The New Saint Petersburg: 
Trapped in Time?

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Introduction

The naming of St Petersburg forms a distinct pattern. In emerging in the context of early modern Russia the city gained a name that signaled - by having Dutch and German rather than Russian connotations - some degree of mental openness. The choice was very much in line with the overall endeavour of bringing Russia in touch with Enlightenment and making it part of European civilisation, thereby breaking the isolation caused by Russia's somewhat peripheral location in view of the rest of Europe. Petrograd, the name used for a short period since the First World War, represented a different logic. ‘Burg’ was translated into Russian ‘grad’, this change being spurred by the anti-German feelings that prevailed in 1914. Moreover, the religious connotations were dropped. The name chosen represented, with Peter the Great and Russia's own history as a point of departure, a step in the direction of national closure and Leningrad, the name assumed in 1924 five days after Lenin's death, strengthened this feature even further.

Naming obviously matters and my concern here consists of how to interpret the recent re-emergence of the old name of St Petersburg, one given originally by Tsar Peter I after his patron saint, the Apostle Peter. The questions is what such a renaming - passed through a popular referendum in September 1991 and compounded by the fact that the city was also administratively detached from the surrounding Leningrad region with its old Soviet-time name - means in the new Russia and more generally the post-wall Europe.
The process of re-naming is of interest as city-names are often societally deep-rooted and quite sedimented. If changed, there exists – in all probability - rather profound reasons for such a move. The question thus reads what is behind the return of St Petersburg. What spurred such a change, what hides behind the city's radically different view of itself and how has the new name been thematised in the discourse that has followed taking into account that the impact of re-naming may be enabling as well as constraining? And in what way have these changes in self-perception - signaling an ability to break with previous mental and political borders - been reflected in the policies pursued vis-à-vis the intra-Russian as well as the external environment? Are the changes merely symbolic or are they also visible as to their background and consequences in a more concrete fashion in the policies pursued? The argument is that combining a constructivist approach and the focusing on the boundary practices - both mental and real - of a regional actor may provide essential insight not just about St. Petersburg itself but also the unfolding of political space in Russia as well as in the context of the EU-Russia relationship more generally.

**Turning Back or Looking Forward?**

There is no doubt as such that the abandoning of the Soviet-time name of Leningrad implies a repositioning of the city in both temporal and spatial terms. It does so in providing the St Petersburg with an old/new symbolic frame, distinguishing the city from the Leningrad Oblast and by lifting it out of a number of constraints embedded in the city's posture in the context of the socialist project. There is, at least in principle, much power involved in the move. The installing of such a 'lens' or a 'prism' by digging into an alternative memory allows the city to see itself - and perhaps also Russia at large - in a different perspective. Going back to the name St Petersburg brings back memories of a time when Russia endeavoured at being part of a singular European civilisation instead of striving for a distinct one of its own. The name chosen enables the emergence of
new, more relativist and perhaps increasingly self-reflective visions. The move in the sphere of symbolics has at least potentially a liberating impact with some elements residing in the past being restored in order to provide for an altered sense of place and belonging.

An interpretation along these lines has been presented by a group of German scholars (Creuzberger et. al., 2000). St Petersburg is, in their view, moving into a direction of not just linking up to a historical European identity. The city is again, they claim, in tune with time and able to cope with various aspects of change in being truly post-Soviet. A previous pattern of adaptation is once more confirmed with the renaming of St Petersburg having features of an eastern response to the postmodern challenge. The city is once again able to follow suit, they assert. They argue that it mirrors the challenges of the current era, takes stock of its critical potential and reflects general trends in the development of political space far better than any other site in Russia due to an endeavour of combining the local with the global.

Yet a very different reading consist of the argument that the city is well on its way of getting trapped in time. It could be claimed that due to an inability to link up with European integration and commonness along contemporary lines - due to internal obstacles or limits set by a more international discourse on Russia - St Petersburg signals being one of ‘us’ merely by the usage of unifying historical symbols. Debordering takes place just by the dint of upgrading memories pertaining to a period that most of Europe has left behind ages ago, and without anything more contemporary being added to this elementary move - or if his the case, the configuration unfolding represents a move towards ‘the past as a future’.

In sorting out between these two rather different interpretations, i.e. whether the renaming of the city expresses a wish to anchor oneself in the past or points more in the direction of the future, it is worth noting that there are two main ontologies and ‘prisms’ at play. They are not just different in time but also provide for rather distinct features as to the unfolding of political space.
Basically, there is a pre-modern one pointing in the direction of an Empire-type of Russia and Europe. Such a figure allows, in having the shape of concentric rings, for rather flexible borders and it is not premised on any strict (modern) need of homogeneity. Matters seen as essential take place at the core but once this is secured there is also place for considerable plurality and a fading out of centrality and 'we'-ness towards the outer spheres (cf. Wæver, 1990). However, amidst this plurality the requirements of centralizing power and forming a dense core prevails. Such a premodern move - important as such in shaping identities and reconfiguring political space - would in the case of St Petersburg basically stand for a turning back to 'authentic' and uncontaminated Russian values and imperial postures that are felt to be immutably stable even in the context of the current turmoil. The choice stands, if the ontology behind the renaming has such a premodern character, for a kind back-to-the-past aspiration, i.e. an effort of narrowing down rather than opening up towards the new and changing environment.

The second and more forward-looking 'lens' would be postmodern in nature. It allows for de-bordering but tolerates - in contrast to the premodern one - also a considerable degree of de-centralization. It would be in line with the formation of a rather multicentred Europe, one of Olympic Rings, with regionality as an essential constitutive principle. The adoption of the old name, one with roots in the past, would in such a context not stand for nostalgia and a longing back to the 'old good times' but rather testify to an ability of coping creatively with the new challenges that resonate with globalization/localization. The re-deployment of symbolic resources located in the past would go hand in hand with partaking in a networking of cities, the implementation of various transborder and crossborder endeavors as well as engagement in region building. One could also expect - along similar lines - to come across efforts of linking in to the re-emergence of northernness as a master-signifier of European political space and, more specifically, the EU's Northern Dimension.

