

Developing a Gramscian Approach to Toponymy

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Abstract

Power and place naming are intimately linked, as recognised by the growth of critical approaches to toponomastics, examining the effects of unequal power relations on place names and place naming practices.

Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) is best known as a philosopher and politician whose original treatment of hegemony has been extremely influential. Less generally known is how profoundly Gramsci's strong interest in linguistics defined his more general political thought. Of particular relevance to the present study is Gramsci's understanding of the cultural roots of power and the processes of coercion and consent that determine, in this case, the struggles between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic toponymies. In 1917, Gramsci also wrote a harsh critique of changes to street names in Turin, which makes a compelling direct link between his promotion of a more 'organic' form of progress and a critical approach to toponymy.

This paper discusses the advantages of Gramsci's perspectives for the enrichment and further development of critical toponomastic theory. Gramscian thought is used here as a lens through which to view such onomastic phenomena as toponymic de- and re-commemorations after regime changes, tensions related to place names in minority-majority language situations, and recent attempts to commodify names.

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Introduction

Since the 1990s, a new politically-oriented turn has characterised place name research in disciplines from human geography to political sciences, with a strong focus on toponymy-related cultural conflicts and ideological strategies (e.g. Berg and Vuolteenaho 2009, Rose-Redwood *et al.* 2010). The key concern in this literature has been overtly political acts of naming, and above all the toponymic rhetoric of de- and re-commemoration processes that comply with dominant ideological worldviews and the established interpretations of the past, and that bolster hierarchical power structures and political elites in a given society. Especially with case studies conducted in varying historical and geographical contexts, the new power-sensitised toponomastics has facilitated understanding of the interconnectedness of place naming and the symbolic construction and consolidation of power structures through linguistic means (Vuolteenaho and Berg 2009, Vuolteenaho *et al.* 2012: 12).

In this paper, we will attempt to advance the development of this research field with theoretical and empirical perspectives inspired by the work of Antonio Gramsci. In a sense, our intervention can be viewed as a response to the criticism by Reuben Rose-Redwood *et al.* (2010: 14) of the risk that critical toponymic studies may become 'a bit too predictable' in their 'repetitious invocations of toponymic domination and resistance' (see also Azaryahu 2011, Light and Young 2014: 669-672). Indeed, it seems to us that many recent case studies on the politics of place naming have focused too one-sidedly on 'top-down' dimensions of

de- and re-commemoration, and for the most part turned a blind eye to one of the pivotal insights in the Gramscian theory of hegemony, namely the reciprocal relationship between the rulers and the ruled. In starting to tackle this bias, we will shed light on how the coercive nature of street and place naming has been complemented in various historical circumstances by popular and legitimising aspects.

Our selection of examples from post-Risorgimento Italy and the Soviet Union to contemporary branded urban places exposes that – besides unmistakably elitist ‘medal names’ (Gramsci 1982 [1917]: 183) – toponymic evocations of ‘organic’ local traditions, folk heroes, ‘ordinary’ people’s role in history and other vernacular symbols have frequently been adopted into the ingredients of official toponymy. While this paper will also discuss several cases that are overtly political, our key aim in the following is to show that the Gramscian theoretical model outlined below can inform an approach to power and place naming whether that power is being used overtly or covertly.

Antonio Gramsci and Hegemony

Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) is best known as a philosopher, as one of the founders of the Italian Communist Party, and as a victim of Fascist political imprisonment. The main contribution of his political thought is widely considered to be his original treatment of the concept of hegemony, which has been extremely influential.¹ Before Gramsci, hegemony had mainly been used to refer to ‘hard’ political domination, but one of the innovations of Gramsci’s approach was that he sought to explore dominant influences ‘not limited to matters of direct political control but [instead describing] a more general predominance which includes, as one of its key features, a particular way of seeing the world and human nature and relationships’ (Williams 1983: 145). In this way, the Gramscian approach facilitates the analysis of power relations throughout culture and society.

