, but *hydro* is also in limited use in Scotland as a short-form generic, referring to hydropathic hotels developed for water cures during the nineteenth century (Durie 2006). There are a handful of these hotels left, and they have connotations of relaxation and slightly old-fashioned luxury. Now *The SSE Hydro* may be drawing slightly on that history and onomastic capital to build new brand loyalties.

The Scottish data set is unique in this study in that the most common generic for football grounds overall is not some form of *stadium*; instead the most common and traditional generic for non-sponsored football grounds in the Scottish sample is *park* (12/18). As well as in Scotland, *park* is a typical generic for early football grounds in England, Wales, Ireland and Northern Ireland, particularly for those that originated as a more general recreation area. Its continued visibility in Scotland attests to the long history of many grounds, but it is also a generic that has been productive into more recent times compared with the examples in the English and Welsh data set. The most recently opened *park* in the English and Welsh sample is *Selhurst Park* (1924), while the most recent ones in the Scottish sample are *New Douglas Park* in Hamilton (2001) and *St Mirren Park* in Paisley (2009), although both have since been known by several sponsored names, all of which used the generics *stadium* or *arena*. This shows a preference in these sponsorship deals for generics that, at least in this cultural context, point more to the edifices around the football pitch than to the pitch itself, and that may be imbued with greater onomas-

tic capital by association with other venues on an international level.⁹ Indeed, the sponsored football grounds in our sample typically use *stadium* (5/8) or *arena* (2/8), with one using a combination of *stadium* and *park* (see 5.3 below).

Some of the smaller venues in Scotland have had exceptionally many short deals, such as the home of Livingston FC, which was built in 1995 and has had six official names since then, including five sponsored names. Its current name is the *Tony Macaroni Arena*, after a chain of Scottish-Italian restaurants (see Figure 1). It is occasionally nicknamed the *Pasta Bowl*, mainly by fans of other teams. Another of the stadium's nicknames was, however, officially recognized in the 2019–20 season, through its use in hashtag form on the back of the team's shirts: *#Spaghettihad*, an ironic reference to the sponsored name of the English Premier League club Manchester City's *Etihad Stadium*.¹⁰ Within our European data set, Scotland also has the venue with the most naming deals with different sponsors. The home of Dumbarton FC, with its capacity of 2,020 spectators, has had six name sponsorship deals since it was opened in 2000. Among its many and varied names was *Dumbarton Football Stadium sponsored by DL Cameron*, in memory of one of the club's late directors, who had been intending to arrange stopgap sponsorship for the ground (Findlay 2012). Due to its commemorative role, this particular name was a borderline case for categorization, but the fact the name incorporated the words *sponsored by* determined that it should be seen as a sponsored as well as a commemorative name.

⁹ *New Douglas Park* first had the sponsored name *Ballast Stadium* (2001–03) – although it was still known unofficially by its non-sponsored name throughout that period – and later became the *SuperSeal Stadium* (2016–18), *Hope CBD Stadium* (2018–19) and *Fountain of Youth Stadium* (2019–). Meanwhile, *St Mirren Park* has also been known as the *Paisley 2021 Stadium* (2015–17), in order to promote Paisley's ultimately unsuccessful bid to become UK City of Culture in 2021, and the *Simple Digital Arena* (2018–).

¹⁰ The team itself once bore the name of an engineering company, having been founded in 1943 as the factory team *Ferranti Amateurs*, later becoming *Ferranti Thistle* in 1948, and then actually being forced to change its name to *Meadowbank Thistle* in 1974, due to Scottish Football League rules against sponsorship, before later moving location to Livingston (Clark 2015:126).

An early case in Scotland that was also difficult to categorize was the home of Perth-based St Johnstone FC, *McDiarmid Park*, which was named after local farmer Bruce McDiarmid, who donated the land for the stadium, opened in 1989 (Currie 1999). Since *McDiarmid* was the surname of an individual, not a company name, and was not directly tied to a sponsorship deal, we decided to view this as a commemorative and not a sponsored name: although it could be seen as a borderline case, it is closer to the philanthropic notions of Carnegie (see 2.3 above) than to name sponsorship. These borderline cases highlight the potential for future studies to explore notions of onomastic capital and commemorative naming further in terms of gift culture.