All in all, the move of renaming would be part - as to its epistemological aspects - of endeavors aiming at a breaking down of
the rigidity of the EU-Russia border, thereby also contributing to a
decentralization of both Russia and the EU. Studying the policies of
not-so-central actors yet having the capacity to influence borders and
approaches to bordering would in that case be important for the
overall unfolding of political space. Being mentally part of both East
and West as well as Russia and Europe, St Petersburg in particular
could contribute to the breaking down of the self-other divisions of
the Cold War period - and the applying of a postmodern 'lens' might
hence constitute an essential aspect of such a task.
It goes without saying that the two 'lenses' outlined here are not
categorically distinct from each other, nor do they stand out as two
totally different models, each with its own underlying logic. They are
both related to the modern project and contain some similarities such
as tolerance for plurality and favoring flexible borders. What keeps
them apart consists above all of the way
centralization/decentralization is being viewed, with the postmodern
model standing here in a category of its own. My aim is thus to treat
the two prisms merely as heuristic tools helpful in illuminating
essential aspect of the process of renaming and to trace the more
profound ontological modes of thinking that might reside in the
background. It would be futile to think that the deeply ingrained
modern project - with an emphasis on homogeneity, centrality, clear
external borders and statist security as a core constitutive argument
for the formation of a distinct self-other relationship - has suddenly
lost its grip. Surely it has not crumbled in any total manner by being
surpassed either by some premodern or postmodern alternatives.
Rather, what is at stake consists of tendencies. The tendencies of
remaining with history, past memories and resisting too radical
breaks as well as the effort of tuning in to the new appear to be
present simultaneously. The outcome is thus not one of absolute
shifts, and yet one may expect that both models - each with their own
ontology - presage changes such as a proliferation of identities, a
pluralisation of histories as well as a destabilization of authority in
the context of St Petersburg. Above all, it is the renaming itself that
gives cause to think in these broader terms on the level of ontology in
exploring how the new St Petersburg relates to centrality, bordering
and aspects of region-building as well as networking that reach beyond the ordinary modern and basically state-centered approaches.

**Part of Soviet Avant-garde**

It seems, to start with, that the abandoning Leningrad and the return to St Petersburg constitute rather fundamental moves. There is more to it than just a re-naming of a major city. The switch may also be viewed as forming a key site in the discourse on the current-day Russia. Larger than Berlin, St Petersburg is a true metropolis (it has a dual position in being constitutionally both a city and a separate subject as "a city of federal importance" together with Moscow) with some 4.6 million inhabitants located in Northern Europe. The features of being a city-state more than any other region located in Russia are rather strong. St Petersburg is, as the city forms a vast conglomerate of urban space, of considerable importance also for the broader environment. As the new name appears to stand for a profound move of identity transformation, the question emerges whether such a move in the sphere of naming has also been followed up in terms of social transformation and in terms of more tangible realities.

The very fact that St Petersburg has quite different connotations than Leningrad underlines that a considerable change has taken place. There are good reasons to argue that Leningrad was intentionally set up as something of an antithesis to St Petersburg, and that these two configurations represent rather opposite postures in the construction of political space. Interestingly enough, both the Soviet and the post-Soviet periods have been labeled by an active policy of naming. They have both stood for a desire to arrest and outline place in a way of their own, thereby breaking with historical continuity.

Leningrad was, for its part, rather easy to categorize and place into perspective. It stood out as a provincial part of larger homogeneous and quite hierarchic whole dictated by the principle of statist sovereignty. Some plans to return to the position of a gateway existed early on but they never materialized (Helanterä, 2000: 18).
The core was located elsewhere and Leningrad was, since the beginning of the 1930s, subjected to the overall plan of developing the Soviet Union, i.e. an object of thinking taking place elsewhere. It was above all allotted with the task of producing industrial products to satisfy the needs of the Soviet Union - and later also to contribute to the trade with other socialist countries. Considerable parts of the Soviet heavy industry, including shipyards, production of nuclear plants, aircraft industry and space technology, was concentrated over time to Leningrad. The fact that most of this was related to military preparations made Leningrad particularly vulnerable to central planning and investments devised on that basis.

In 1931 a previously unified and functional region was divided into two by the split into the Leningrad City and the Leningrad Oblast. With the strict bordering towards the rest of Europe, Leningrad lost in addition to its environs its position as a center for innovation and the role of mediating between the western world and the rest of the country. The drying up of foreign trade further isolated the city and contributed to its peripherilisation. Leningrad stood for something rather modern in the sense of being molded to fit a Soviet lens of avant-garde, i.e. exemplary, ahead of its time and different from the imperial era St Petersburg, the latter understood as a remnant from the past. The socialist project and the needs of the new core, that is Moscow, also dictated how Leningrad was staged - and it was hence depicted as a kind of "Potemkin village for the restaging of the revolution while Moscow was consolidating itself as the seat of Soviet power" (Boym, 2000: 315). Leningrad, relegated to a mere locality and yet constantly suspected (due to its potential more than any actual policies) of harboring intentions of breaking with such a limited role and the principles underpinning the period of Soviet rule, had a ring of something closed and protective attached to it. The totalitarism of the period, with stress on continuous threat and grievance, forged it into a strictly bordered constellation of either-or. The city became unyielding to reforms and symbolized heroic resistance against invading foreign forces in defense of the fatherland. It was premised on a clear self-other distinction and allotted the function of serving as an outpost, one
protecting the country against external influences from Finland, Scandinavia, Europe and the West more generally. This symbolism made it also easy in the West to regard Leningrad in terms of alterity and to perceive it as representing a different, competing civilisation, thereby providing it with features of Europe’s Other. As Lenin's town the city had a firm and clearly defined position in Soviet ideology as well as a distinct hierarchy of influence and power within a rather monolith Soviet Union. The borderlines were quite firm as the overall project was about socialism in a single country, one that represented progress and was destined to be carried forth by the force of history. There were no traces of autonomous development and the city hardly overspilled the boundaries set by statist - and Moscow-dominated - policies. On the contrary, it was firmly attached to various statist and rather modern concerns. It was, on a more general note, embedded in a distinct geopolitical discourse, and based on rather firm border-drawing. There was, in line with this, a strong military industry forming up to 80 percent of the city’s overall industrial potential and a hard-working KGB, and in general the city was part and parcel of an anti-western stance. The strong Othering entailed in such a discourse led to perceptions of Russia and Europe being two worlds apart. This outlook severed the city not only from its nearby environment but also its own past with St Petersburg being understood as the Other of Leningrad.