As Gramsci outlined, the influence of cultural hegemony derives not only from coercion or force, but also from popular consensus consent:

L’esercizio ‘normale’ dell’egemonia nel terreno diventato classico del regime parlamentare, è caratterizzato dalla combinazione della forza e del consenso che si equilibrano variamente, senza che la forza soverchi di troppo il consenso, anzi cercando di ottenere che la forza appaia appoggiata sul consenso della maggioranza, espresso dai così detti organi dell’opinione pubblica – giornali e associazioni – i quali, perciò, in certe situazioni, vengono moltiplicati artificialmente. (Gramsci 2007: 1638)

The ‘normal’ exercise of hegemony on the now classical terrain of the parliamentary régime is characterised by the combination of force and consent, which balance each other reciprocally, without force predominating excessively over consent. Indeed, the

¹ It is also important to note that Gramsci’s thought was heavily influenced by his interest in linguistics and his personal experience of power relations between languages (see e.g. Carlucci (2013), Ives (2004), Puzey (2011, 2016)).

attempt is always made to ensure that force will appear to be based on the consent of the majority, expressed by the so-called organs of public opinion – newspapers and associations – which, therefore, in certain situations, are artificially multiplied. (Translation in Gramsci 1971: 80)

Popular consent for hegemony may appear ‘spontaneous’, but it is the result of a ‘prestige’ born historically from the position of the ruling classes (Gramsci 2007: 1519). This notion of consent is constructed in public opinion and is seen to legitimise the use of coercion by the hegemon. Importantly, the power of a hegemon can be so strong that aspects of the system it promotes are internalised among a population as ‘common sense’. Through combined processes of coercion and consent, a hegemon is able to exert a profound influence on individual world views.

When reading Gramsci, doubt can occasionally arise as to whether he is seeking to criticise cultural hegemony as a form of domination or whether he is suggesting it as the method by which communists should assume power. In fact, he does both, but, valuably for analytic purposes, he also discusses different forms of hegemony. Joseph Femia (1981) outlines three main kinds of hegemony present in Gramsci’s writings. Firstly, Gramsci encourages integral hegemonies, which are democratic and organically representative of society. Secondly, there are decadent hegemonies, which Gramsci criticises: these are corroded integral hegemonies that are no longer representative of society and no longer satisfy all of society, so have lost support. Thirdly, minimal hegemonies are those which only cater for elites, and these are criticised heavily by Gramsci.

Other research has shown the utility of Gramscian frameworks for exploring the nature of everyday power structures and understanding the role of language and toponymy in building, maintaining or challenging popular consent for hegemony (Puzey 2011, 2016). An emerging hegemon’s efforts to name or to rename can be an important part of constructing a new ‘common sense’ hegemonic narrative. We can see this in the politics of place naming, which is so often a key part of struggles against previous linguistic and cultural hegemonies. For example, in Graeme Gill’s discussion of a key rationale behind place name changes in various phases of societal and urban development in Moscow:

[...] the reworking of language (through the injection of new words, the changing of the meaning of existing terms, and the elimination of some words) in order to invest it with a new ethos [is] important to the creation of a new regime’s symbolic culture. (Gill 2005: 480)

A principally similar spirit can be seen operating in many contemporary post-colonial contexts, such as with the increasingly widespread use of the dual name *Aotearoa / New Zealand*, giving a name that is more organically representative of other social groups previously under-represented in power structures. Evidence of these processes can also be seen in connection with regime change, as in Iraq, when *Saddam Hussein International*

Airport was renamed *Baghdad International Airport* (Woznicki 2003).² The following section will explore evidence of Gramsci's own thoughts specifically in relation to renaming.

Gramsci on Toponymic 'Progress' in Turin

Gramsci was an advocate of quite specific forms of revolution, change and progress. There is even specific evidence on what Gramsci made of changes to the namescape. In 1917, he wrote about changes that were happening with street names in Turin, where he was living at the time. The article in question, originally published in the newspaper *Avanti!* on 1 June 1917 under the title 'Il progresso nello stradario' ('Progress on the street map'), makes a compelling direct link between a critical approach to toponymy and the more organic form of progress advocated by Gramsci. Furthermore, it offers a useful framework for the criticism of non-authentic, non-organic renaming:

Armata di enciclopedia e di scure [la Commissione municipale per la denominazione delle vie] procede allo sventramento della vecchia Torino. Cadono i vecchi nomi, i nomi tradizionali che ricordano la vita fervida del vecchio comune medioevale, la fantasia esuberante e originale degli artigiani del rinascimento, meno enciclopedici ma più pratici e di buon gusto dei mercanti odierni. Si sostituiscono i nomi-medaglia. Lo stradario diventa un medagliere. (Gramsci 1982 [1917]: 183)

