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Names and Identities

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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 Meso-American 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 anthroponymic 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 reconstructing 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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PLACE NAMES AND IDENTITIES: THE USES OF NAMES OF HELSINKI

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ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the use of names that are used to refer to Helsinki, the capital of Finland. Three research questions are studied: Firstly, which name variants do the Helsinkians claim they use about their own home city? Secondly, how do they rationalize and explain their name use or non-use? And thirdly, in what ways do the self reported use and the spontaneous use of name variants differ from each other? The explanations for the use or non-use of specific name variants are often attached to the speaker's identity.

[1] INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses the use of names that are used to refer to Helsinki, the capital of Finland. Three research questions are studied: Firstly, which name variants do the Helsinkians claim they use about their own home city? Secondly, how do they rationalize and explain their name use or non-use? And thirdly, in what ways do the self reported (metalinguistic) use and the spontaneous use of name variants differ from each other? The explanations for the use or non-use of specific name variants are often attached to the speaker's identity. Thus, this paper also explores the relationship between the use of place names and social identity. Social identity contains self-descriptions derived from memberships of social categories, including nationality, gender, ethnicity, occupation or hobby groups (Hogg & Abrams 1988, 24–25). The most important and relevant social feature in this study is the place of birth, i.e. a native city dweller's identity vs. the identity of a person having moved to the city from elsewhere. Nevertheless, it is crucial to understand that we all belong to multiple social categories at the same time. The number of social identities varies from person to person, just as their combinations. Although different social identities may sometimes show tension, they are usually connected to each other somehow. (Verkuyten 2005, 50–51).¹

[1] The article “Place names in the construction of social identities: the uses of names of Helsinki” by Ainiala published in the Proceedings of twenty-third International Congress of Onomastic Sciences (Toronto) studies the same problem but with different examples and slightly different data.

[2] RESEARCH DATA

The present study is based on a research project titled “Transformation of onomastic landscape in the sociolinguistically diversifying neighbourhoods of Helsinki”, carried out at the Research Institute for the Languages of Finland. The project investigates the historical and current onomastic landscape of Helsinki from the viewpoint of toponyms (both official and unofficial) that the various social segments of the population use. Two case study neighbourhoods, Kallio and Vuosaari, are studied ([Ainiala & Vuolteenaho 2006](#), 59).

The research data consist of thirteen interviews, of which three were individual and ten focus group interviews. In all, twenty-eight Helsinki-dwellers were interviewed. All the informants were living in Vuosaari in eastern Helsinki. Nineteen of the informants had Finnish as their mother tongue, whereas nine were Somali immigrants and spoke Finnish as their second language or as a foreign language. Thus, I am going to comment briefly on how the use of place names differed between the native Finnish informants and the informants having another language as their mother tongue. In the group of nineteen Finnish speakers, eleven were native Helsinkians, whereas eight had moved to Helsinki from somewhere else in Finland. The interviews were made between 2004 and 2008. In every focus group there were between two and four participants talking about Helsinki. The discussions were taped and transcribed after the interviews. The transcription used is fairly rough and only gives the word-for-word description. All examples are translated from Finnish to English.

[3] NAMES OF HELSINKI

There are three main name variants for Helsinki in the material. The official name of the capital of Finland is *Helsinki*. The city was founded 1550 at the mouth of the river Vantaanjoki. The Swedish name *Helsingfors* was used to refer both to the city and the rapids of the river. Swedish was the major language in the area at that time, since the largest part of the population was Swedish-speaking. It was only later that the city received its Finnish name *Helsinki*, in co-occurrence with the growing Finnish-speaking population. The first written documents concerning the name *Helsinki* date from the end of the eighteenth century ([Paikkala 2007](#)). In today's bilingual city, both *Helsinki* and *Helsingfors* are used, the latter one by the Swedish-speaking population, representing about six percent of the population in Helsinki. There were no Swedish-speaking informants in the present study.

The most common and widespread unofficial names for Helsinki are *Hesa* and *Stadi*. They both have their origins in Helsinki slang. Helsinki slang is a unique Creole dialect which evolved between 1890 and 1910 among the working class with both Finnish and Swedish language backgrounds in their densely occupied neighbourhoods in Helsinki. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the number of

Swedish-speakers was much bigger than today. In 1910 Swedish-speakers represented 35 percent of the population in Helsinki (cf. today's six percent). Slang was born to facilitate bilingual communication. Phonologically it was closer to Swedish than Finnish and included the phonemes /b/, /d/, /g/ and /f/, which are not indigenous to Finnish. Slang names and words were usually composed by annexing a "slangifying" suffix to the root of the name (e.g. *Fleminginkatu* 'Fleming's Street' > *Flemari*). In contrast to the suffixes in standard Finnish, the slang suffixes did not have a semantic function of their own but they were simply used to make words and names slang-like ([Paunonen 1994](#), 227, 237–238); ([Paunonen 2000](#)).

Eventually, in its later phases, gradually from the 1950s onwards, the old Helsinki slang gave way to a 'normal' Finnish-English-based slang of the younger generation throughout the Helsinki region. Even though the main user group and the function of the slang have changed, very many slang expressions and slang-based place names have remained the same from the very beginning of Helsinki slang, for over one hundred years ([Paunonen 1994](#), 238); ([Paunonen 2000](#)).