Opening up Towards Europe

The new St Petersburg, no longer Soviet but part of a Russian heritage, has a much more pluralist feel about it. It draws upon an alternative memory emanating from an earlier period and is far less easy to pin down in any categorical terms. The city is not just an outcome pertaining to a statist arrangement as is already indicated by the religious connotations of its name, although a variety of state-related aspects are present as well. St Petersburg is often spoken of as the most Western, cosmopolitan and advanced of all Russian cities (cf. Hedenskog, 2000: 62). Moreover, there is strong emphasis on the
cultural aspects of the entity, St Petersburg being often called the cultural capital of Russia, this delineation also referring to the presence of some critical thinking. Yet, on the other hand the city does not have connotations of being avant-garde, i.e. being destined to follow a fixed route and an externally given logic. The new name does not point to a destined future or smack utopia but resides in history. A further quality consists of that there is, contrary to many other border regions, no profound "periphery complex" inherited from the past to be discerned in the case of St Petersburg (Makarychev, 2000: 23). The city has, being located at a distance from the core and close to an external border, a distinct identity of its own and harbours the reputation of a democratic stronghold chiefly voting for reformist parties and politician (Poulsen-Hansen, 2001: 187).

The town of Apostle Peter has, in general, a standing of its own in the form of not bending easily to outside pressure. For example the gubernatorial elections in May 2000, with Vladimir Yakolev being elected despite some efforts of President Putin to secure a different outcome, may be interpreted as having evidenced such a semi-autonomous aspiration (Oldberg, 2000: 24, 37-39), albeit more recently a more conciliatory attitude appears to have carried the day. It also appears that the Petersburgers rather actively nurture and discuss their identity. The tercentenary celebrations of the year 2003 have further contributed to this (cf. Joenniemi & Morozov, 2003).

Proposals to improve and elevate the city's status are frequent. Occasionally these proposals are about re-conquering the position of Russia's capital - i.e. the underlying logic is then one of competing with Moscow with statism and sovereignty as the core constitutive principles - although many of the proposals also reach beyond such a (modern or, for that matter, premodern) logic (cf. Hedenskog, 1999:74). For a while a movement advocating a totally autonomous position existed, but it seems to have died out more recently. What appears to be crucial in the current discourse is that there are elements of metropolitanism, regionalism and re-linking to northernness to be traced, and more generally, the representational frame of St Petersburg appears to be city-centered rather than statist.
The features of metropolitanism - to the extent that they are really there - imply that there are seeds of de-territorialisation present. The city's character is expressed by labels such as 'the Northern Palmyra', 'the Northern Venice', 'the Northern Amsterdam' or 'the Northern Rome' - all modeled according to known foreign (mainly European) cities - although images such as 'the Northern Gate' or 'the Window to Europe' have been employed as well. The frequent usage of such labels testifies that there are some elements present in the discourse reminiscent of the double role that the city harbored historically. It ascended, by being simultaneously Russian and European, rapidly into one of the modern Europe's key centers of power and Russia's cradle of internationalization (Eskelinen and Vartiainen, 1996: 231). The process of naming also testifies, according to Svetlana Byom (1999: 149) that labeling it as "a city without memory" and the "first proto-postmodern city" is not without foundation. The first epitaph refers to the city's special nature in not having to be born out of some natural and gradual growth but having been established in 1703 'unnaturally' in a sweeping manner, without any integral relationship to its environs as well as by a political decision and according to a purely administrative plan. These aspects may be interpreted as indicating that visions and images have a particularly distinct position in underpinning to city.

Various narratives pertaining to the city being 'unnatural' and having historically broken out of an 'uncivilised' past have been there from early on as the city grew out of an idea of a fresh start for Russia in the midst of a more common degeneration and inability to open up for some of the requirements of modernity. It represented a breach and stood for an effort to catch up with other parts of Europe by mobilizing the forces of the country into a gigantic endeavor - a pattern that has reoccurred in Russian history (cf. Shaw, 1999). The enormousness of the endeavor also led to rather brutal and repressive measures and gave the city features of an abstraction, a copy or a mere facade (and it has therefore - not least because of the considerable repression and suffering involved - been seen by various authors and writers as having a rather shaky and uncertain ground. What further adds to this is that the city has been built on a
previou s marshland). St Petersburg hence carries, in some of its aspects, connotations of something unreal, artificial and voluntarist. It bends in many directions and does not lend itself, it seems, to any stable interpretation. It is precisely the plurality, flexibility and an unsettled frame that also now constitutes a core reason why St Petersburg tends to be quite important for the new Russia, Europe and European politics more generally.

Furthermore, the re-emergence of St Petersburg represents an endeavor to strengthen the culturalization of political space. It provides a very different representational frame compared to the previous Leningrad. The re-naming that took place at the beginning of the 1990s coincided with a period when there was much stress on Russia's "return to Europe" or, indeed, a "return to civilization". The effort was one of rapid change as well as linking up with key cultural and societal trends and to do away with the previous self-other distinction. Novgorod has, in some sense, followed suit by assuming the name 'Novgorod the Great' in its search for direction and meaning through the elevation of its impressive past. Such moves allow for mobility, de-bordering and circulation within a wider sphere. They represent a direction that is less inclined than some of the other post-Soviet themes in the debate to trigger a sovereignty-related, statist and security-oriented discourse. Kaliningrad, also located around the Baltic Rim, serves as an example of these latter tendencies. The discourse pertaining to this Russian exclave remained quite traditional, sovereignty-related and security-focused during most of the 1990s, although also the debate on Kaliningrad has more recently reflected themes such as integration, de-bordering and networking (Joenniemi, 2000).

St Petersburg's re-naming aspires, one may think, at doing away with the bifurcated logic and the strictly state-based bordering of political space, i.e. a legacy that started already long time ago. The turning point consists of Finland's, Poland's and the Baltic counties' separation from Russia and Russia's isolation from Western Europe in the context of the events in 1917. The re-naming negates the whole period that followed, particularly the years of the Cold War, and is hence rather destabilizing in its consequences. It opens up the
broader questions of who are 'we' in the case of Russia and where to place Russia as to the broader European consciousness concerning time and place if it is no longer bordered in the way it used to be. Such questions surfaced once the dominant ideology and systemic differences of the Cold War years and strict division into the East and the West no longer offered ground for staying aloof and required a refraining from linking up with broader European trends, including, region-building, urbanization and the joining of networks of urban spaces.

