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**Eighth United Nations Conference on the
Standardization of Geographical Names**

Berlin, 27 August-5 September 2002

Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

**Reports by Governments on the situation in their countries
and on the progress made in the standardization of
geographical names since the Seventh Conference**

Place names — the memory of places

**Theme of the European Heritage Days held in Finland
in 1999**

Submitted by Finland**

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Following the initiative of the Council of Europe, the member countries have organised annual Heritage Days since 1985. The aim of the Heritage Days is to make people see and value the environment built around them, its beauty and variety. The event also aims at making people more interested in the planning and protection of the built environment.

The Heritage Days do not have a unified theme, but instead, the countries pick their own theme for each year. Finland's theme in 1999 was chosen – on the basis of a suggestion made by the Research Institute for the Languages of Finland – *Paikannimet – paikan muisti* (Finnish), *Ortnamnen – minnen i miljön* (Swedish), in English "Place names – the Memory of Places". For a more detailed account of the theme, cf. Reports of the Divisions. Place Names - The Memory of Places. The theme of the European Heritage Days in Finland 1999. UNGEGN Twentieth Session. New York, 17–28 January 2000. Working Paper No. 22.

The planning of urban nomenclature is a topical issue in Finland. The migration from the rural regions to towns has been strong since the 1960s. Urbanisation has also had its effect on place names, especially in the southern cities that have grown fast. It has been necessary to invent a large number of names of suburbs, other regions, streets, roads, parks, squares and various public buildings. The total of new planned names given in the past few decades is ca. 300,000.

The planning of names is the responsibility of the municipalities. However, the municipal name-giving has not always been done in a desirable way. Name planning has not been considered to require as much special expertise as town planning. The planning phase has often been carried out without people with name-planning knowledge, and the linguistic perspective may have been left unconsidered. The objective of the theme "Place names – The Memory of Places" was to draw attention to the place names in a built environment and to the significance of name planning in the creation of good and comfortable surroundings.

Organisers

The European Heritage Days in Finland were organised by The Ministry of Environment, The Finnish Association for Local Culture and Heritage, The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, The National Board of Education, The National Board of Antiquities. In addition to these, there was a special body specialised in the theme in of the year. In 1999, the expert body was The Research Institute for the Languages of Finland.

The task of the Research Institute was to produce publications on names, as well as other material for the use of the Heritage Days. To do this, the Research Institute set up a working team whose members represented the Finnish onomastic research (Ritva Liisa Pitkänen) and the treatment of Finnish names (Sirkka Paikkala), as well as the Swedish onomastic research and treatment of Swedish names (Peter Slotte).

The official organisers assumed the main responsibility for the organisation of the event and the publications. The theme also attracted broader interest in concrete actions. There was a large number of local events, e.g. presentations, exhibitions, collection of place names and memories related to them, guided tours of the place names, etc. On the local level, it was the municipalities and associations for local history and culture that took care of the organisation (town planning, education, culture, and museum).

The outcome of the theme year

Publications

- ◆ The Research Institute for the Languages of Finland drafted instructive articles in Finnish and in Swedish, published in the language planning bulletins of the Research Institute (*Kielikello* 1/1999 and *Språkbruk* 1/1999).
- ◆ The brochure of the Heritage Days was published both in Finnish (*Paikannimet – paikan muisti. Euroopan rakennusperintöpäivät 11.–12.9.1999.*) and in Swedish (*Ortnamnen – minnen i miljön. Dagarna för Europas byggnadsarv 11.–12.9.1999.*). Both booklets contain nine articles, six of them focusing on the contents or the planning of names.
- ◆ The guidebook published by the Research Institute and the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities *Yhteinen nimiympäristömme – nimistönsuunnittelun opas* [Our Common Name Environment – a guide to the planning of names; 225 pp.] contains twenty-nine articles on the background, planning, legislation, and treatment of names. There is also a comprehensive bibliography in the book. Most of the articles are in Finnish, and some in Swedish.

The book is sold by the Association of the Finnish Local and Regional Authorities:
 Number: 505669. Price: EUR 30.27
 Orders by fax: + 358 9 771 2331.

- ◆ The Research Institute for the Languages of Finland and the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities submitted a questionnaire to the municipalities (452 questionnaires in all), asking for details of the organisation of name planning and the information of the municipalities' principles. The answers were used for an analysis of the Finnish name planning: Paikkala, Sirkka, ed. (1999). *Kaavanimien hätäkaste : nimistönsuunnittelu kunnissa 1999* [Emergency baptism of planned names: name planning in municipalities 1999]. Helsinki: Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, Research Institute for the Languages of Finland. 103 p. – The book also contains an article on map names.
- ◆ The Research Institute produced a TV program called *Paikan nimi – paikan muisti* [Place names – The Memory of Places] in co-operation with the MTV Academy of Finland. The program deals with the names in a built environment, and their perpetuation, demise, and planning. The programme was also made into a video, which is available in English in the following address:

University of Helsinki
 Public Relations and Press Office
 Yliopistonkatu 3
 FIN-11140 University of Helsinki
 FINLAND
 fax: +358 9 191 23010

The Price is EUR 25.20, including VAT and postage. The programme, produced in co-operation with The Research Institute for the Languages of Finland, lasts ca. 20 minutes.

Seminars and other events

- ◆ The Research Institute and the Association of Finnish Local and Regional authorities arranged a nation-wide name seminar for municipal employees. There were 85 participants, involved in municipal name planning. The lectures handled the cultural values of place names, name planning, correct spelling, documentation of name-related decisions, and results of the recent inquiry on name planning in Finnish municipalities.
- ◆ The Research Institute arranged a one-day workshop on names in municipal name planning for scholars and students from universities. There were 34 participants.
- ◆ The main events of the Heritage Days took place in 11–12 September. There was a single-day seminar for invited guests and experts at the architecture department of the Helsinki University of Technology. The seminar attracted 100 participants. The themes of the presentations included "Language and Mind", "Values and Times" and "Authority and Responsibility". There was also a two-day "Name Square" open for the general public, presenting the urban nomenclature through presentations, panels, exhibitions and name competitions. All in all, the event had as many as ca. 2,000 participants.

After the Heritage Days

The Heritage Days highlighted the lack of and need for knowledge of urban nomenclature. The theme was also widely debated in public, and the name issues found thus their way to the public consciousness.

After the theme year, we have taken measures to collect information on urban nomenclature. The member organisations of the Heritage Days drafted a proposal to the Ministry of Education for the inclusion of courses and study material in name planning in the education programme of the community planning. The first course in name planning was held at the University of Technology in 2001.

At the beginning of 2001, the Research Institute launched, together with six universities, an Urban Names project. The project will last for three years, and it is conducted mainly as the students' study projects. The objective is to analyse both the official planned urban nomenclature and the unofficial spontaneous urban names. The analysis is used to obtain, inter alia, basic data for name planning. The objects of study are, e.g., the principles of name planning and their practical applications, as well as people's opinions of planned names.