Hesa derives from the official name *Helsinki*, which has been shortened and supplemented with the slang suffix *a*. The variant was known in Helsinki slang as early as the beginning of the twentieth century. According to the dictionary of Helsinki slang, *Hesa* belonged to the language use of native Helsinkians until the first half of the twentieth century ([Paunonen \(2000\)](#) s.v. *Hesa*.)

Stadi, in turn, has its origins in the Swedish word *stad* 'city, town'. Even *Stadi* has been in use in Helsinki slang ever since the beginning of the twentieth century. Traditionally, *Stadi* was used both to refer to a city or town generally and to Helsinki, especially the city centre. *Stadi* began to refer more and more often to Helsinki in the second half of the twentieth century. *Hesa* has been labeled more and more explicitly as a name variant used by peasants and non-native Helsinkians. *Stadi* thus carries the label of a name used by native Helsinkians ([Paunonen \(2000\)](#) s.v. *Hesa, Stadi*; ([Vaattovaara & Soininen-Stojanov 2006](#), 237)). As will be seen in this paper, the research material partly confirmed, yet partly challenged the ideas and assumptions connected to the names *Hesa* and *Stadi*, and to their users.

[4] THE NAMES THE INFORMANTS SAY THEY USE

In the interviews, the informants were usually asked which name they used about Helsinki. In most cases the interviewer gave the three alternatives explicitly.

As the official name of the city *Helsinki* is the standard and neutral variant. It is only natural that most of the informants said they used it. However, as many as six out of the twenty-eight informants did not say they used the standard form *Helsinki* at all. I guess the informants must have regarded *Helsinki* so self-evident that they did not consider it essential to point it out in the interview. In addition,

while answering the question about the name use, the informants did not necessarily think about the different name variants they used in various situations, but rather gave the name variants they felt corresponded to their identities most.

Unlike the official variant *Helsinki*, the unofficial name variants *Hesa* and *Stadi* are clearly affective in the material. I will first take a deeper look into what the interviews reveal about the use of *Hesa*. First of all, thirteen of the twenty eight informants said they used *Hesa*, i.e. almost half of all the informants. These thirteen informants included six native and five non-native Finnish-speaking and two Somali-speaking informants.²

In many interviews the traditional view that *Hesa* belongs to the language use of people living in the countryside and those who have moved to Helsinki from somewhere else was reinforced. In the following example (ex. 1) a non-native informant Tuula (born 1949) is having a conversation with her son Lauri (born 1985) and Lauri's friend Tuomas (born 1988). Both Lauri and Tuomas are native Helsinkians.

- (1) Interviewer: So, if we like go right to the point now, let's start with Helsinki, so I'm asking you first what name you use about Helsinki.
Tuula: *Hesa*, of course.
Tuomas: People from the country say *Hesa*.
Lauri: *Hesa* and *Stadi*.
Tuomas: It's simply *Stadi* or *Helsinki* for me. I haven't I wouldn't, in my ears *Hesa* sounds nasty, since mom always says that country people say *Hesa*.
Tuula: Well no, I'm from the country, it suits me well enough.
Tuomas: It's *Stadi* or *Helsinki*.
Tuula: I moved there when I was nineteen, so I can say *Hesa*.
Lauri: Erm, I may have learnt it from you.
Tuula: Yeah.
Interviewer: Does it vary from one situation to another?
Tuomas: Yeah it does.
Lauri: Yeah if you talk to somebody, someone who's like from the country or something.
Tuomas: Do you know any people from the country?
Lauri: So then you'd say, you'd probably try to be polite, like you wouldn't use some of your own like code language, so you'd say *Helsinki* and the like, but otherwise to other people from Helsinki like *Hesa* and so on, like that.

[2] Finnish-speaking informant = informant, who has Finnish as her mother tongue; Somali-speaking = informant, who has Somali as her mother tongue. The same definitions are used throughout the article.

Since *Hesa* is labelled as a name variant used by peasants, it is only natural that the native Helsinkians often avoid using it. This is exactly the case with Tuomas in the previous example.

Even though the name variant *Hesa* is regarded in the dictionary of Helsinki slang as being used by people from the country, there were six native informants who reported they used *Hesa*. Further, *Hesa* seems to be a common variant even in the collection of slang place names. This collection was compiled by interviewing teenage school children in Helsinki region in 2003. The material includes some 4 000 different place names used by teenagers and some 14 500 different references to names (Ainiala 2006, 101). The name *Hesa* is mentioned 97 times in the material, which makes it the 18th most popular name in the whole material (Ainiala 2004). Thus, the name variant *Hesa* seems to belong to the name usage of young Helsinkians of the 21st century.

Likewise, two young Somali immigrants say they use *Hesa*, as well. In the following example (ex. 2) Abdi, a 22-year old Somali immigrant discusses the name variant *Hesa*.

- (2) Interviewer: So then a bit more about the names like do you always say Helsinki and what other names you know for Helsinki than just Helsinki?
 Abdi: No other names.
 Interviewer: I mean like anything young people would use or anybody else. Like would you just say that I'm going, I'm going to Helsinki. Or I'm going..
 Abdi: To *Hesa*.
 Interviewer: To *Hesa*. Yeah.
 Abdi: Yeah.