Simultaneously Old and New

Yet the moves of opening up new departures have remained rather cautious. The traces of the previous period are not just to be abolished overnight. Expecting that moves of closure suddenly come to an end would be naïve taking into account the heavy structural legacy of the Soviet period but also the way the modern symbols have been sedimented over time. This is so particularly in view of the wartime experiences as well as the heavy militarization and stalinization of the city during the Soviet years. A clear avoidance of breaking into something totally unexplored is there. Anxieties about being faced with an altogether new situation have to be alleviated. The name of St Petersburg diverts this dilemma, it appears, by being simultaneously old and new. It pertains to something familiar and is undoubtedly part of 'our' heritage, yet signalling that change has taking place in regard to the Soviet past. Moreover, the move circumvents the Soviet period in temporal terms. It provides - by drawing on a different prism and resources available on historical grounds - a connection to Russia's past by offering strong links to the old Russian Empire while at the same time pointing to various possible futures. It articulates a future vision by calling upon the past in a way that transcends the recent isolationist and xenophobic period of Russian history. It aims, one may claim, at establishing a new identity, but does so without denying previous experiences (Kaliningrad/Kônigsberg is again
much more of a dilemma in being largely void of historical linkages to Russianness and hence also deprived of the option of turning its past to a future). Above all, the image of St Petersburg introduces a self-understanding that is far more conducive to a tuning in to European integration than some other articulations present in the Russian politico-cultural discourse that also aim at influencing the course of future development.

This is not to say that the return to St Petersburg automatically strengthens images of an open and a rather Europe-oriented Russia or augurs measures such as the joining of a network of urban spaces, that is figuring as a global city being transnational - or perhaps even anti-national. The outcome is not necessarily an entity that is prepared to eagerly encounter region-formation around the Baltic Sea, engage oneself in European integration and, more generally, contribute to networking in the context of globalization, and to do this without feeling its identity to be threatened and exposed to intolerable challenges.

This is not my argument here. The contention is rather that there are, in the struggle for the new Russia, at least some moves present that may potentially provide the departures needed. There are elements in the debate that could pave the way for a Russian entity to develop into one of the significant subjects in the context of the Baltic Sea area, the new Europe or - more specifically - within a network of urban spaces and postmodern politics more generally.

St Petersburg is, as such, a reminder of that it was once possible to adopt a posture that contained an identity sufficiently unique and yet open for the more general. It constituted a site where it was possible to be simultaneously Russian and European. For example, the city stood out as major Russian and European financial and banking center with four times as much capital at its disposal than Moscow (Helanterä, 2000: 15). The city was able to cope with some degree of openness and plurality without feeling threatened. It was not the external but rather the intra-Russian base that turned out to be the weak point as the post-revolution Soviet Union found the previous situation with relatively open borders and mixed identities unbearable. Russianness was increasingly defined in distinctive
The New Saint Petersburg

In consequence, there has been less emphasis on constituting a financial and cultural center, although the element of industry has remained strong (Bater, 1976). Leningrad was firmly tied to the domestic - basically military - economy of the Soviet Union, and the recent changes have not radically changed this state of affairs. In general, the heterogeneous both-and elements to some extent discernible in the essence of old St Petersburg were substituted by a far more categorical logic of either-or and inside-out. The Dutch/German and to some extent universal (religious) features of St Petersburg had to give in for more Russian and Soviet-oriented connotations and a Soviet-specific version of modernity (sometimes called pseudo-modernity in being based on technological development without the appropriate institutional and civic basis). The re-naming was followed up by the city being deprived of its standing as a capital. Clearly, the Soviet Union was in need of a different approach than the one represented by the heritage of St Petersburg, and hence the more mundane and yet religious, folkish and Slavophile Moscow (cf. Vendina, 2000) became the dominant center of the USSR. The evolving Russian 'we' was less in line with the rationality, extroversion and internationality, that is the hallmarks of St Petersburg, and better in tune with those of Moscow pertaining to ethnicity and Orthodoxy.

From Wall to Gate
The question is hence whether there is now the will, interest and awareness to tap into the potential that was once left behind. Is it still possible to argue that St Petersburg constitutes a Russian site that has the ability to reflect and bend to the challenges of each era, including the current, more postmodern one? The question pertains, on the one hand, to the unfolding of the Russian 'we' in the post-Cold War period (cf. Morozov, 2001) and the ability of St Petersburg to utilise the options furnished by the new conditions on the other.

Some essential changes have undoubtedly taken place. As various military threats pertaining to inter-state relations have receded, central political control has slackened. Russia is clearly more at ease with itself and its external environs in northern Europe. Such trends have then allowed for some degree of regionalization as well as linking up with the external environment. The growing eminence of northernness as a cartographic signifier, as indicated above all by the EU's Northern Dimension, enables a somewhat different positioning in time and place. Already President Yeltsin's penchant for divide-and-rule policy contributed to increased freedoms (Oldberg, 2001). Actors located in the vicinity of borders have gained in subjectivity and they are less automatically peripheralized than was the case previously. Various options of establishing foreign contacts, inviting investments and engaging in cross-border trade have been utilized. The external impulses have been considerable and have led, in the case of St Petersburg, to the formation of an extensive network of twin cities. Nowadays the city has 52 partner-cities in all continents except Africa. The most active partners consist of Turku, Hamburg, Manchester, Antwerp, Milan, Osaka, Rotterdam, Le Havre, Helsinki, Stockholm and Kotka (Suslov, 2000: 1). The network is extensive, although it may also be observed that the option of capitalizing on the new openings has, in general, been used rather cautiously and in fact St Petersburg's connections to foreign cities of its own rank have remained modest. For example the 'Baltic Bridge' with Hamburg has so far been rather light in content (Suslov, 2000).

The new constellations have also left their mark on the discourse concerning the essence of St Petersburg. The slogan 'St Petersburg -
the Northern Gate' is again very much alive (Governor Yakolev has launched an initiative 'Petersburg - European Door to Russia') and has been provided with substance in terms of trade, investments and services. A 'Strategic Plan' concerning the city's development - one that leans on the concept of a gateway not just towards Europe but also Asia due to St Petersburg's maritime nature - has been coined by the Leontiev Center (a research entity closely linked with city-planning) and debated by various political bodies since 1997. The plan sets the target of developing St Petersburg into "a multifunctional city integrated in Russian and world economy". Moreover, it speaks of the city as an intermediary between these entities, including the turning into an economically important trade route between Russia and the EU (Strategic Plan of St Petersburg, 1998: 43, see Helanterä 2000). External relations are not only seen as being important; they are comprehended as a necessity for the city to promote its further development (Suslov, 2000:2). This implies endeavors of debordering and leaving previous self-other comprehensions aside.