4.3 Germany

Compared to the often relatively short-term nature of name sponsorship in Scotland, many venues in Germany are at the opposite end of the spectrum, with strategic deals characteristically lasting a decade or longer. The non-sponsored football grounds in our German sample ($n = 12$) all officially use the generic *Stadion*, but as in the other countries, the generics are not always used in everyday language. This is especially the case with stadiums where the name refers to external toponyms, such as *Millerntor-Stadion* (or simply *Millerntor*) in Hamburg, or *Wildparkstadion* (or simply *Wildpark*) in Karlsruhe.¹¹

Among the sponsored football grounds ($n = 28$), there are some with *Stadion* (6/28) or *Sportpark* (2/28), and one *Park* (*Signal Iduna Park* in Dortmund), but the vast majority use *Arena* (19/28). One noteworthy example is the monumental *Allianz Arena* in Munich, which is one of the venues built in the run-up to the 2006 World Cup. Since FIFA guarantees exclusivity to its own sponsors, and demands venues clean of sponsored names, the stadium was temporarily referred to by the non-sponsored name *FIFA WM-Stadion München* (*FIFA World*

¹¹ In the case of some newly built venues in Germany, especially sponsored ones, the specific element is occasionally dropped instead. For instance, Munich's *Allianz Arena* is sometimes referred to merely as *die Arena*.

Cup Stadium, Munich) and the logo was removed. In total, seven stadiums had to change their names during the 2006 World Cup. When the Allianz Arena hosts the massively followed UEFA games, such as Champions League matches, the logo is covered and the stadium is called *Fußball-Arena München* (*Football Arena Munich*), or sometimes just *Arena München*. Such temporary ‘de-sponsoring’ is commonplace during internationally broadcast tournaments (see also 4.6 below).

A further case of interest is the high-profile home of football club Bayer 04 Leverkusen, the *BayArena*. The team was founded by the pharmaceutical company Bayer, and this is reflected in the portmanteau form of the name, which otherwise appears slightly incongruous to an English-speaking audience, for example, which might expect a very different topographical situation than the inland plains of North Rhine-Westphalia. Although the sponsored nature of this name is not as obvious as with the Allianz Arena, it had to change during the 2011 Women’s World Cup, when it became the *FIFA Frauen-WM-Stadion Leverkusen*. In fact, the links between modern industry and naming are implicit in the name of the city itself, bestowed by its founder, the industrial chemist Carl Leverkus (1804–89), whose business was later acquired by Bayer (Schumacher 1985:390).

Historically, we find the unusual use, via English, of the Latinate generic *Stadium* for the main stadium in Nuremberg (originally the *Städtisches Stadion* and today the *Max-Morlock-Stadion*), which was known as *Victory Stadium* while used by the US Army in 1945–61. A similar course of events was witnessed in Stuttgart, where what was originally the *Adolf-Hitler-Kampfbahn* became *Century Stadium* in 1945–49, and most recently (since 2008) the *Mercedes-Benz Arena*.¹² The old generic *Kampfbahn* ‘competition/battle stadium’, as once seen in Stuttgart, is no longer productive in new names, and the same applies to *Sportplatz* ‘sports ground/field’.

Most of the sponsored indoor venues in the German sample use *Arena* (10/12), with one *Dome* and one *Stadion*. The use of *Arena*

¹² This new name is also used for two indoor arenas: one in Berlin and the other in Shanghai.

for more modern, typically sponsor-named venues is made especially clear when we consider that *Halle* is the prevailing generic for non-sponsored indoor venues (5/8). Only one of the latter uses the name *Arena*, and that name has a non-traditional construction for German: *Arena Leipzig*, with the generic first, followed by the specific element, being the name of the city. This name's structure almost suggests an invitation to potential sponsors who may wish to add their company or brand name in front of the existing name.

As discussed in Section 4.1 above, the Telefónica-owned telecommunications brand O2 had already set a precedent for unusual naming patterns in relation to London's entertainment complex *The O2*. Its former sponsorship of two indoor arenas in Germany took a different but still idiosyncratic approach, with *O2 World Berlin* (2006–15) and *O2 World Hamburg* (2010–15) both using the generic *World* (see Figure 2).¹³ In a metaphorical sense, this may imply a sphere of existence with distinct experiences compared to the rest of the planet, although its use in two cities suggests these are parallel worlds. Crucially, it also ties in with the widespread global use of this generic for amusement parks as diverse as the *Walt Disney World Resort* in Florida, the now closed aircraft-carrier-themed *Minsk World* (Chinese: Míng sī kè hángmǔ shìjiè 明斯克航母世界) in Shenzhen, *uShaka Marine World* in Durban, or *Moominworld* in Naantali (Finnish: *Muumimaa-ilma*; Swedish: *Muminvärlden*). This evidently expands the possible associations of the generic considerably to include enjoyment and fascination, as well as highlighting the multipurpose function of these venues. Although the venues in Berlin and Hamburg now have different names, these cases demonstrate that the impact of onomastic capital can readily cross over between different sectors of human activity, here inspiring the use of generics that may be less immediately

¹³ Both these facilities are owned by the US-based Anschutz Entertainment Group, as is *The O2* in London, and they also employed the same alternative type-setting of the company name (see 4.1 above). In 2015, the Berlin venue became the *Mercedes-Benz Arena*, and the Hamburg venue (originally the *Color Line Arena*) became the *Barclaycard Arena*.

descriptive of a location's primary function but that may entail other connotations and be redolent of prestige in other ways.