Abdi has lived in Helsinki and Finland for 16 years, having moved to Finland as a child. Another Somali immigrant who said she used *Hesa* was Ayan, a 17-year old girl who had lived in Finland for ten years. They both spoke fluent Finnish and used slang words and other expressions typical of youth language. Accordingly, *Hesa* is a natural part of their vocabulary. In general, *Hesa* is part of the language use of young Helsinkians, both natives and non-natives, even though it is sometimes labeled as a rural variant, in contrast to *Stadi*. One of the obvious reasons for using *Hesa* is that it is short and thus an easy variant to use.

Stadi has traditionally been considered a name variant used by native Helsinkians (see ex. 1). Therefore, as expected, people who had moved to Helsinki from elsewhere did not seem to feel that *Stadi* was a natural variant for them, at least if they had not lived in Helsinki for long enough. In fact, a non-native informant Heidi (born 1985) makes the following ironic point in example 3:

- (3) Heidi: Yeah, I certainly [use] *Helsinki*, and all, I'm not yet enough of a *Stadi* native to dare to use that.

Out of the twenty eight informants in the material, almost every third, i.e. a total of ten people said they used *Stadi*. Of them, six were native (ex. 1) and three non-native Finnish-speakers, and one was Somali-speaking. A non-native informant who said she used *Stadi* was Tuula (born 1949), whom we know from example 1. In the following example (ex. 4) she says she uses even *Stadi*, in addition to *Hesa*.

Tuula says she is well aware of the fact that *Stadi* is associated with the language use of native Helsinkians and that non-natives should not even be allowed to use it.

A Somali immigrant who said she used *Stadi* – or at least recognized it, see the following example (ex. 5; see also ex. 7) – was Jasmin (born 1974), who moved to Helsinki (and Finland) in 1992 when she was 18 years old. She worked in a local youth centre with teenagers with different linguistic backgrounds, even Finnish, and was thus familiar with youth language and its typical place names.

- (4) Interviewer: Do you remember any other word for Helsinki than Helsinki?
Jasmin: *Stadi* dweller.
Interviewer: *Stadi*, yeah.
Jasmin: Mm.

As we have seen (ex. 1, 3, 4), *Stadi* has been labelled strongly as a name used by native Helsinkians. Whilst looking for an explanation for this, we should start by considering the early days of Helsinki slang – which, by the way, is generally called *Stadi slang*. As I have already pointed out, slang was born for over hundred years ago as a linguistic form that combined Finnish and Swedish and was filled with phonetic and lexical features from the Swedish language. The most typical of these features were the initiative double consonant and the phoneme *d*, which are both found in the name *Stadi*. It could be claimed that *Stadi* gained popularity at least partly because it was difficult for the rural-born Finnish-speakers to pronounce. They pronounced the name “incorrectly” as *Stati* or *Tati*, which slang-speakers found comical or irritating. The slang and the name *Stadi* as one of its most prominent emblems was loaded with associations that were probably based on very strong stereotypes ([Vaattovaara & Soininen-Stojanov 2006](#), 226). The affective nature of the name *Stadi* has been preserved until today.

People’s awareness about the ideas associated with the name *Stadi* and its use can also be seen in that even present-day Helsinki dwellers sometimes use the name in ironical ways. *Stadi* may turn into, e.g., the humorous forms *Stati* or *Tšadi* in the language use of both native and non-native Helsinkians. In example 6 two native men in their forties are discussing the use of names for Helsinki.

- (5) Interviewer: What about you others?
Pasi: Well yeah, *Helsinki*, but then there’s this like Timo mentioned this funny name *Tšadi* which is of course a version of *Stadi* but you know like

it's *Helsinki* and so.

Timo: You know I'm using just *Tsadi* nowadays.

(laughter)

[5] THE SPONTANEOUS USE OF NAMES

What is the relationship between the self-reported (metalinguistic) and spontaneous use of name variants in the material? I will answer this question by comparing the informants' descriptions about their name use with their spontaneous use of the names. However, it should be kept in mind that the material available for the study did not provide a very wide or comprehensive picture of how the informants used the names.

There are notable differences between the metalinguistic and spontaneous use of names. When asked, thirteen of the informants said they used *Hesa*. However, nobody displayed this variant in the material in actual use. Just one informant, Pirjo, born in 1950, who had moved to Helsinki from elsewhere, referred to herself as *hesalainen*, 'a *Hesa* dweller'. She was the same woman who claimed that she only used *Stadi* when asked (which, as a matter of fact, she did not use).

As regards *Stadi*, ten informants said it was a variant they would use. Of these ten people, just three informants, two natives and one Somali immigrant, used the name even in other than metalinguistic contexts. A Somali immigrant Jasmin (born 1974) uses *Stadi* spontaneously in the following example.

- (6) Interviewer: What comes to your mind when I say *Helsinki*? What, what like

Jasmin: *Helsinki*.

Interviewer: Hel-, what is *Helsinki* or what is *Helsinki* like?

Jasmin: What's *Stadi* like? (laughs) Er, it comes, the railway station comes right away. (laughs)

Interviewer: Yeah.

In example 7, Jasmin answers the interviewer's question by a question in which she uses *Stadi* instead of interviewer's official *Helsinki*. When asked, Jasmin also says she uses *Stadi* in addition to *Helsinki* (see ex. 5).

In the light of my material it would seem that there is a considerable difference between the reported use and actual use of *Hesa* and *Stadi*. This may have to do with the fact that the interviewing situation was perceived as an institutional, official discussion, and the informants attempted to use standard language expressions. Yet, it might also be the case that the informants' perception of their own use of the names was different from their actual use.