Aspiring for closer contacts with the EU implies that cooperation in the Baltic Sea region has grown in priority. This has been acknowledged by the city's administration (Suslov, 2000:5). 'The Baltic Initiative', launched in 1997 and supplemented each year, aspires - by comprising of eight projects of regional co-operation - at enhancing St Petersburg's position in the Baltic Sea region. The aim is one of turning into a gateway and, more particularly, creating an integrated transborder space (Marin, 2000:41). The city's program for its 300-year anniversary, with the program 'St Petersburg - European Cultural Capital 2003' aspires at placing the city among the greatest of not only the Baltic cities but also European cities more generally. The EU's Northern Dimension has been used as a vehicle for approaching the EU and seen as a link to the Union's Commission, although the positions taken have been strictly in line with those assumed by Russia in general. The moves have been 'mercantilist', that is utilitarian in nature rather than using the northern signifier and its symbolic power as such and capitalizing on St Petersburg historical legacy as a northern actor in European affairs (Suslov,
In addition to the more programmatic moves, the city has established a representation in Turku and a commercial representation in Kotka, both coastal cities in Finland. There is also the so-called 'Baltic Troika' involving regular meetings between the mayors of Helsinki, Stockholm and St Petersburg. Clearly, the city has been among the most active Russian regions in establishing external relations (Kuzmin, 1999, 109). It hosts altogether 35 consulates and representations of international organizations, including those of UNESCO and UNIDO as well as an information bureau of the Nordic Council of Ministers (Marin, 2000: 28). Moreover, St Petersburg has been represented in the various Russian delegations to the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS), it is an active participant in various regional cross-border co-operations as well as in the context of the Union of Baltic Cities (UBC). It has also established links to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe. Some aspirations aim at taking stock of the increasingly co-operative city-relations that color Northern Europe in particular. This latter aspect is exemplified by the Baltic Palette co-operation between the cities of Helsinki, Riga, Stockholm, Tallinn and St Petersburg. The Palette has been established recently and is still in its formative stage.

St Petersburg is hence - due to its plans, ambitions and endeavors - different from many other Russian regions. Most of them have an underdeveloped conceptualization of their mission and future orientation, they lack a strategic vision and there is a heavy inertia of "old times". It seems, in general, that the agents of cross-border interaction and globalization are in general weak (Makarychev, 2000:30). This is not the case with St Petersburg, although even here there is much to be hoped for as to long-term thinking and relevant future scenarios.

The strategies that have been developed have met with some success with St Petersburg having attracted a considerable amount of foreign investments. These have started to give relative effects since the end-1990s with some 13 percent of the overall production of the region originating from plants based of foreign capital (Poulsen-Hansen, 2001: 186). It may also be observed that the city has a leading role as
an economic attraction among the Russian regions located in Northern Europe and Russian regions in general, although the overall sum of foreign investments is not as impressive as that of Moscow (Hedenskog, 2000:74). Moreover, the Leningrad Oblast has often been seen as more attractive than St Petersburg. Russia's capital has gathered more than half of the overall foreign investments received by the country during the recent decade, but also St Petersburg has been able to harvest a considerable amount. One reason why the policy of creating specific 'investments corridors' like Moscow and St Petersburg to foster high-tech development, know-how and technical expertise has so far yielded only modest results consists of that Western countries have until now been mostly attracted by projects dealing with transportation and developing natural resources (Makarychev, 2000: 16). This may change, as to St Petersburg, in the near future. The city will be able to combine these two aspects in being furnished with new and significant harbor facilities. It may be argued that the loss of the previous port facilities for example in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania has compelled St Petersburg to turn back to its former role of a gateway and mediating factor between the external and the intra-Russian spheres. Obviously, as stated by Ingvar Oldberg (2000:27), St Petersburg already now forms "an extrovert region", i.e. the border-transcending features have become considerable.

**Limited Success**

Although the city appears to be on the forefront among the Russian actors, it also remains clear that the various images of an extensively outwards-reaching city have so far had rather limited currency. Ideas such as the one of St Petersburg performing the role of a bridge between Russia and Northern Europe have not really struck home, and there is thus a certain discrepancy to be traced between identity transformation and more concrete social transformation. Or to put it differently: the city's new identity has been conceptualised in so restrictive terms by going back in time that it tends to restrain rather
Interpretations regarding 'Europe' are often coloured by the legacy of the Europe of Empires. Such comprehensions are conducive to anchoring St Petersburg temporally in a manner that does not bring about a conflict with a Russia seen as a power-political state, although not conducive to the need of relating to an increasingly networked Baltic Sea region or a postmodern northern Europe at large.

This tension may have increased rather than decreased during the previous decade. Mayor Anatoli Sobchak had a number of thoughts, at the beginning of the 1990s, as to the following up of changes introduced in the sphere of identity transformation. He clearly recognized that the city had to be opened up internationally. In line with this, he tried to turn St Petersburg rapidly into an international financial and trade center with considerable stress on tourism.

However, the plans were rather diffuse and poorly anchored in local realities - or mentalities for that matter. The idea of opening up may have been sound as such but it was not underpinned by a preparedness to do so for example in terms of having the infrastructure needed in terms of airports, roads or harbor capacity (cf. Oding, 1995: 33-35), neither were the plans anchored in any broader Russian development strategy. They were rather drafted in isolation - perhaps deliberately so in order steer free from any uncertain statist interference. It is also to be observed that the political turmoil as well as the lack of required legislation hampered any implementation of the plans. In fact, Russia's banking stayed in the hands of Moscow, this implying that the Mayor's plans remained underfinanced. Among the 20 largest banks in Russia, only one is located outside Moscow (Promstroibank in St Petersburg ranking 17 on the list) (Helanterä, 2000: 71).

The international interests in contributing to Sobchak's scenario of increased openness formed a source of disappointment as well. One has to add, however, that also the ability of Sobchak himself (or that of the new power-holders more generally) to implement such ideas often remained limited (Orttung, 1995). The period of Vladimir Yakolev, elected Mayor after Sobchak, has been characterized by a more mundane and traditional agenda. Yakolev has, to some extent,
purported himself as an anti-Sobchak in being above all a practitioner with "down-to-earth" ambitions. Instead of utilizing and carrying on the leap into history, one characterizing the period of Sobchak, Yakolev has given signals of returning to the standard policies of empirism and gradualism. There is less stress on liberal and unregulated development, and more emphasis on seeing St Petersburg part of a certain division of labor within the Russian economy, for example in terms of producing equipment needed in the sphere of oil and gas production.

It may also be observed that the city's leadership has in general been constrained by a Russian resistance towards internationalization (Mellor, 1997), although the idea of developing St Petersburg into a gateway, and more particularly a hub of transport in the context of the Baltic Sea, is still there and has recently yielded considerable results in the form of new ports being constructed in the city’s vicinity. The national Russian discourse has displayed a variety of restraints felt also in the case of St Petersburg. The city has to take into account that with the prevailing of nationalistic sentiments and the emphasis on the genuinely Russian, suggestions pointing at a radical opening up towards Europe may fall flat. They risk being interpreted as anti-Russian and anti-national in essence. This implies that the self-other barrier is to some extent still there. This is due to the pre-eminence of a geopolitical and state-nation based way of comprehending international relations and the external environment as well as a tendency of contrasting Russia with Europe and of seeing these two in rather exclusive terms.