4.4 Italy

In our Italian sample, all non-sponsored football grounds (n = 41) use the generic *stadio*. This includes the unusual case of *Stadio Arena Garibaldi-Romeo Anconetani* in Pisa, where *Stadio* is the main function-related generic, while the *Arena* is an embedded traditional generic referring to the site's former life as the *Arena Federighi*, an open-air amphitheatre long before it became a football ground. It is very common in Italy for the names of public buildings and streets to commemorate specific individuals, and this name is also part of that trend. Commemorative naming can be redolent of the dedication of churches to the memory of saints, and there is something almost hagiographic about this name. The fact that it also commemorates two separate individuals – Giuseppe Garibaldi (1807–82), hero of the Risorgimento, and Romeo Anconetani (1922–99), former chair of the resident football club – is also reminiscent of churches, which may be dedicated to more than one saint: see for instance the *Basilica dei Santi Giovanni e Paolo* in Venice, contracted to (*San*) *Zanipolo* in the Venetian dialect.

In colloquial use, as in Germany and elsewhere, the names are often simplified without the generic *stadio*, and if there are multiple specifics, one is often seen as the primary one. For instance, commentators or fans might say informally: '*Ci vediamo al Via del mare*' [See you at the *Via del mare*], referring to the home ground of Lecce. The stadium's full name, *Stadio comunale Ettore Giardiniero-Via del mare*, references ownership by the municipality, commemoration of former mayor Ettore Giardiniero, and the stadium's location on the main road leading from Lecce to the Adriatic Sea. Nevertheless, the abbreviated stadium name (*il*) *Via del mare* keeps the masculine gender of the implied generic (*stadio*) and does not take the feminine gender of the colloquial street name (*la*) *Via del mare*.

There are only four sponsored football grounds in the Italian sample, but all of them use other generics than the usual *stadio*. One uses

arena, while three use the generic *stadium*, which originated via Latin (see 2.2 above) and has now returned to its homeland. These four are the *Dacia Arena* in Udine, the *Mapei Stadium-Città del Tricolore* in Reggio Emilia, the *Orologel Stadium-Dino Manuzzi* in Cesena, and the *Allianz Stadium* in Turin. The latter was built for Juventus in 2011 and was originally known as *Juventus Stadium*, so it used the ‘international’ generic *Stadium* before it was even sponsored, again perhaps as a signal to potential sponsors and in order to stress the aspect of being the new benchmark for Italian football venues (Wolny 2016:199).¹⁴ The generics of these sponsored names are unusual for the Italian context, but it is also worth noting that the traditional structure of a stadium name in Italian starts with the generic, followed by one or more specific elements. In the case of these names, though, the order is reversed, with the sponsor specific coming first, followed by the generic. This may make the names stand out as cosmopolitan, international and new, but it also gives the sponsor pride of place before even announcing what type of venue it is. From the sponsor’s perspective, this might be particularly important in cases where there are multiple dedications within a name that would otherwise dilute the sponsor’s prominence, such as the commemoration of club chair Dino Manuzzi in Cesena, or of Reggio Emilia’s status as the birthplace of the Italian flag.

The main generic used for indoor arenas is *pala* (in 9 of the total of 20 sponsored and non-sponsored venues). This generic is an abbreviation of *palazzo/palazzetto*, which is to be found in more extensive generic constructions such as *palazzo dello sport* (literally ‘palace/large building of sport’) or *palazzetto dello sport* (for a smaller venue, hence the diminutive suffix). The intermediate step in the shortening process is often the form *palasport*, which dates back to 1961 (*Lo Zingarelli* 2020) and is to be understood as a typical modern-sound-

¹⁴ In this case, either the specific or the generic can be used on its own as a nickname of sorts, as shown in these phrases from the same paragraph of a news report: ‘*Lo Stadium riapre dopo quasi 90 giorni e sembra passata una vita. [...] Sarri dividerà i suoi giocatori in due squadre sul prato dell’Allianz*’ [The Stadium reopens after almost 90 days, which seems like a lifetime. [...] Sarri will split his players into two teams on the pitch at the Allianz] (Bianchin 2020).