Usually the informants used the standard form *Helsinki* to refer to the city. There were no differences between natives and non-natives in this sense, but both

used Helsinki in numerous examples. In ex. 8, 9 and 10, three native Helsinkians Tuomas (born 1988), Lauri (born 1985), and Noora (born 1984) refer to their home town as *Helsinki*.

- (7) Tuomas: It winds you up if someone's living in Helsinki and they don't know how to take the metro to Vuosaari.
- (8) Lauri: But then like the services have been getting poorer and poorer all the time like after we were born in *Helsinki*.
- (9) Noora: Coz there's no, in the end it's [Vuosaari] is so strange. Like there are definitely better places in *Helsinki*.

Accordingly, the non-native Helsinkians Heidi (born 1985) and Pirjo (born 1950) use the official *Helsinki* in examples 11 and 12.

- (10) Heidi: Well but there's still here in *Helsinki* there's such small stores here, like we have much bigger ones in Kouvola.
- (11) Pirjo: Could it be that the immigrants are active and curious, coz I'm, in fact I'm an immigrant in Helsinki. When I came to *Helsinki* I took it like you can go anywhere here.

For the Somali informants, too, *Helsinki* was the typical name variant to use. There were hardly exceptions to this rule; only Jasmin (ex. 7) used Stadi occasionally. In example 13, Abdi (born 1985) talks about Helsinki.

- (12) Abdi: And another thing is you know the way you sometimes treat older people. It is a bit, in *Helsinki* at least, I dunno if it's like that in other places.

[6] CONCLUSIONS

I hope I have managed to show in this paper that there is quite a difference between the metalinguistic and spontaneous use of names. According to the results of my study, I would suggest that the informants' descriptions do not reflect their ability (or disability) to make observations about their own language use. Rather, the informants' descriptions would seem to indicate their orientation towards the social norms and show how they identify themselves and which social group they regard as prestigious (see also Trudgill (1972); (Labov 2001, 193–194)). The research material even showed how names are strongly connected to the speakers' ideas about their varied identities as Helsinkians. Thus, it could be argued that the speakers' descriptions about their uses of names *Helsinki*, *Hesa* and *Stadi* indicate especially their identity vis-á-vis being a native or non-native.

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NAMES AND IDENTITIES IN THE ITALIAN DETECTIVE STORY

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ABSTRACT

Detective stories were established in Italy at the end of the nineteenth century in imitation of the ‘noir’ and the French and English serial novels. The Italian detective story over time has grown also with some of our better writers and it is to stories written by Carlo Emilio Gadda, Leonardo Sciascia, Carlo Fruttero/Franco Lucentini, Carlo Fruttero and Andrea Vitali that this paper is dedicated to investigating. In addition, all these authors reveal with linguistic reflections that they appreciate the inherent power of Proper Names. The detective novel is especially appropriate on the relation between proper names and identity. Indeed, normally at the beginning of events both in the real world and in detective fiction the personalities present in the good and bad texture of events have not yet been identified. These authors of Italian detective stories look for an ally in the *nominatio* to help them define the identity of their characters and the backdrop of their story.

[1] INTRODUCTION

In Italy the detective story is also called a ‘giallo’ (yellow). This name derives from the colour of the book cover of a series of detective stories which the publisher Mondadori inaugurated in 1929 calling them ‘yellow books’ (gialli) (Crovi 2002). One can say that detective stories were established in Italy at the end of the nineteenth century in imitation of the ‘noir’ and the French and English serial novels (above all those regarding the mysteries of Great Cities), but soon they began to take on their own characteristics, especially given the great number of trials that shocked Italian society at the turn of the twentieth century.

Scholars who have examined Italian detective stories in their complexity have given the following global judgement upon them: first and foremost blood, love and money must never be lacking; further, often a sleepy provincial town is preferable to the mysteries of big cities; the rich bourgeoisie should feature, as should some typical forces of law and order; and finally special emphasis should be given to the psychological aspects of the investigation (Reuter 1997; Crovi 2002).

The detective story over time has become a mask symbolizing the tragic nature of our era. Furthermore it has grown also with some of our better writers and it is to some stories written by Carlo Emilio Gadda, Leonardo Sciascia, Carlo

Fruttero together with Franco Lucentini, Carlo Fruttero and Andrea Vitali that this paper is dedicated to investigating. In addition, all these authors reveal with linguistic reflections that they appreciate the inherent power of proper names. I hold that the detective novel is especially appropriate, for today's discussion, on the relation between proper names and identity. Indeed, normally at the beginning of events both in the real world and in detective fiction the personalities of everyone present in the good and bad texture of events are not yet identified.

In real life the identity of a person is consolidated. In general it is enough to check the name and surname, national insurance number, address and little else such as stature or eye colour. Today we have digital finger prints. The identity of a person means being this person and not someone else. It is obtained via a complexity of characteristic and fundamental data that allow individuality or guarantee authenticity, especially regarding birth registration and other bureaucracy. The first data in order of importance, both in real life and in stories, are birth registration data. This is unavoidable; hence we have given name and surname.

In a literary work, and in fiction in general, the identity of someone or something necessitates a more complex operation since everything has been created from scratch and because the character is not present in his/her physicality. His/her identity emerges bit by bit through descriptions of behaviour, habits, reflections on his/her personality and traits, etc.; and also, for the reasons given above, with the attribution of a name or surname or name and surname, sometimes even a nickname, in a direct or indirect manner.