This is to say that to some extent the city and its leadership appear to be burdened by experiences of the modern, state-centered period. They have also themselves, on occasions, fallen into the same pattern by challenging Moscow with attempts to reverse the rank-order of these two cities in the national hierarchy. The approach chosen tends to be a rather competitive one, perhaps even revanchist. This might be understandable in a historical, pro-national perspective and against the background formed by the Soviet Union as a strictly centered space. However, it is hardly conducive to an opening up and stressing the significance of links with Europe, and instead such an
endeavor may require the purporting St Petersburg as a truly Russian configuration unfolding along old imperial lines. Hence there is only a somewhat restrained eagerness to link up with the new Cupertino around the Baltic Rim. Particularly the relationship to the Baltic countries (which during the early Gorbachev years and the period of the Baltic national fronts was rather intense) remains cool. A transcending of these barriers would require further moves of de-securitization and de-bordering in the sphere of identification (Morozov, 2001:17).

The need for aid that emerged due to the August 1998 economic crisis made it important to establish further contacts with Finland, Scandinavia and other parts of Europe. Yet, this aspiration has remained rather cautious. The slowness in reaching out pertains also partly due to the fact that it has taken time and effort to achieve sufficient authority on the local level, establish a firm budget for the city, delimit its property, etc. The city's aging infrastructure and its rather severe ecological problems call for considerable investments, this leaving limited resources for any renewal of the city. Moreover, the internal power struggle in St Petersburg seems at times to have been so intense that there has been limited interest and energy left over to the establishing of a distinct foreign policy profile and providing the image of a gate towards Northern Europe with a real content.

One has to add, of course, that also a number of international constraints exist. The western discourse on Russia has the rather enduring features of treating Russia as West's Other, or at most an apprentice allowed to cross distinct dividing lines only in the longer perspective. As Iver Neumann and Michael Williams (2000) demonstrate, this discursive barrier and frame has been there for ages, and is still blocking rather effectively various Russian moves of trying to break with existing borderlines. Efforts to do so conflict with naturalized memories of Russia and arguments that the past traditions are unchangeable.

Going back to St Petersburg represents, against this background, a rather clever move in signaling that there has been a different past with Russia as part of European commonness. The question is,
however, whether a policy of underlining that Russia once upon time was part of ‘us’ also carries under the present conditions. Does it imply that Russia, having been once part of a singular European civilization, is automatically treated in inclusive terms? This is not necessarily the case as history may remain history, i.e. point to a golden past that never returns. A resort to the rich historical heritage in the case of St Petersburg - or for that matter Russia at large - may thus isolate rather than furnish the inclusion aspired for. The St Petersburg narrative may well be interpreted as pertaining to a story about distinct historical efforts to establish ‘a window to Europe’, albeit efforts that failed and therefore also further underline the Otherness of Russia.

It appears, in general, that in the case of St Petersburg itself much attention has been focused on the history of the city whereas there has been less stress on visualizing a new and different future as compared to the period of Leningrad (Joenniemi and Morozov, 2003: 31-2). The narratives told do not seem to presuppose an opening up for intense interaction between the city and its external environment. This state of affairs seems to point to that some of the potential of internationalization is bound to remain untapped. St Petersburg stands out as an unequal player on the international scene. It does so in lacking some of the options and the drive that is characteristic of many other cities of the same magnitude and historical proportions. Ingmar Oldberg (2000:48) endeavors at providing one explanation to such an outcome by concluding, on the basis of a survey, that "the city has played a leading role in regional policy across Russia, but remains hamstrung by the federal center". This may well have been the case during the end-nineties but is hardly the case any more with President Putin having assumed a clearly visible role of a driving force, one aspiring for the city’s internationalization. The tercentenary celebrations are largely directed and financed by the federal center and Putin has taken a number of initiatives in order to develop St Petersburg into a mediating factor between Russia and Europe (Suslov, 2000: 18). He has brought a considerable number of foreign, high-level quests to St Petersburg during the recent years, a trend that peaked during the celebrations of the 300th years
anniversary. Moreover, ideas have been coined about the city becoming a site for the second chamber of the Duma and some ministries are being transferred to St Petersburg.

In sum, St Petersburg appears to have gained - despite considerable obstacles - the profile and aspiration of a global city, an endeavor that also brings it occasionally into an alliance with (Luzhkov's) Moscow. The two cities are not, within such a framework to be viewed as competitors in a statist and pro-national context but seen as "potential gates to the global world" (Makarychev, 2000:34) or "oases of post-industrialism and quasi-Western lifestyle" (Medvedev, 2000: 95), although both tend to remain "islands of globalization" within a political landscape still governed by sovereignty-related departures and a great power ideology. In other words, there are features pointing in a postmodern direction and St Petersburg contributing to a Europe of Olympic Rings but these features tend to be rather weak. The strong urge to secure the existence of a distinct core and to preserve Russia as rather homogeneous political space rather speak for modern or premodern preferences, this implying that future is still premised basically on statist departures or at most the figure of a Europe of Empires.

**Integral Part of Europe**

This is so as there are still forceful voices in the debate both on the Russian side and abroad that operate within the context of a classical geopolitical analysis, thereby contributing to securitization and bordering. Talk about phenomena such as "vacuums" or "grey zones", i.e. properties that are thought to have resulted from the implosion of the previous setting, has not died out. Likewise, warnings against the various dangers that may originate with the perceived "instabilities" in the relationship between Russia and the Baltic countries may still be heard.

However, St Petersburg is there and it seems that the re-naming is yielding, albeit slowly, results as a discursive strategy and a new prism. The disappearance of the previous horizon of expectations has
freed creativity and coined new thinking, albeit it has also paved the way for a serious amount of crime and corruption (Mellor, 1997; Rytövuori, 1998). The renaming endeavors at opening up what the more conventional, geopolitical and state-related stories often aim at freezing and keeping intact. Openings are indeed needed as the city is located in a part of Europe where borders are changing in nature and regional endeavors blossom. This is indicated for example by the coming into being of the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS), Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC), a considerable number of 'Euroregions' and the EU's Northern Dimension, an initiative that calls for dialogue, regionalisation and partnership across the Union's northern borders. The presence of such integrative trends tends to soften the more extreme voices, tune down concerns operating within the context of a traditional security mode and departing from the concepts of survival and strict as well as divisive sovereignty. The new features of the political landscape instead bring the debate into the direction of identity politics in terms of cultural self-defense, and more generally into pursuing questions on the meaning of ones being in a rapidly changing environment.