ing word from that era, full perhaps of optimism for the future. The full-length terms achieved prominence with the construction of two arenas for the 1960 Summer Olympic Games in Rome, named simply *Palazzo dello Sport* (which bore the sponsored name *PalaLottomatica* in 2003–18) and *Palazzetto dello Sport*. Together with the abbreviations *pala* and *palasport*, these are part and parcel of the post-war economic boom in Italy, when many of these indoor arenas were constructed. As name sponsorship deals have emerged in more recent decades, we see *pala* also being used as a generic for sponsored names of indoor venues (2/8), although it is now marginally eclipsed by *arena* (3/8).

Some particularly exotic generics have also been used in Italy. One more recent instance of a name that conjures up futuristic images is an indoor venue in Bologna, now called the *Unipol Arena*, which was known in 2008–11 as the *Futurshow Station*, with *Futurshow* being the name of a technology fair that used to be held in the city. The *Station* generic for what is an indoor arena appears even more unconventional, considering that the railway station serving the venue is called *Casalecchio Palasport*, referring to the part of the Metropolitan City of Bologna where the venue is located and using a more standard generic for indoor venues.

4.5 Finland

In Finland, non-sponsored football grounds in our sample use a variety of mainly prosaic function-related generics, such as *keskusenttä* ('central ground', 4/17) and *urheilupuisto* ('sports park', 2/17). By contrast, the venues that are sponsored use only *stadion* (4/8), *areena* (3/8) or *arena* (1/8). There is only one non-sponsored football ground that uses the generic *areena*, named after a footballing legend, the *Arto Tolsa Areena*. This latter commemoration is also a relatively recent coinage, from 2000, replacing *Kotkan urheilukeskus* [Kotka Sports Centre], originally opened for the 1952 Summer Olympic Games.

Ice hockey is a more popular spectator sport than football in Finland, a fact reflected in naming rights deals for indoor venues, which

are more common than for the country's football grounds. Of the 13 sponsored indoor venues in our Finnish data set, almost all use *areena* (11/13) or *arena* (1/13), the only exception being the *Gatorade Center* in Turku. Most of the non-sponsored indoor venues include the prosaic description *jäähalli* ('ice rink', 4/7), which is entirely absent from the sponsored names.

In a similar way to Scotland, Finnish evidence suggests that there is a strong tendency for name sponsorship deals to last considerably shorter periods in peripheral or semi-peripheral geographical settings with smaller venues, lower-ranked sports clubs, less affluent local economies and less media attention. In smaller Finnish localities, naming rights contracts typically only last for a couple of years. Even at the upper end of the spectrum, strategic contracts allocated for a decade or longer have been rare in Finland. For instance, since its completion, Helsinki's second-biggest football venue has experienced four consecutive name revisions by separate domestic or Nordic corporate sponsors, being first *Finnair Stadium* (2000–10), then *Sonera Stadium* (2010–17), *Telia 5G Areena* (2017–20), and most recently *Bolt Arena* (2020–), notably also a return to the international spelling of the generic element *arena* instead of its Finnish variant *areena*.

Resistance to the proliferation of venue name sponsorship has not been particularly vocal in Finland, but there have been exceptions. In newspapers and online forums, both enthusiasm and scepticism have been expressed. These varied stances are illustrated by popular responses to the series of corporate or brand names associated with the aforementioned *Gatorade Center* (2016–). This is the venue with the earliest name sponsorship deal in our European data set and, prior to its current name, it has also been known since its opening as *Typhoon* (after the regional bank Turun Työväen Säästöpankki, abbreviated as TYP; 1990–94), *Elysée Arena* (after a sparkling wine brand; 1994–2006), *HK Areena* (after a meat-based food manufacturer; 2010–16), and as *Turkuhalli* in periods without sponsorship. While popular with some, each of these names has also been ridiculed, a case in point being the colloquial moniker *Nakkikattila* [Sausage Kettle], which was once a widely used nickname for the *HK Areena* (Vuolteenaho

forthcoming). The mainly latent cultural and institutional resistance to suggestions to rename the country's most iconic and by far biggest event facility, *Helsingin olympiastadion* (*Helsinki Olympic Stadium*), appears to be even stronger. With an existing name harking back to the grandest international event ever organized on Finnish soil, and embodying classically associated onomastic capital, speculations about lucrative name sponsorship in connection with a recent costly renovation of this national landmark did not carry the day (see, for example, Sjöblom 2017).