Armed with an encyclopedia and an axe, [the municipal street naming committee] is proceeding with the evisceration of the old Turin. Down come the old names, the traditional names of popular Turin that record the fervent life of the old medieval commune, the exuberant and original imagination of the Renaissance artisans, less encyclopaedic but more practical and with better taste than the merchants of today. They are replaced with medal names. The street map is becoming a medal showcase. (Translation in Puzey 2016: 168)

Turin was once the capital of the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia and was the first capital of Italy from unification in 1861 until 1865, when the capital moved to Florence. In the immediate post-unification period, there were a number of street name changes that saw the memorialisation of the House of Savoy and of heroes and symbols of the Risorgimento. For example, the street once known variously as *via del Re*, *viale del Re* or *corso del Re* (meaning 'King Street') was renamed *corso Vittorio Emanuele II* in 1878, thereby commemorating one specific king. The former *via Nuova* ('New Street') became *via Roma* in 1871, the same year that the Italian capital moved from Florence to Rome, and *via Dora Grossa*, formerly named after a river, became *via Giuseppe Garibaldi* in 1882, the year in which this protagonist of the Italian Risorgimento died.

² Even in airports, old names can live on, for example in the three-letter International Air Transport Association airport codes seen on baggage labels, such as *LED* for Pulkovo Airport in Saint Petersburg (formerly Leningrad), or *TGD* for the airport serving Podgorica, formerly Titograd.

There was also an increasing gentrification of street names in this period and in the time that Gramsci was writing, so *via del Fieno* ('Hay Street') was renamed *via Giovanni Botero*, after a political philosopher who died in Turin in 1617, and *via Gasometro* ('Gasometer Street') became *via Giovanni Camerana*, after a poet.

On 1 June 1917, in the very same issue of *Avanti!* in which Gramsci's article on street names was published, another piece announced a proposal to be discussed by the city council that day to change a number of street names in the city centre (see Table 1). Further research into city records is needed but, based on later maps, it would appear that not all of these changes were approved.

Existing name	Translation	Proposed change (June 1917)
via dei Carrozzai	Coachmakers' Street	via Domenico Berti [politician, 1820-1897]
via del Deposito	Warehouse Street	via Quinto Agricola [Roman general]
via dell'Ospedale	Hospital Street	via Galileo Ferraris [engineer and physicist, 1847-1897]
via dei Quartieri	Barracks Street	via Elvio Pertinace [Roman emperor]
via della Zecca	Mint Street [in the sense of coin manufacturing]	via Giuseppe Verdi [composer, 1813-1901]

Table 1. Proposed street name changes, 1 June 1917 (see Gramsci, 1982 [1917]: 184)

Gramsci complained about the decorative function of these new names, void of any real meaning connected to the places in question:

Ogni nome [nella città degli artigiani] era un brano di vita, era il ricordo di un momento di vita collettiva. Lo stradario era come un patrimonio commune di ricordi, di affetti, che univa più strettamente i singoli coi vincoli della solidarietà del ricordo. La borghesia bottegaia ha distrutto questo patrimonio [...]. Tutti i principi, i regnanti, i ministri, i generali di casa Savoia hanno avuto la loro nicchia [...]. L'enciclopedia ha dato il resto. Cosmopoli è la città borghese, cioè una falsa internazionale, una falsa universalità [...]. Cosmopoli incolore e insapore trionfa. (Gramsci 1982 [1917]: 184)

Every name [in the artisans' city] was a branch of life, it was the memory of a moment of collective life. The street map was like a common patrimony of memories, of affection, binding individuals together more strongly with the ties of solidarity through memory. The shop-keeping bourgeoisie has destroyed this heritage [...]. All the princes, regents, ministers and generals of the House of Savoy have been given their niche [...]. The encyclopedia has provided the rest. The bourgeois city is cosmopolitan, in other words a false international, a false universality [...]. It is the triumph of the colourless and tasteless cosmopolis.

It is perhaps not surprising that a Marxist philosopher would criticise bourgeois naming practices, but Gramsci was also criticising the ‘evisceration of the old Turin’. This is entirely in keeping with his approach to organicity: the notion that there should be an organic link of ideas between political and intellectual power structures and the social groups they seek to represent. Gramsci was calling for more sensitive, considered and authentic naming, with a sense for the real social history of a place and not only the history represented by encyclopedias or elites. In essence, he saw benefits of street naming practices that would be more consistent with ‘solidarity through memory’.

