INTRODUCTION

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Whereas the study of place names has largely concentrated on etymological and semantic aspects, the study of personal names has to a greater degree aimed at researching the use and function of names, for instance in a socio-psychological perspective. A more recent approach is to elucidate names as identity bearers and identity markers. Shakespeare's often quoted words "What's in a name?" in the play *Romeo and Juliet* have been applied in many ways to say something about the meaning of names, and they are also valid when it comes to what constitutes the identity of a person. Though the term 'identity' is vague and complex, it is often used, perhaps superficially, about the bearing of personal names, but less about place names. It is scarcely controversial to assert that there is an intimate relationship between a person's self and her or his name, as well as with other names to which the person may feel attached, including place names. The present papers set out to explore aspects of names and identities and provide the readers with a broader insight into the topic.

This volume was initiated after two workshops on names and identities held at the Department of Linguistics and Scandinavian Studies at the University of Oslo: the first on 16 November 2007, and the second on 21 November 2008. The question of names and identities may be examined from a number of research disciplines within humanities, such as onomastics, linguistics, anthropology, socio-psychology, sociology, human geography and not least literature. The literary use and potentiality of names representing personal identity has been demonstrated in a striking way by the Norwegian success writer Karl Ove Knausgård in the novel *Min kamp* (to be published in English as *My Struggle*), vol. 6, the chapter "Navnet og tallet".

The multidisciplinary approach contributes to a wider understanding of the phenomenon even though it is difficult to come up with synthesised results. It is our hope that the papers presented here will trigger the research interest for names in an identity perspective.

As can be seen from the table of contents, the contributions are organised alphabetically according to the author's surname. Three of the authors approach the topic from a literary point of view, while another four concentrate on street names. The remaining fifteen look into the topic from a variety of angles and with a variety of materials.

Terhi Ainiala, Finland, focuses on variants of names that the inhabitants of Helsinki claim to use for parts of their own home city, and how they rationalise and explain their use or non-use of these names. She also asks in what ways the self reported use and the spontaneous use of name variants differ from each other. She shows that the explanations for the use or non-use of specific name variants are often attached to the speaker's identity.

Maria Giovanna Arcamone, Italy, investigates the relationship between proper names and identity on the basis of five Italian detective stories. She observes that, through their linguistic reflections, these authors reveal that they appreciate the inherent power of proper names. Normally, both in the real world and in detective fiction, it is not obvious from the start whether characters will belong to the good or bad texture of events. She concludes that the authors of the stories she has analysed look for an ally in the *nominatio* to help them define the identity of their characters and the backdrop of their stories. Names also furnish useful clues.

Silvio Brendler, Germany, introduces identity of name(s) as a crucial problem of name studies that is worth, and indeed in need of, being explicitly recognised as a principal onomastic concept. Nomematics, an identity-theoretical framework based upon a dynamic model of language, is applied to achieve this purpose. He demonstrates that only the various manifestations of one and the same name are identical, with the nomeme serving as an identification schema. Onymic entities (the various manifestations of names) are identical if, and only if, they match the identification schema (criterion of identity).

Emmanuel Chabata, Zimbabwe, focuses on the role played by place names in defining Zimbabwe, both as a physical entity and as a community of speakers with their own history and sense of nationhood. Two types of place names are discussed from this perspective: those referring to the natural landscape, such as mountains and rivers, as well as those referring to artificial features. The extent to which these names are used as tools in describing the landscape is also examined. The author also considers how the bestowal of commemorative names on Zimbabwean features has been used to concretise the Zimbabwean people's links with their country's history.

Richard Coates, England, takes as his starting point that many places have more than one simultaneously current name within the same linguistic community, usually an official one and at least one unofficial one. He concludes that, in most cases, where there is a clearly unofficial form it can be characterised as the form used by local people with other local people in a way that asserts their shared identity and community values. Where there is instability of usage, the direction of change is almost always in favour of the pronounced spelling. There is sufficient evidence, however, that simplistic assessments of the situation in England are unwise, and certain cases are discussed that pose difficulties for the idea that

informal alternants have always been produced by the same kinds of historical processes.

Thomas Hylland Eriksen, Norway, poses the question of future urban naming and takes as a hypothesis that citizens of Oslo in a not too distant future will have the opportunity to meet for appointments at **Salimi Square,* to shop for vegetables in **Kharian Street,* to enjoy their picnics in **Rubina Rana Park* and to drive to the nearby town of Drammen on **Mogadishu Road.* He asserts that historical change may lead to politically motivated, although often slow and uneven, changes in place names, and major upheavals such as revolutions tend to entail a total renovation of the names of streets, parks and other urban fixtures.

Charlotte Hagström, Sweden, focuses on personal names and naming from a cultural ethnographic perspective. She begins with reflections on the link between name and self, continuing with a discussion of how names are used to provide a cultural structure to our surroundings and to interpret the world, and concluding with an analysis of names used in virtual settings. The virtual field has hitherto not received much interest among name researchers. In online games, chat rooms and web communities, names are not only useful and applicable, as they are in the so-called real world; they are even more essential and important, as it is mainly through their names that participants recognise and identify each other.

Botolv Helleland, Norway, discusses various approaches to the topic 'place names and identities', addressing the meaning and function of place names, their role as links to the past, and their identity-building capacity. He argues that there is an intimate relationship between place and place name, and discusses how place names may reflect or give rise to feelings of individual and collective identity attached to a place. He also gives an example of the identity role of some place names from his childhood.