4.6 Norway

Similarly to Finland, more prosaic or unostentatious generics were once widespread at Norwegian football grounds, but they have now almost disappeared from top-flight grounds, with the exceptions of the non-sponsored *Myrdal gress* (*gress* meaning 'grass' or, by extension, 'pitch'), the sponsored *OBOS Idrettspark Nordre Åsen* (where *idrettspark* is 'sports park'), and the non-sponsored (semi-)simplex name of *Idrettsparken* [The Sports Park] in Notodden (which bore the sponsored name *Tinfos Arena* in 2007–08). The slightly more elaborate *stadion* is by far the most typical generic used for non-sponsored football grounds (18/25), while the arguably more dramatic *arena* is very uncommon in the non-sponsored group (2/25), but is definitely the most used generic for sponsored football grounds (8/14).¹⁵ The use of both these classically inspired generics demonstrates tapping into onomastic capital, especially in the case of *arena*.

Not all sponsored names are instantly recognizable as such, as with an example from Kristiansand, where the bank Sparebanken Sør

¹⁵ The dictionary *Bokmålsordboka* (2020) defines *stadion* as 'idrettsanlegg (med tribuner)' [sports facility (with stands)], while it gives *arena* two senses: 'strids plass i et romersk amfiteater eller spansk tyrefekterstadion' [combat area in a Roman amphitheatre or Spanish bullring], and the figurative meaning: 'strids plass, skueplass' [combat area, stage]. *Det Norske Akademis ordbok* (2020, s.v. 'arena'), meanwhile, gives the meanings of *arena* as 'idrettsanlegg' [sports facility] and, figuratively, 'sted eller miljø hvor noe (interessant) utspiller seg' [place or setting where something (interesting) happens].

bought the naming rights to the new stadium built for IK Start. A public competition was held to suggest a name, and the name chosen by the bank's CEO was *Sør Arena* [South Arena] (Sandvik 2006). Although this name did use part of the bank's name, it also referred to Kristiansand's location near the southernmost tip of the Norwegian mainland, and suggested ambitions to be an arena with a wider macro-regional catchment area. This case shows how corporations may sometimes purchase naming rights, but not make use of the right to name the property after themselves in an obvious way, instead using the opportunity to market their brands less directly. Even so, the use of the generic *arena* instead of the more common *stadion* hinted at a newly coined name. IK Start had severe financial problems, and the bank deepened its involvement, taking on ownership of the club and its stadium, and later selling both for the token sum of NOK 2 (Sørgjerd 2009, *E24* 2010). Nevertheless, its involvement continued, and with a new sponsorship deal in March 2014 the name was changed to the less ambiguous *Sparebanken Sør Arena* (Holtet 2014). Meanwhile, UEFA refers to the stadium merely as *Kristiansand Arena* (see 4.3 above for further examples of such temporary or context-specific 'de-sponsoring').

In Norway, as elsewhere, *arena* is the most typical generic for sponsored indoor venues (3/4), with only one sponsored use of *amfi* (an abbreviation of *amfiteater*), at *CC Amfi*, the home ice of Storhamar Hockey in Hamar. The latter is among the most curious cases, as the name is disputed by the local authority. The venue was opened in 1992, in the run-up to the 1994 Winter Olympic Games, when the rink hosted short-track and figure skating. The building belongs to the municipally owned company Hamar Olympiske Anlegg and was originally known as *Hamar Olympiske Amfi* [Hamar Olympic Amphitheatre], also acquiring the poetic alternative name *Nordlyshallen* [The Northern Lights Hall]. In 2015, CC Gruppen, a company owning various shopping centres and other property in Norway, agreed with the ice hockey club to pay NOK 6 million over ten years for the naming rights to the venue (Steen Hansen 2015). Nevertheless, the municipal arena owners do not use the sponsored name on their

website and have stated that they were not asked about the naming deal (Kristiansen 2015). In light of the extraordinary onomastic capital of venues associated with the Olympic Games, this is an unusual instance of an Olympic name being abandoned, although using the word ‘Olympic’ directly together with the sponsored name would almost certainly constitute trademark infringement. The disputed status of the name allows the municipality to continue utilizing the onomastic capital of the Olympics. Meanwhile, the ice hockey club has essentially activated the latent onomastic capital of the venue as if it were a blank slate, making economic capital out of the transaction. As for the sponsor, it has transformed economic capital into symbolic and social capital through the act of renaming, with potential for further economic capital to accrue.