In fiction, though, however much data needs to be amassed, identification – the construction of the personality of a character – is a much more laborious task than in real life; for everything is missing and so every element must be very well chosen and evaluated. This implies that also proper names become carriers of more than one piece of information. This is obtained by choosing 'telling names' and allusive names and delaying the character's appearance or having them introduced by others, etc. ([Debus 2002](#); [Porcelli & Terrusi 2005](#)).

What this amounts to is a requirement that proper names in fiction should be strong carriers of clues (to the character's personality) and in detective stories (conforming to the structure of the genre already mentioned) they should be so to a higher degree compared with other literary genres, since it is precisely clues that detective stories are based on.

In Italy, many studies are being carried out on detective stories and their authors. However, it is only in the last couple of years that onomastic study in this literary genre has started to be conducted ([Sciascia 1983](#); [Porcelli & Terrusi 2005](#); [Arcamone 2007](#); [Porcelli 2009](#)). I have therefore investigated the functions of proper names (PNs) in a few Italian detective novels. These novels are: *Quer Pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana* (That Ugly Mess in Via Merulana) by Carlo Emilio

Gadda ([Gadda 1957](#)), *Il giorno della civetta* (The Day of the Owl) by Leonardo Sciascia ([Sciascia 1961](#)), *La donna della domenica* (The Sunday Woman) by Carlo Fruttero and Franco Lucentini ([Fruttero & Lucentini 1972](#)), *La modista* (The Milliner) by Andrea Vitali ([Vitali 2005](#)), and *Donne informate sui fatti* (Women Informed of the Facts) by Carlo Fruttero ([Fruttero 2006](#)). As I said earlier I have preferred to choose authors who are not dedicated exclusively to the ‘whodunnit’ genre but who are also actively productive in other literary genres. So much so that these authors show that they are aware of the strength inherent in proper names, as is revealed by their own linguistic reflections. It is not without significance that all these stories, apart from the most recent ones just published, have been made into movies or theatre, thus demonstrating their strong realism. To begin with, I shall introduce the contents and some of the characters of the texts to be examined and evaluate them chronologically.

[2] QUER PASTICCIACCIO BRUTTO DE VIA MERULANA

Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana (That Ugly Mess in Via Merulana) by Carlo Emilio Gadda, was officially published in 1957, though it had appeared in serial form as early as 1947. It is set in Rome during the years the author himself was in Rome – in the Fascist era. The story is about a woman from a good family living in Rome under Fascism. Her given name is *Liliana*, her maiden name *Valdarena*. She is brutally murdered in her own house. The police inspector, *Dottor Francesco Ingravallo*, follows many trails around Rome and its well-known surrounding towns near the *Castelli Romani* and the Alban Hills. There are many suspects, but no murderer is ever found and the novel ends unresolved, like many other investigations in real life in Italy.

The main characters’ identities, constructed by means of brief, pithy descriptions ([Gioanola 2004](#)), are reinforced by their names, surnames and nicknames, and are seen primarily as ‘speaking names’ or as allusive names on the basis of their appearance within the work ([Amigoni 2002](#); [Terzoli 2007](#)). For example, the police inspector is introduced immediately at the beginning of the novel. First we learn of his nickname, *Don Ciccio*, then immediately his name and surname: ‘Anyway everybody calls him Don Ciccio. He was Inspector Francesco Ingravallo Mobile Commander.’ *Ciccio* is a southern Italian hypocorism for *Francesco*, which, by contrast, is pan-Italian ([De Felice 1986](#), 175). *Ciccio*, being a southern Italian hypocorism ([Rossebastiano & Papa 2005](#), 270) together with *Don* (< Lat. *Dominus*) and together with the surname *Ingravallo* – typically of the Region of Molise in Italy ([Minervini 2008](#), 28, 31) – immediately indicates that the character is of Southern Italian origin, as policemen generally are in Italy, and as they are in other novels. His authoritative ways of doing things, the fact he’s a *Don*, and the morpheme *grav* – encapsulated in the surname *Ingravallo*, all allude to the gravity and seriousness with which he approaches his work. However, he is also down to

earth. ‘Everybody calls him Don Ciccio.’, i.e. by his nickname which is also an allusive name because It. *ciccio* means plumpish (Devoto & Oli 1990, 375). The reader almost inevitably thinks of the colloquialism *ciccione* (plump) and in fact a little later is described as being ‘of medium stature, a rather rotund person, or maybe a little stocky...he had a rather sleepy air about him, a heavy gait, a dull-witted approach!’ Here the *grav-* (serious, important) is reaffirmed in his surname *Ingravallo*. It was during the First World War that the migration to Rome of Italians from Abruzzo and Molise increased, as the presence of many Abruzzo trattorias in Rome testifies. And it is today’s Roman cuisine that has been influenced by recipes from Abruzzo. It is in fact expressively stated that he comes from Monte Matese, which is in Molise. This insistence on good cuisine often returns and reaffirms that the character originates from Molise. In fact he loves good food and a good glass of wine and every now and again he has the odd stain of olive oil on his collar which is almost imperceptible; it is however ‘almost a reminder of the hills in Molise’. Also various surnames such as *Crocchiapani* (munch bread), *Bottafavi* (squash broad beans) refer to food.