Further large-scale changes to the street names of Turin would come at other critical junctures after 1917, in particular after the First World War, during the Fascist period, and in the wake of the Second World War. One of the most significant changes of the Fascist era was the renaming of the *nuova barriera di Nizza* as *piazza Bengasi*, after the Libyan city of Benghazi, an Italian colonial possession. This name remains to this day.

Among street names in Italy commemorating certain dates, one of the most ubiquitous is *via XXV aprile*, after Italy’s liberation day on 25 April 1945. Three important roads in Turin were renamed after the largest Allied powers, so there was a new *corso Inghilterra* (formed from part of *corso Principe Oddone*), *corso Stati Uniti* (formerly *corso Ferdinando Duca di Genova*) and *corso Unione Sovietica* (formerly *corso Stupinigi*). The latter has survived the end of the political union it was named after and is the site of Turin’s Olympic Stadium. The stadium itself acquired its current name from hosting the Winter Olympics in 2006, but it was originally opened in 1933 under a very different commemorative name, as the *Stadio Municipale Benito Mussolini*.

Gramsci himself is a major subject of commemorative street names in Italy, and Turin is no exception, even though his own criticism of ‘medal names’ suggests he would not have approved. The street in question previously bore the name *via dei Carrozzai* (‘Coachmakers’ Street’), an artisan name of the sort to which Gramsci was referring in 1917; indeed this was one of the very street names he was directly discussing. Part of the street was renamed in 1860, in the encyclopaedic fashion typical of the age and of later eras, as *via Andrea Doria*, after a 17th-century Genoese admiral. In the period following the Second World War, a section of the street was renamed after *via Antonio Gramsci*.

Saint Petersburg/Petrograd/Leningrad: A Cradle of Revolutions

Saint Petersburg was founded in the 18th century as Russia’s window to Europe. In 1914, the potentially German-sounding name was changed to *Петроград* (*Petrograd*), and after the death of Vladimir Lenin in 1924, the name was changed again to *Ленинград* (*Leningrad*), most recently reverting to *Санкт-Петербург* (*Saint Petersburg*) in 1991. Before the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, the street toponymy of the central parts of the city abounded with imperial, military and religious commemorations (Nikitenko n.d.), but by 1924, roughly one third of the city’s street names had been changed (Marin 2012: 198).

One prominent characteristic of early Bolshevik commemorative naming was to stress the heroic role of the working classes and poor rural people in overthrowing the capitalist and imperialist oppressors, for example with the change of name from *Большая Дворянская*

улица ('Great Nobility Street') to *улица Деревенской Бедноты* ('Street of the Rural Poor'). Not all national heroes inherited from the Tsarist era were removed from the city's namescape though: writers such as Pushkin and Dostoevsky could be associated with anti-Tsarist attitudes or making a case for the poor, so they remained untouchable. Many historical dissidents were also commemorated, as in the renaming of *Сенатская площадь* ('Senate Square') to *площадь Декабристов* ('Decembrists' Square'), after the early-19th-century anti-monarchist uprising.

By the mid-1920s, however, the most prolific new name category in Leningrad were names that heralded the Bolshevik revolution and new Soviet society as historical culminations of working people's empowerment. A case in point was the renaming of the city's main artery *Невский проспект* ('Nevsky Prospect'), named after the 13th-century Prince Alexander Nevsky, which became *проспект 25 Октября* ('25 October Prospect') in memory of the Bolshevik revolution itself. The new name was not universally liked and failed to be adopted in daily usage by most locals. In multiple ways, the initial focus of the new naming policy in Leningrad, and in other Soviet cities, was to equate the new Bolshevik rule with the rule of the people, in an attempt to fuel the people's engagement and revolutionary enthusiasm. The central paradox was that the rulers otherwise acted in openly coercive ways as the self-proclaimed representatives of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Many contemporaries, even among progressives, were under few illusions as to the actual success of the attempts by Soviet rulers to root their power in inherited cultural forms of expression and existing popular mindsets. Rosa Luxemburg, for example, attacked the Bolshevik leaders for their 'cool contempt' for the freedom of the press and free assembly (1961 [1918]: 48), as well as for turning the revolutionary cause into a brutalisation and bureaucratisation of public life and a clique affair, 'a dictatorship, to be sure, not the dictatorship of the proletariat, however, but only the dictatorship of a handful of politicians' (Luxemburg 1961 [1918]: 72). In the Gramscian terminology, it could perhaps be called a decadent, or even a minimal hegemony, not sufficiently 'organic' to represent the people.