The most common generic for non-sponsored indoor venues in the Norwegian sample is *hall* ‘hall’ (7/16), with the compounds *fjellhall* ‘mountain hall’ and *idrettshall* ‘sports hall’ making up another two, but there are several others, including *spektrum* (3/16) and *arena* (2/16). One of the non-sponsored indoor venues, again in Hamar, has no function-related generic at all: *Vikingskipet* means ‘the Viking ship’ and refers to the shape of its roof. Its original official name was *Hamar olympiahall* [Hamar Olympic Hall], but the more poetic name has been officially adopted too, and is apparently the main name used by the venue’s owner and operator. Such official use of two names for the same venue – a more common practice among sponsored venue names in our European data – indicates that valuations of onomastic capital vary in context-specific ways over time or depending on register, and further, that venue owners are often reluctant to abandon established names altogether, as they may still carry important meanings for people. Likewise, as in this case, names used colloquially may catch on to the extent that they are preferred to the official name, even in official contexts.

5. Discussion and conclusions

Backed by historical insights, and scrutinizing the present-day sponsored and non-sponsored venue toponomasticon, this article has investigated the mobilization of onomastic capital, as well as associated linguistic and cultural variations, in a variety of European contexts. In commodified spectator sports and entertainment, the interplay between economic and onomastic capital (and associated symbolic, social, political and psychological meanings conveyed by venue names) has dramatically intensified and grown in salience, especially in the wake of selling facilities' names to corporate sponsors. Even many historic football stadiums such as *St James' Park* in Newcastle (see 4.1 above), or the *Estadio Santiago Bernabéu* in Madrid (Friend 2018), have been under pressure to sell naming rights in order to bolster revenue streams or cover renovation costs (Vuolteenaho forthcoming). Nevertheless, a substantial proportion of venues in Europe are still not named after a sponsor, and institutional and popular resistance to the name sponsorship phenomenon has surfaced in many local contexts. This has offered an intriguing framework for comparing these processes of capital formation from onomastic perspectives. In this final section, we summarize the article's key answers to the onomastically focused research questions presented in the introduction and suggest avenues for future research in this area.

5.1 Generics as signals of onomastic capital in sponsored names

Traditionally, there have been considerable national variations in the use of generics in venue toponymies, but a slight trend towards transnational commonalities was observable in our data, especially but not only in connection with the naming rights trend. A case in point is our observation that the onomastic capital associated with *arena* has been on the rise irrespective of national context; indeed, the general popularity of the generic *arena* for sponsored venues of all kinds, especially for indoor venues, is clear at a European level. The etymology and current definitions of *arena* are accounted for in 2.2 above,

but as an internationally recognized naming element it now appears to describe a place of energetic or exciting action, often with naming rights sold or for sale, and is thus functioning increasingly as a transparent signal of the mobilization of onomastic capital. Among football grounds, out of our currently non-sponsored examples only 2.0% (3/148) use *arena/areena*, while 44.7% of the currently sponsored football grounds (34/76) use these generics. As for indoor venues, 25.0% (16/64) of the ones that are non-sponsored at present use *arena/areena* in some form (including several *ice arenas* and one *climbing arena*). The figure among the currently sponsored indoor venues, meanwhile, is 76.5% (39/51). Indeed, *arena/areena* is the most widespread generic for sponsored indoor venues in each of the contexts considered here. With indoor venues, this frequency is partly due to the types of venue that attract the most sponsorship: *arena* is non-specific and hence fits many of the multipurpose venues that are in our corpus. Clearly, the connotations that *arena* has with spectacle, drama and grandeur, not to mention the paradoxical modernist symbolism of a word with such a classical pedigree, have increased its traction as a source and signal of onomastic capital in recent decades, to the point that its mere use in a name suggests the name is more likely to be sponsored, at least in the data set used here.

The same connotations could be said to apply to *stadium/Stadion/stadion/stadio/stadiwm* in relation to football grounds, but the earlier widespread use of this group of generics in most contexts studied here means that they were already well established among non-sponsored names and do not necessarily carry the same novelty factor as *arena/areena*. One exception, to some extent, can be found in Scotland, where *stadium* might have more novelty value than in England and Wales, and where the currency of this generic may have grown partly due to the advent of name sponsorship. The prevalence in Scotland of *park* over *stadium* as a traditional generic for football grounds, and the continued productive use of *park* in that sense there, indicate that *stadium* may have stronger stand-out novelty value in that country than elsewhere. This is also suggested by the use of *stadium* as the most common generic for sponsored football grounds in Scotland,

followed by *arena*. In Italy, meanwhile, although the Italian form *stadio* is the function-related generic used for all non-sponsored football grounds, *stadium* has re-entered the scene via English as the most common generic for sponsored names of football grounds, as that generic's onomastic capital comes full circle.