He is reflective, lazy and half asleep. He is, however, gifted with a flawless memory. He is often invited to lunch by his good friends, the *Balducci* family. The lady of the house, *Signora Liliana*, is beautiful and very rich, more so than her husband. She is still young but very sad because she can’t have children. She is a lovely character, both inside and out. The name *Liliana* (De Felice 1986, 233); (Hanks & Hedges 1990, 206) portrays her as having the beauty, purity and nobility of a lily. Her husband, whom the Inspector does not like very much, the inspector is described as an affectionate husband although rarely present. He represents the typical male of the Fascist era; strong and with a love for hunting. He bears the double-barrelled name *Remo Eleuterio* (De Felice 1986, 140, 314); (Terzoli 2007, 1230). The first name, *Remo*, together with the morpheme *Bald-* ‘bold’ from the surname *Bald-ucci* (De Felice 1986, 84), conveys the idea of virility even though he has not helped to produce children. The whole novel is laced with irony, especially regarding men.

There is *Lulù*, a female Pekinese, which later mysteriously disappears a little before the crime while being taken for a walk by *Assunta*, one of the characters suspected not of the murder but of being an accomplice. The name *Lulù*, taken from the world of operetta and often given to pets, sheds light on the dog’s main activity, which consists in barking; but not for long, because it soon disappears rather mysteriously. Lulu’s disappearance is connected to the death of her owner. In fact when the lady of the house is killed the little dog is already not at home any more. Maybe it was kidnapped so that the *Signora* could not be warned by its barking. Both names begin with *L* and the first syllable is repeated: *Lili-ana* and *Lulù* connoting ties and shared destinies. Then we have *Tina* (a frequent hypocorism for *Assunta* (De Felice 1986, 79); (Rossebastiano & Papa 2005, 164), known as *Assuntina*

by her table companions at a famous lunch, where directly or indirectly later all the suspects are present. (Especially in centuries past in Italy hypocorisms were characteristically used among the serving classes.) However Inspector Ingravallo thinks it is better to call her *Assuntona* (big Assunta) ‘with that chest’ and the author graphically describes her prosperous beauty in a ‘crescendo’ from *Tina* to *Assunta* to *Assuntina* to *Assuntona*.

Signora Liliana’s cousin, who is one of the suspects later released, is officially introduced at the meal as ‘Signorino Giuliano’ – a noble name (*Giuliano*: (De Felice 1986, 195)) from ancient Rome. Also his parents are given high-sounding names: *Romolo* (a name of Latin origin: (De Felice 1986, 320) and *Matilde* (a Germanic name: (De Felice 1986, 256). Regarding this, one may observe that the writer makes great use of Roman names like *Remo* (Signora Liliana’s husband) and here *Romulus*. But also the two poor people *Enea* and *Lavinia* have names (De Felice 1986, 145, 224) which hark back to the origins of Rome. In these very pompous nominations of individuals who are deep down just modest people one may discern Gadda’s irony towards the grandiloquent Fascist era, which is antiphrastically and ironically identified as having the same origins as Rome (Bolla 1976, 89). Note that on the other hand the beautiful and very noble *Liliana*, the victim, is given a modern simple and pretty name (Pissarello 2010).

Names characterised by dialect (Cavallini 1977; Benedetti 1987; Donnarumma 2006) are inserted into a work which was a great innovation by Gadda; so we have his use of dialect alongside standard Italian and the use of several different registers: upper class, middle class, lower class, according to who is speaking. This is also reflected in the naming. The lower classes have very expressive names and surnames: *Bottafavi* and *Crocchiapani* (see above). The upper classes have more classical sounding names like *Balducci*, *Menegazzi* and *Angeloni*. The two very honest and competent detectives do have names and surnames but they are identified by their nicknames, given by ordinary people: one *Biondone* (big blond) *Gaudenzio* and the other *lo Sgranfia* (the talon) *Pompeo* (*Gaudenzio* and *Pompeo* are also of Latin origin: (De Felice 1986, 180, 303)).

[3] IL GIORNO DELLA CIVETTA

1961 sees the publication of *Il giorno della civetta* (The Day of the Owl) a novel about the Mafia which brought Leonardo Sciascia a large part of his celebrity. His social commitment and his denunciations of crime in Sicily were to become pertinent traits for a definition of the profile of this writer and intellectual (Traina 1999). This novel is about a carabiniere, Captain *Bellodi*, originally from Parma (his surname is typical of Modena, near Parma). *Bellodi* is looking for the perpetrators and planners of two crimes clearly carried out by the Sicilian Mafia. While he utters his surname *Bellodi* ('listen well' – *-odi* is a suffix which coincides with a part of the verb *udire* – 'to hear' – and this has been utilised well by the writer) the

wise inspector is about to file the deposition for his inquiry but later gets transferred. The wife of one of the two dead people is incriminated on the grounds that she has a lover and could have killed her husband, thus hinting at a crime of passion, while all along it is a crime committed by the Mafia. While all the other Christian names and all the surnames of the novel are typically Sicilian, only this courageous northerner has a non-Sicilian name, suggesting that he is alien to the Sicilian world of connivance, *omertà* (a conspiracy of silence) and fear. It is difficult for a local person from the island to mount a campaign against the Mafia. The name *Bellodi* stands in parallel and contrast to the name *Dibella* with the same morpheme *Bell-* ‘beautiful’: this is an ambiguous police informer with double meanings. His full name is *Calogero Dibella*, known as *Zicchineddu* (a gamble).