After Lenin's death, and especially with the rise of Stalinism, the coercive nature of the Soviet state became increasingly evident in toponymic terms, despite the lip-service paid to the noble ideals of the equality of people and the autonomous status of Soviet republics. The coercive official rhetoric of the personality cult became visible in all kinds of place naming, with practically every Soviet city and village dotted with the names of leaders intended to embody the party and therefore all of the people. Part and parcel of the Stalinist 'cult model' (Murray 2000: 17) was that the increasingly paranoid political system became obsessed with outing formerly respected communists as 'enemies of the people', declaring them 'persona non grata' and liquidating them from the streetscape. An extreme, but by no means unique, example, comes from Magadan, in the far east of Russia:

[...] the chiefs of the NKVD gave their names to cities, squares, factories, schools, until a veritable NKVD-land had come into being. In 1935 Berzin opened in Magadan a park of culture, giving it the name of his superior, the chief of the NKVD, Yagoda. Three years later Berzin and Yagoda were shot. Berzin Street was renamed Stalin Street, and Yagoda Park was renamed after the new chief of the NKVD, Yezov. A year later they shot Yezov, and the park received the name of Stalin. In 1956 Stalin

Street was changed into Marx Street, and Stalin Park was renamed Lenin Park. For how long – no one knows. Eventually, the town council hit on a good idea, and is now giving streets apolitical names. So there is Gazetnaya, Pochtovoya, Garaznaya, Nabierzhaya. After all, newspapers, post offices, garages, and shorelines will always be around. (Kapuściński 1994: 209)

Another tendency with consent-seeking overtones that gradually emerged in the street toponymy of Soviet cities was that the insistence on making a clear break with the pre-socialist past decreased somewhat over the decades. The blessings of internationalism and supra-ethnic proletarian Sovietism were still to be seen in the streetscape, but selective ethno-national ingredients were also elevated into the established urban iconography. In the case of Leningrad, efforts to boost the citizens' morale led to a number of cases of name restoration. On 15 January 1944, with the 900-day Siege of Leningrad nearing its conclusion, twenty street names with monarchist or religious themes were reinstated in the city centre, with perhaps the most significant case of pre-post-communist 'de-Sovietisation' being *проспект 25 Октября* ('25 October Prospect'), a name which apparently few ordinary Leningraders ever adopted in day-to-day life (Marin 2012: 200, Salisbury 1969: 740). The street's ur-Russian maiden name of *Невский проспект* ('Nevsky Prospect') was restored. Seen through a Gramscian lens, the muting of the former official street name by locals was a revealing instance of how the commemorative naming policy adopted even during the early Bolshevik years was not organically representative of the proletariat, in spite of the rulers' emphasis on the popular element as the cornerstone of the commemorative rhetoric.

Toponymic Changes in the Gorbachev Era

In more recent times, a stronger wave of ethno-nationalist place and street naming was experienced in the wake of Mikhail Gorbachev's reform initiatives. The agenda of glasnost relaxed restrictions on public discourses in the mid- and late 1980s, also giving rise to a surge of protests against the toponymic policies that had been pursued up to that point in the Soviet Union, as detailed by John Murray (2000: 87-92). In 1989, for instance, there was an outspoken plea from some Armenian linguists – whom we might perhaps call 'organic intellectuals' in this case – pointing to 'numerous scandalous facts of the most flagrant violations and arbitrariness in conferring and changing geographic names' (Grigoryan and Grigoryan 1989, cited in Murray 2000: 92-93).

There are some remarkable parallels between Gramsci's thoughts and the 'new thinking' of Gorbachev's reform agenda, which appears to have drawn some inspiration from the Eurocommunist approach taken by the Italian Communist Party in the 1970s and 1980s, under Enrico Berlinguer. The Eurocommunist approach sought to implement communist policies not through armed revolution but through the democratic process and civil society. The Italian approach to consent-seeking communism had been viewed with suspicion in the Soviet Union for being unorthodox, but both the Italian party and Gramsci were rehabilitated in the 1980s (Kubálková 2001: 137). As Gramsci sees it, an active relationship between an individual's thought and their global, international cultural environment forces them into a

constant process of self-criticism (2007: 1331). Gorbachev's agenda of 'new thinking' and reform were forms of self-criticism, and perhaps this is where Gorbachev's link with Gramsci is strongest. The apparently Gramscian-inspired perestroika and democratisation implied reconstructing the Soviet system, and for some in the Soviet republics, this legitimised campaigns to reassess street toponymies from a national, less Russocentric point of view, all of which contributed in its own way to the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