5.2 Sponsored names as rule-breakers

Another key trend among *arena* names, whether or not they are sponsored, is that they frequently have non-traditional structures. In addition to cases such as *Arena Leipzig* (see 4.3 above), there was also *Arena Birmingham* in England (temporarily in 2017–20), which appeared to be another invitation for sponsorship and which, after the cut-off date for our corpus, has found a new sponsor as *Utilita Arena Birmingham* (Balloo 2020). In Norway, what was originally *Arena Larvik*, in itself a strange onomastic structure for Norwegian, found a sponsor and became *Boligmappa Arena Larvik*, followed five years later by *Jotron Arena Larvik* after a new sponsorship deal, giving the last element more of an address function (Skogheim 2015, Jotron 2020). This trait of novel syntax in some commercial names has been noted by Paula Sjöblom in her investigation of the multimodality of company names in Turku (2008:361).

A small but significant detail that is apparent in many of the examples shown above, and can also be seen in many other cases not studied in detail in this article, is the use of capital letters in sponsored names. In Finnish and Norwegian, for example, traditional names made up of multiple words, with a 'specific + generic' structure, typically only have initial capital letters for the first word and not for any subsequent words that are part of the name, such as *Helsingin olympiastadion* or *Haugesund stadion*, whereas sponsor-named venues tend to favour more capital letters, such as Helsinki's *Telia 5G Areena* (now *Bolt Arena*) or *Aker Stadion* in Molde.

Such examples suggest that the prominence of the sponsor's name and aggrandizement of the venue through orthography and typography are prioritized above conformity with established naming con-

ventions. In effect, this may come across as an endeavour to inflate the perceived combined onomastic capital of the sponsor's name and venue name. Breaking rules in this way may indeed help such names to stand out, which is especially pertinent bearing in mind the resistance that they can face. Some types of rule-breaking or innovative naming might also prevent names from being abbreviated in colloquial use in a way that would silence the sponsor's name, as with *The O2* (see 4.1 above) or *The SSE Hydro* (see 4.2 above). In the latter case, the generic also has connotations with the sponsor, although its status as a generic is debatable.

5.3 Toponymic attachment patterns and attitudes to name sponsorship

As shown in earlier critical toponomastic studies, numerous characteristics explain the recurring tensions around the name sponsorship phenomenon in Europe and beyond (see, for example, Madden 2019; Vuolteenaho, Wolny & Puzey 2019). Some fans and local residents do seem to welcome radical and multiple name changes brought along by this boom, owing to added financial resources, enhanced prestige or other factors. However, name sponsorship has also been resisted on several grounds, such as for its use in corporate image laundering, for doing away with the conventional functions of venue names as the bearers of heritage or public values, for additional technical-cartographic costs, and for everyday confusion related to name changes.

In stricter onomastic terms, a root cause of resistance to the renaming of older venues is often that naming rights tend to obliterate or transform existing names or naming elements, most usually by replacing but sometimes by adding to existing structures. Fans have typically developed a strong attachment to the existing names of venues, and these linguistic attitudes can cause resistance to sponsorship. The more established a place's name is, and the more tradition it is seen to embody, the more resistance any attempt to change it will typically come up against. The attachment felt by fans to the names of stadiums and other sports venues, in particular, is not dissimilar to

the notion of toponymic attachment elaborated by Kostanski (2009), conceivable in this connection as a potential source of onomastic capital that is prone to be diminished rather than boosted through name sponsorship.

Partly related to this resistance is another onomastic repercussion of the naming rights boom. In all of the European contexts in our data, the majority of non-sponsored facilities have names with relatively conventional ‘face-value’ structures. Among sponsored names, a great many follow a similar pattern, and there is even one example in our corpus of a sponsor-derived simplex name (*The O2*). More often, however, the expansion of name sponsorship seems to have led to an increase in more complex names, with inverted structures (see 5.2 above) but also effectively with multiple specific components, such as the *Sportpark Ronhof Thomas Sommer* in Fürth, or the aforementioned *Orolog Stadium-Dino Manuzzi* and *Dumbarton Football Stadium sponsored by DL Cameron* (see 4.4 and 4.2 above, respectively).