The challenge is rather formidable, and particularly requiring in the case of Russia. Viatcheslav Morozov formulates it as follows: "A search for an alternative identity, not directly based on the idea of the Russian/Soviet statehood, would almost certainly require a dramatic break with the past". Russia has, he argues, to secede in a certain manner from itself, although he adds that the leap could perhaps be first made by some Russian region or city. St Petersburg occurs as one of the prime candidates on his list of decentralizing agents. It could be easier for an entity like St Petersburg, with the desecuritization that already there is the discourses on metropolitanism and regionalism, to establish links across previous divides. Schemes of co-operation may be introduced that run contrary to previously sacrosanct borderlines. The argument is that identity transformation and social transformation can be brought in line with each other in the context of region-building around the Baltic Rim. Opening up is easier for an actor that does not remain trapped within the modernist discourse: "Russia cannot become a Baltic country, but St Petersburg
and especially Kaliningrad can become Baltic cities" (Morozov, 2001: 30).

Conclusions

The re-naming of St Petersburg is a clear demonstration of that the city has been able to get rid of many of the constraints pertaining to the previous period. A liberation has taken place at least in the ideational sphere, although the legacy of the Soviet past still weighs heavy in many others. The resources available for example in the field of economy needed in tuning in to the challenges of glocalisation - i.e. a combination between the local and the global - have remained modest. Yet the re-naming constitutes an important move as such in being symbolically quite powerful. It indicates that there are also alternative memories and other options available in Russia than just clinging to the remnants of a socialist past, including the holding on to the various ideas of progress and the final outcome of a promised land. It also goes beyond, in being anchored in Russia's own history, the often-used option of bluntly imitating Western models and practices. Opening various temporal and spatial frontiers by digging into one's own past offers, at best, alternatives to a freezing into historical immobility or, for that matter, the deployment of themes pertaining to religion, nationalism or ethnicity. The move of tapping into memory along the lines of St Petersburg helps to carve out, it seems, a kind of 'local time' in regard to 'world time' - to apply a vocabulary coined by Zaki Laïdi (1998). The options unfolding are clearly preferable to a total staying at the sidelines, not to speak of engaging in various forms of escapism or - for that matter - endeavoring at the tackling various challenges of globalization head on, although the danger of getting trapped in past history is part of the picture. The re-discovery and obvious playing with elements receding in the past singles out St Petersburg as a rather special site within Russian
political space as Russia at large appears to feel rather uncertain about its relation to 'world time'. Russia, as a wider framework of reference, lacks a strong integrative drive at the supra-national level (Makarychev, 2000: 12). Moreover, the country tends to remain quite insecure in face of strong local expressions of identity. Space and time are still comprehended almost exclusively in state-centric as well as core-oriented terms and the unfolding of political space is measured predominantly in a modern and rather hierarchic manner. Instead of allowing for diversity, the usage of region-specific resources and encouragement of the emergence of local inroads into 'world time', the reaction has often been one of contesting the claim that such a time is a legitimate challenge in the first place. There is little outright resistance but much reluctance (with the image of 'West' being seen as a cultural offence that aims at undermining 'Russia') in embarking upon an avenue that tends to require an emphasis on diversity rather than homogeneity and de-bordering instead of bordering. The formation of linkages between the local and the global are - if taken far - discouraged. They are perceived as encroachments on the power of the federal authorities and interpreted as efforts of circumventing the more state-centered and concentric ways of organizing political space. The challenges are experienced, on a more general level, as enhancing a loss of a previous horizon. Such moves are hence depicted as rather troubling in destabilizing the unity between territory, history and the statist endeavor. This is to say that an ontology of fixity, stability and continuity tends to dominate the all-Russian approaches also around the Baltic Rim. Obviously, there are elements of tension present in the policies pursued by St Petersburg and Russia as a whole, although the reading could also be that St Petersburg is ahead of many other parts of Russia. It is, at least in principle, able to mediate and show the way in constituting a kind of 'third', post-binary way between imitating the West or just staying put without shaking off the Soviet heritage. The move may, more generally, form an important building block in the post-socialist reconstruction of identities as well as social practices. The choices to be made are not just those of either-or. Also
the option of both-and is there, and in this sense the re-appearance of St Petersburg contributes to the undermining of any bifurcated, Huntingtonian type of conceptualizations concerning the post-Cold War political constellations. The city exemplifies - without explicitly pitting itself against any other direction except those represented by the former Leningrad and the Soviet project at large - that there are elements also in the Russian heritage to be re-deployed and re-invented once embarking upon a different route. The historically familiar may serve as an inroad to the new by nailing down that Russia is, in some of its aspects, firmly European. It helps to re-claim lost ground and undermines more divisive discourses present both on the Russian and more broadly the European scenes. It allows, at best, the question 'who are we' to be answered by de-bordering rather than bordering. Russia's repertoire of choices increases as the alternative selves do not just boil down to those of a truly foreign and a well-bordered domestic one. Moreover, 'Europeanisation' gets a more familiar meaning as it does not require that Russia totally abandons its old self in becoming gradually, by moving closer to given civilisational values, part of the new commonness. The transition from the previously rather firm self-other divide does not have to imply that Russia is cast in the role of a student and learner in order to become – in due time if passing all the tests - one of 'us'. A strategy of remembrance and elevating alternative memories pertaining to St Petersburg as a truly European city allows Russia to assume a much more offensive posture. The city may opt for a much more equal position as a discourse that provides St Petersburg with a rather central standing is not just about Russia. It is also about Europe and the European heritage at large thus allowing for the claim that Russia is not just out for reasons of its own but also in order to help Europe to reunite with and rediscover some of its own heritage. This move has been particularly clearly visible in the way the tercentenary celebrations have been thematized. The more offensive strategy enables Russia to turn from an apprentice to an actor furnished with the power of heal, and to do so by contributing to a restoration of Europe's lost unity. In other words, by influencing the
way the border unfolds, and by utilizing the location being in the vicinity of the border, actors such as St Petersburg do not just yield power over themselves. They may also gain subjectivity - by removing themselves from what has been understood to constitute the utter edge to the systemic margins - power in the constitution of what Russia, the EU and the relationship between these two entities is basically about.