Privatisation and Commodification

In order to illustrate briefly the relevance of a Gramscian framework in other naming contexts, we will finally turn our attention elsewhere to see how market-driven economics are currently raising other naming problems related to hegemony and the 'organicity' of names. With the privatisation of formerly state-owned bodies, private enterprises play an increasingly important role in naming public spaces, often including stations, airports and other transport nodes. From a Gramscian perspective, there are several non-democratic and deeply problematic aspects to marketing-oriented naming (see also Vuolteenaho and Ainiala 2009, Berg 2011, Vuolteenaho and Kolamo 2012, Medway and Warnaby 2014). There is, for example, a growing role of sponsorship in public-private partnerships, as seen in London with the cable car over the River Thames that opened in 2012 and was sponsored by the airline Emirates for £36 million, meaning that the iconic London Underground map now features advertising in the names of the cable car termini *Emirates Greenwich Peninsula* and *Emirates Royal Docks*.

Another case of name commodification, in Turin, was directly related to the name of Gramsci himself. A building where Antonio Gramsci lived from 1919 to 1921 was recently renovated as a luxury hotel. The developers' first choice of name for the hotel was reportedly *Hotel Gramsci* (Andruetto 2014). This controversial idea led to protests (Montanari 2014), with some pointing out that it was maybe inappropriate to name a luxury hotel after a man who wrote that 'complete and perfect political equality cannot exist without economic equality' (Gramsci 1971: 258). A Spanish partner company in the project, NH Hoteles, was keen to adopt a name that was a little more '*neutro*' [neutral] (Andruetto 2014). The developers, meanwhile, thought that they were honouring Gramsci by turning the building into a space for what they called '*una clientela di fascia alta*' [a high-class clientele] (ibid.). Petitions were signed against the name, with some academics comparing it to naming a fashion boutique in Amsterdam after Anne Frank, dedicating a shooting range in Delhi to Mahatma Gandhi or naming an investment bank in Bethlehem *Gesù S.p.A.* [Jesus plc] (Eddyburg 2014, Montanari 2014).

Although some saw this as the ultimate insult, the name seemed to have the support of the Istituto Piemontese Antonio Gramsci, a local educational foundation in Turin that stood to be given a space inside the building with the opportunity to organise '*piccole riunioni*' [small meetings] (Andruetto 2014). The developers eventually relented, and the hotel was named *Piazza Carlina*, after the square where it is situated, although the hotel restaurant has been named *Antonio* (Guccione 2014).

Conclusion

A Gramscian approach to naming, drawn from Gramsci's more general writings and his specific criticism of changes to the place names of Turin, shows us that toponymic change is certainly possible, but it stands a much greater chance of success if it is rooted in historical authenticity and in an organicity with representation of all social groups.

In Gramscian terms, the cases drawn from Soviet history are, in part, examples of the official toponymy trying to strike a balance between coercion and consent-seeking processes. Generally, we can see that specific language policies, from language education to schoolbooks and official names, are used as tools in an attempt to forge an educational relationship between the rulers and the ruled, but also a cultural and linguistic relationship.

Ogni rapporto di 'egemonia' è necessariamente un rapporto pedagogico e si verifica non solo nell'interno di una nazione, tra le diverse forze che la compongono, ma nell'intero campo internazionale e mondiale, tra complessi di civiltà nazionali e continentali. (Gramsci 2007: 1331)

Every relationship of 'hegemony' is necessarily an educational relationship and occurs not only within a nation, between the various forces of which the nation is composed, but in the international and world-wide field, between complexes of national and continental civilisations. (Translation in Gramsci 1971: 350)

These relationships can be two-way: on the one hand, rulers mobilise intellectual-linguistic labour to impose their ideological world view as unquestioned common sense, but on the other hand, so-called 'organic intellectuals' act as crucial cultural mediators. This bi-directionality is not necessarily always the case: a ruling ideology can remain merely coercive and one-sided, and then its hegemony is not effective and will remain 'minimal'.

Recent examples of the commodification of names highlight the growing interest of financial capital in (re)naming public spaces, especially in connection with the privatisation of former state enterprises. Names are a cultural element of shared public capital and infrastructure, so these developments call for further scrutiny to be given to such processes in order to guard against the misappropriation of names for profit.

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