[4] LA DONNA DELLA DOMENICA

1972 brings *La donna della domenica* (The Sunday Woman) by Carlo Fruttero and Franco Lucentini, from Piemonte in northern Italy. In this novel all the surnames have a clearly defining function (Arcamone 2007). Unlike in the previous novels here the murderer is unmasked thanks to inspector Santamaria’s intelligence and familiarity with Turin’s high society. He is, like many Italian policemen, of Sicilian origin, as is his pleasant surname which is very common in Sicily. The inspector is a bachelor. He is naturally elegant, very tactful and chivalrous with a young and beautiful woman from Turin high society who has the lovely double-barrelled name of *Anna Carla*. For a while she is unjustly suspected. An interest begins to spark between them which is echoed by the inspector’s Christian name *Francesco*, a pan-Italian name (see above, (De Felice 1986, 175)) – the name of the patron saint of Italy, worthy to stand beside *Santa Maria*, which harmonises with *Francesca*, the name of the beautiful baby girl belonging to Signora Anna Carla. (We noted this previously at the given name of inspector *Francesco Ingravallo*; intertextuality with Gadda is not excluded).

The policemen have southern or Venetian names such as *De Palma*, *Macaluso*, *Ruffo* and *Picco* (De Felice 1978, 156, 186, 218). It was from the south of Italy and from the Veneto region that many families arrived to find work in the famous industrial triangle – Turin-Genoa-Milan – after the Second World War. The people from Turin have names frequently found in Piemonte. Among these is *Garrone*, one of the two people killed. He is a failed, obscene architect, a sponge and a parasite. The name means ‘heel’ in the Piemontese dialect. He is a friend of a seedy figure called *Zavattaro* (= ciabattaio: (De Felice 1978, 271)) which means ‘slipper-maker’. There are two university professors who are each others’ enemies. Their names are *Bonetto* ‘the name of an exquisite Turinese sweet’, the softer of the two; while the other apparently slightly more sinister is called *Marpioli* (which means ‘slyboots’). In this novel also the dense toponymy, as in the *Pasticciaccio*, identifies

the places and actually carries the reader towards a natural conclusion and the consignment of the murderer into the hands of the law.

[5] DONNE INFORMATE SUI FATTI

In the 2006 novel *Donne informate sui fatti* (Women Informed of the Facts) by Carlo Fruttero alone, we witness an innovation. First and foremost, the events unwind through the reflections of about ten women. Also the murderer is a woman. A school housekeeper finds the dead body of a young woman. There is a barmaid who has seen the body but not reported it. There is the daughter of the dead woman's husband, her friend, a female carabiniere, a female journalist, a female volunteer, etc.. This novel has an original format like other texts by Fruttero. Its events also take place in a modern setting: here the classic figure of the police inspector is lacking, while it is the attentive female carabiniere who discovers the truth, aided by the reflections of the other women. The dead woman was originally from Rumania – a common origin of many immigrants in Italy today. The motive is classic, the murderer is passionate and predictable – she is the best friend of the family, ex-lover of the widower father. The events in this story take place in Turin and a few surnames are present: *Covino* ([De Felice 1978](#), 109) – the school housekeeper, *Dragonero* ([De Felice 1978](#), 116) – the gardener. However a few characters have no names. Others are referred to by their Christian names but their connotations do not identify anyone in particular.

Only one character's name merits comment: it is the name of the lady who is ironically referred to in the novel as 'the best friend of the family'. She first appears as the lover of the father and later as the murderer of the young woman. Her name is *Beatrice* ([De Felice 1986](#), 87), 'she who makes people happy' (Italian *beato* 'blessed', adjective). We may remember it was the name of the woman Dante loved. But her true, terrible nature was anticipated by her schoolfellows, who, changing a single letter and so a single vowel, called her *Be-atrocce*, which means 'atrocious, dreadful, terrible'.

[6] LA MODISTA. UN ROMANZO CON GUARDIA E LADRI

On the other hand the identifying function of names is extremely clear and emphatic in the last novel to be examined here: *La modista. Un romanzo con guardia e ladri* (The Milliner. A Novel with a Cop and Robbers) by Andrea Vitali, published in 2008. It is both a detective story and an Italian comedy, for its format is one of irony and laughter. The story is set on Lake Como in Lombardy during the Second World War. It is full of characters with allusive and connotative 'speaking' names and surnames ([Milani 2010](#)). Also its toponymy makes a contribution to the construction of the identity of its individuals and especially its main characters. Here there are no murder victims; but there are burglaries, ambiguous characters and