The move of turning towards one's own roots in the process of adapting to the circumstances that prevail after the rupture of the socialist project and the end of the Cold War is thus, in this light, a rather powerful one. It stands for opening up rather than entrapment in time.

The re-emergence of St Petersburg signals that the competence to use such influence is at least to some extent present. Although the move is a backward-looking one start with, it may yet work in a liberating manner in opening the way for future-oriented visions. It may – if the policies pursued turn out to be skillful enough - neither be regarded as an escape from being faced with formidable challenges, nor seen merely as an expression of nostalgia for a 'Golden past', a reflex of fear in the face of the current challenges or simply a move of resistance *vis-à-vis* globalization. The act of playing on alternative memories may constitute - in some of its aspects - an interesting experiment in turning previously divisive borders into interfaces in order to pool local resources in face of the extensive challenges and dangers of entrapment that easily peripheralize entities such as St Petersburg and perhaps even Russia at large.

The re-naming of the city stands out as such an experiment - according to a positive interpretation. This is so as it does not just constitute a limited aspiration of coping with existing realities; it also contains features of constructing a new horizon of meaning. The falling of a variety of barriers in the post-Cold War situation is not interpreted in terms of estrangement and exclusion. It is also comprehended as opening linkages to Russia's own past thereby allowing 'Europe' to be defined in a manner that locates an essential part of Russia on the inside of such a configuration from the very start. Europe-making thus gets a more profound meaning and has a
more familiar cling to it. Europe again turns into a ‘true’ Europe instead of having over a long period of time been conceived as a ‘false’ one, i.e. a project that denies Russia the option of injecting itself into such a constellation (cf. Neumann, 1996). Russia may, due to a standing that allows it to regulate Europe's bordering and turning a previous edge and outer limit to a margin that signals continuity, purport itself as an actor conducive to a restoration of what has been lost over time. There is the prospect of "stitching back the Old Continent and enhancing prospects for greater Europe" (Trenin, 2000:20). Instead of aspiring for something totally new - perhaps in the form of an utopia that would, after the experiences of the socialist project, be viewed with utmost suspicion - there is a more modest and historically familiar choice available. The crisis of expectations that emerged after the fall of the Soviet project may be remedied by the usage of elements that originate with one's own past and became within reach as the previous Otherness of St Petersburg evaporated with the fall of the socialist project. The access route chosen in the case of the city seems at least identity-wise fit some of the needs of the situation.

Importantly enough, it has been St Petersburg itself and to some extent the citizens themselves that have been able to mark and carve out - by public referendum and debate - a considerable part of the new path. The power of renaming has in St Petersburg been exercised to some extent in a top-down fashion, but in Russia as a whole the renaming stands for a local initiative and bottom-up type of move. The city has grasped the options that have opened up without waiting for the dictates of the present 'world time' to impose themselves - either from abroad or through the federal authorities. It has outlined the necessary signposts that eventually may lead the way towards a much more inclusive relationship to the rest of Europe.

More generally, an important opening has seen the light of the day, but it also stands clear that St Petersburg has not yet reached very far in terms of the implementation of concrete policies. There is some discrepancy between the new and the old. The city appears to experience difficulties in catching up, in terms of regionalisation,
with the dynamism of the Baltic Sea region. Identity transformation and social transformation are not in synchrony, and hence St Petersburg has gained some rather hybrid features. The symbolic side appears to be far stronger than the societal one, the situation thus being different from the one that prevails in the case of Moscow (a city with much societal change within a rather fixed image).

One of the underlying reasons might be a temporal one. The identities constructed in the case of the new St Petersburg often pertain, it seems, to the Imperial Europe of the past, and a Europe of power politics and geopolitical thinking. Such an anchoring is problematic as the difference between the era of the Russian Empire and the current, more postmodern one is particularly distinct in Europe's North and the Baltic Sea region.

The policy of re-naming appears to be framed and premised by assuming that there is considerable continuity present in terms of great power politics. The move rests on conceptualizations of a rather securitized, state-centered and well-bordered Europe and one that still contains elements of Russia's Other, albeit in a less systematic manner than in the context of the bifurcated East-West divide of the Cold War years.

Assuming the name of St Petersburg disassociates the city from its previous essence as Leningrad. However, it does not go far enough by also offering a way out of various state-centered and centralizing concerns and thereby allow access into a more postmodern environment, i.e. the pursuance of politics in different keys. The re-naming is not utilized as a denouncement of the imperial and centralizing elements contained in St Petersburg's legacy and as a way of installing new transnational or perhaps even anti-national elements into it, and this may go some way in explaining why it remains weak in configuring 'Europe' in postmodern terms, i.e. a 'Europe of Olympic Rings'.

It may be concluded on a more general note that some of the preconditions for the old/new horizon really to set in are there, although also the obstacles to any extensive utilization remain distinct. The 'prism' or 'lens' installed by the move of renaming is too burdened by a historical legacy in containing considerable
ingredients of statism, centralism and securitization. The vision of a 'Europe of Empires' can be envisaged on the basis of the departures used - with President Putin and the local leadership increasingly operating in tandem in order to devise linkages to the rest of Europe - but a 'Europe of Olympic Rings' and a more decentred configuration sounds more utopian and out of reach. This implies that St Petersburg's record in mediating and showing the way has remained modest. It offers a remedy, with the breakdown of previous discursive structures of self and other, to some of the dislocation caused by the eruption of contingency. However, some of the important openings that have emerged do not seem to be easy to catch. The constraints are numerous, and the liberating aspects of the re-naming have been challenged and marginalised by more traditional and time-bound discourses. They reside in the dominant Western ones used in framing Russia as well as in the dominance of modern interpretations as to the way Russia frames itself. Some constraints are also ingrained in the way the new name, i.e. St Petersburg, has been comprehended and utilized. The avenues of metropolitanism and regionalization are there, albeit they remain limited and are not exploited in any decisive manner. The new St Petersburg appears to be basically depicted as the return of a grand narrative, one resonating with the figure of a Europe of Empires, rather than an exercise in simulation and playing with names. The belief widely heralded after the end of the Cold War that territorial and mental barriers could be transcended, with 'Europe' reconstructed in a much more open way also along Russian borders, has not materialized in full. Yet metropolitanism and regionalism form the two most important inroads to a community of belonging based on 'world time' available also to St Petersburg - and Russia more broadly.

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Note
I would like to thank the EUR group at COPRI/IIS as well as Christopher Browning, Marko Lehti, Viacheslav Morozov, Oleg Reut and Vladimir Rukavishnikov for comments on earlier drafts of this contribution.