Characteristically, the above kinds of unconventional or idiosyncratic name structures seek to serve multiple functions of a place name simultaneously. Sometimes, this tendency may be explained by latent or explicit resistance, anticipated by name sponsors or venue owners in order to avoid interruptions to name-based heritage and place identities. A new phenomenon seeking to bridge this gap is the embedding of original ‘heritage’ names within a sponsored name, potentially with multiple function-related generic elements. One such example from Scotland is the home of Dundee FC, which had been called *Dens Park* since 1899, but in 2018 became *Kilmac Stadium at Dens Park*, notably with *stadium* as the generic connected to the sponsor’s name. Another similar case is the home of Partick Thistle, in Glasgow, which has been at *Firhill Stadium* since 1909 or, since 2017, *Energy Check Stadium at Firhill*. These examples show that, reluctant to abandon commemorative or heritage-related functions of names, many name-givers have increasingly resorted to complex multi-part name constructs in an onomastic trade-off due to divergent commercial and other pressures: a ‘have cake and eat it’ approach to onomastic capital and name sponsorship. A paradoxical downside to

such attempts to maximize the exploitation of onomastic capital is that the longer or the more convoluted a sponsored name gets, the more likely it is that the functions of the full venue name as a communicative tool and identity marker will be impeded, as predicted by the branding consultants of *The SSE Hydro* (see 4.2 above). This paradox evokes the aforementioned irony in the name of Rome's Colosseum: occasionally, no matter how hard an owner tries to implement their preferred name, colloquial use or attachment to established names may prevail. Indeed, another common, parallel tendency is for the continued use of two or even more separate names with official or semi-official status for the same venue. Anticipated resistance towards commercial naming practices is arguably driving the multiplication of different concurrent names for the same place, with both 'official-original' and 'official-commercial' names used in different communication contexts (see *Hamar Olympiske Amfi vs Nordlyshallen vs CC Amfi* in 4.6 above).

These trends in the commodification of such place names signal that it is not only poor 'sponsorship fits' or the time-limited aspects of naming rights contracts that many are opposed to and that can impede the implementation of such deals. In fact, contradictions between different forms of onomastic capital are at stake in this toponymic novelty.

5.4 Future challenges for research into onomastic capital

The notion of onomastic capital, as set out in the introduction to this article (see 1.2 above), offers a new focus not only for studies of name sponsorship and the direct commodification of names, but indeed for naming practices in a wide range of contemporary human activity. Much critically aware and politically engaged research in onomastics has rightly focused on the impact of colonialism and conflict on indigenous and minority names, and on other relatively overt political and cultural struggles. A focus on onomastic capital can certainly be useful when exploring such themes too, but it has particular utility in turning the spotlight on what might otherwise be more covert

power struggles. One fruitful way of doing so would be to integrate the study of onomastic capital more completely within a multimodal framework (see also 5.2 above). It has been shown that valuations of onomastic capital vary over time and depending on context, so there is also considerable scope for this concept to be applied in further historical and diachronic studies, as well as in research uncovering the onomastic impact of short-term events such as international sporting competitions, and in studies delving deeper into the differences between, for example, official and colloquial use of names.

Beyond the versatility of onomastic capital for exploring the use of names in society, further elaboration and wider application of this concept in socio-onomastic and critical approaches to the field of name studies would reveal new aspects of the nature of capital in its multiple forms. Observing trends in name sponsorship and other types of onomastic commodification can pinpoint significant changes in the organization of public or common good vs private or commercial property and activities. In a number of cases in the present study, for instance, we have seen the paradox of what are effectively commercial names being applied to facilities that were originally intended to serve mainly non-commercial purposes. In addition to the onomastic implications, this shows the extent to which public-use infrastructure is in various ways being conditioned by commercial interests. In many cases, the very creation of that infrastructure, even when it is to be publicly owned, is dependent on commercial sponsorship, and the level of commercialization of the public space may occasionally be such that the public-use aspect in practice appears to be on the way to becoming a secondary function, at least judging by the semiotic landscape.

Just as acts of philanthropy raise pressing social questions (see 2.3 above), so do acts of sponsorship, including name sponsorship. Top-down acts of naming or renaming, for example by state actors, are often criticized. In democracies, however, there should at least (ideally) be some level of accountability for naming decisions taken or delegated by public officials. When the power to make those decisions is sold to the highest bidder, though, how much accountability

does the sponsor have towards the general public? If a sponsor has the power to name a public-use facility, this act can certainly condition how the facility is spoken about, but it can even condition how it is used, as well as determining which facilities are built. Returning to toponymic attachment patterns and public attitudes, this suggests that, in a worst-case scenario, name sponsorship could represent a crisis for the organicity and reciprocity of naming processes for public spaces (see Vuolteenaho & Puzey 2018). Where there are gaps in public funding, however, such commercialization of the public sphere and trading in onomastic capital are increasingly likely to shape the future of urban namescapes.

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