Peter Jordan, Austria, examines the role of place names in space-related identity building from a cultural-geographical perspective. Starting from the various relations between the culture of a social group and geographical space in general, the author investigates in which of these relations place names play a major role. He finds that place names have important functions in all three relationships: in making use of natural resources when they reflect natural characteristics, in cultural transformation of the geographical space by shaping it both visually and mentally as well as through identity building with individual members of a cultural group, and with a cultural group as a whole when place names function as labels, supporting emotional ties between humans and place.

Adrian Koopman, South Africa, focuses on the consequences of politically-inspired changes of place names as a result of changes in political regimes and looks at the naming of the South African east coast city Durban. He starts with the name *Durban* itself, and the various suggestions that have been mooted for its replacement, in particular the Zulu name for Durban *eThekwini,* 'the place of the

bay', and its suitability as a new name for the city. The author then looks at the recent renaming of a considerable number of Durban's streets, and the public reaction to this. Both the renaming and the public reaction are placed within the context of renaming globally.

Otto Krogseth, Norway, refers to the increased awareness for a connection between the concepts 'identity' and 'cultural memory' and states that cultural heritage has become an extremely popular concept, and has accordingly been converted into a modern system of meaning – as a type of 'secular religion'. With reference to collective identity and cultural memory, he poses the cultural analytical questions 'Why identity now?' and 'Why heritage now?' His answer is that we are experiencing a critical identity crisis, and he suggests three central aspects signifying individual and collective identity: continuity, coherence and individuality. These aspects are being exposed to serious threats in the post-modern era because of changeability, fragmentation and standardisation. This tendency has, however, met with various compensating counter-reactions.

Aud-Kirsti Pedersen, Norway, discusses if place names can be used to construct and express identity, focusing on the Norwegian names of farms and parishes. Since the Norwegian Place Name Act came into existence in 1991, the many appeals in regard to official spellings as decided by the authorities give a clear indication that Norwegians have different opinions of how the names of farms and parishes should be spelled compared to names referring to natural features. The author looks at the reasons for these attitudes and highlights theoretical openings pertaining to language and identity.

Lars Kirkhusmo Pharo, Norway, examines the identity role of the various Mesoamerican calendars. In addition to having conventional personal names, both human beings and deities carry day-names from the 260-day calendar. Furthermore, world ages or world periods, periods of the traditional 365-day calendar and the 52-year calendar as well as the cardinal directions of the quadripartite world were categorised by day-names of the 260-day calendar. Thus not only did human and divine beings receive designations from this calendar, but so did space and time. The author discusses the onomastic practice of giving personal names from day signs of the 260-day calendar and concludes that this anthropnymic tradition provides identity to human and divine beings, as well as spatial-temporal phenomena.

Ljubisa Radić, Serbia, looks at the background of the approximately 25 place-name changes that have taken place in Belgrade in the course of the last 150 years. These changes include the renaming of state administration institutions, research institutes, schools, universities, factories, museums, sport clubs, etc., as well as personal names. The author shows that this process reflects political, economic, demographic and cultural changes serving the purpose of constructing and re-constructing political, ethnic, religious and cultural identity, as well as political

relations and history. In conclusion, the renaming process and its potential for constructing and reconstructing reality are discussed.

Guro Reisæter, Norway, focuses on names chosen for children born into families in which one or both parents are immigrants to Norway, and discusses whether the infants are given names that show a continuation of traditions from the country of the immigrant parent(s), or names that point to an adaptation to Norwegian standards. Based on research conducted with bilingual families and individuals in Tromsø, in northern Norway, the author reveals that many of the children are given names that convey their bilingual background and emphasise naming traditions from the immigrant country. It is also shown that when individuals change one or more of their names in Norway, the name change affects their sense of self and has an impact in both practical and mental terms.

Inge Særheim, Norway, asks in what way heritage and local identity are reflected in the road names of three municipalities in south-western Norway, and how the special character of this area is expressed in the names. His study shows that there is a strong commitment to basing official naming on local tradition and thus contributing to identity. Quite a few elements from the dialect appear in the names, reflecting that the names are part of the local culture, due to the fact that the dialect is unique. With some exceptions, cultural heritage and local tradition have acted as preferred principles and guidelines with regard to the naming of roads in these three municipalities, due to a consciousness that heritage and tradition foster identity.

Karina Van Dalen-Oskam, The Netherlands, explores the literary use of names. By naming a character, an author can accentuate that name and that character; conversely, by not providing a name where a name could be expected, an author can keep that character anonymous. Both approaches are deviations from 'normality'. The paper proposes that the accentuating and anonymising functions of literary names can be closely linked to the idea of 'foregrounding' as developed in stylistic research. To illustrate this, an analysis of the accentuating and anonymising use of personal names in the novel *Beyond Sleep* (1966) by Willem Frederik Hermans (1921-1995) is given, sustaining the plot of *Beyond Sleep.*

Solveig Wikstrøm, Norway, investigates the relationship between surname and identity based on a survey of 314 Oslo residents. The aim was to find out whether the modern individual experiences his or her surname as a part of his or her identity, and what bonds exist between surname and locale. Late modern society typically reveals a fragmentation of individuals from family background and place of origin. A hypothesized outcome of this separation envisages a further breach between the individual and the area their surname denotes. Benedicta Windt-Val, Norway, discusses the close connection between a person's given name and her or his feeling of identity and self, with reference to literary contexts. It has been stated that parents' choice of name for their child will have an influence on the

development of the personality of the child. Personal names and place names are some of the most important tools of the author in the creation of credible characters placed in a literary universe that gives the impression of being authentic. It is shown that names and naming are not only a source of information for the reader, but also an important part of making the characters real to the authors themselves during the process of writing.

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