dead suspects. Everything revolves around a beautiful woman and her various lovers and admirers, beginning with inspector *Carmine Accadi* ([De Felice 1978](#), 42); ([De Felice 1986](#), 100). He too, like the other commissioners cited here, is of Sicilian origin as the name reveals. He is single and he is vain. Instead of investigating the burglary (introduced at the beginning of the book), he thinks only about wooing the beautiful *Anna Montani* ([De Felice 1978](#), 173); ([De Felice 1986](#), 67). Here we may primarily observe the author's predilection for proper names which today would be perceived as being heavy and outdated. We have: *Adelmo*, *Aimone* (a traditional name from Savoy), *Firmato*, *Eutrice*, *Gerbera*, etc. ([De Felice 1986](#), 42, 49). For surnames indicating regional origin (like the Gaddian *Ingravallo* and Sciascia's *Bellodi*) here we have *Gravedoni*, *Fiorinelli*, *Pani* and *Bassi* – all typical of Lombardy. Then there is the journalist *Bentipenso* (I think of you well), the arrogant magistrate *Scannati* (*scannare* means 'to slit someone's throat': ([De Felice 1978](#), 227)) who has a reputation of being threatening; there is *Gargassa* (*Garg-* means 'throat') whose conduct is not, shall we say, gentlemanly. He is *Anna Montani*'s lover and his name is in fact *Romeo*. But this name is ironic, because it is in contrast not only to the triviality of the surname but also to the low moral status of this individual. The name *Eutrice Denti* (*denti* means 'teeth') is interesting. She is the mother of *Eugenio* ([De Felice 1986](#), 157): as her surname connotes, her judgements are cutting. Then there is the perverted *Austera* (austere) – here the name is used in an antiphrastic sense. A clear-cut speaking name is given to another one of *Anna Montani*'s lovers *Eugenio Pochezza*. The first part of his first name (*Eu-*) rhymes with his mother's name *Eutrice*. He depends on her morally. His surname (*Pochezza* meaning 'smallness') is indicative of his modest personality coupled with his being a rich layabout. He is perhaps responsible for the death of his mother *Eutrice* to whom he administered too many sleeping drops so that the meeting with his lover would be peaceful and unknown to his stern mother. Furthermore although he loves this beautiful woman who he had decided to marry, he ends up by not marrying her, but instead keeps her on as a lover. In the figure of the main character *Anna Montani* whose name and surname are without any particular references we cannot exclude the possibility that her name was influenced by the name *Anna Magnani* (a famous Italian film actress).

In fact there is a lot in this book that reminds us of the cinema and previous detective stories brought to the big and small screens as I have already suggested previously.

[7] CONCLUDING REMARKS

To sum up I hold that writers – the authors of Italian detective stories – look for an ally in the *nominatio* to help them define the identity of their characters and the backdrop of their story. In all the novels I have examined in this paper, proper names contain clues as to character and even physical appearance. For example,

Don Ciccio Ingravallo is ‘grave’, in the sense of ‘reflective’, but he is also sturdily built, as suggested by the familiar form *Ciccio*. *Liliana Valdarena* is as delicate and as sweet as a *lily*, but also cloying, like its scent. *Assuntona Crocchiapani* is a good-looking working-class girl, whose figure and manners are encapsulated in the augmentive suffix *-ona* and the noisy, bread-crunching surname, *Crocchiapani*. *Giuliano Valdarena* combines a name of noble origin (*Iulianus* < *gens Iulia*) with an elegant sequence of vowels. In the case of the *carabiniere*, Captain *Bellodi*, his Christian name is never used, just as the private life of this faithful servant of the State is never referred to. What does stand out is his integrity, in clear contrast with the ironically named *Calogero Dibella*, known as *Zicchineddu*, the police informer. The name of *Francesco Santamaria*, the canny Sicilian inspector, brings suggestions of virtue and chivalry thanks to the association with Saint Francis of Assisi and, on a higher level still, the Mother of God herself. A change of vowels – from *Beatrice* to *Beat-roce* – takes us from the apparently angelic to the underlying diabolic nature of the woman in question. Finally, in the case of the confirmed bachelor *Eugenio Pochezza*, the character’s subjection to his mother is underlined by the first syllable of her name, the diphthong *eu-*, while his surname conveys the dearth of moral principles that will lead him to murder her – almost by mistake.

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IDENTITY OF NAME(S) AS A CRUCIAL PROBLEM IN NAME STUDIES, OR: TOWARDS THE RECOGNITION OF ONYMIC IDENTITY AS A PRINCIPAL ONOMASTIC CONCEPT

SILVIO BRENDLER

Lingue

ABSTRACT

In general, identity plays an increasingly important role in name studies. People consider their personal name(s) to be part of their identity, after all. And no less importantly from the onomastic perspective, cultural, social, ethnic or national identity is at least to some extent related to names. So name students utilize names as markers of cultural, social, ethnic or national identity. On the other hand, name studies have in particular neglected to deal explicitly with identity of name(s). As a problem it has, however, been implicitly present from the very beginning of modern name studies. So this paper introduces identity of name(s) as a crucial problem of name studies that is worth, and indeed in need of, being explicitly recognized as a principal onomastic concept. Nomematics, an identity-theoretical framework based upon a dynamic model of language, is applied to achieve this purpose. It is shown 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).

[1] INTRODUCTION

Names go with identities and identities go with names. They are closely related and form a pair of concepts. What is meant is this: names are symbols of identities. They tell, or at least may tell, something about the bearer of the name (a woman called *Nataliya Vladimirovna Vasil'eva* is likely to be Russian). Names may tell something about the relations between the person who addresses someone by name and the person who is addressed by name (someone who addresses the woman as *Nataliya Vladimirovna* has different relations with her from someone who addresses her as *Natasha*). Names may also tell something about the in-

tentions of those who bestow names on others or themselves. Spanish parents who have their son baptized *Jesús* probably want their son to share some of the characteristics of the original eponym. Names may furthermore tell something about the intentions of those who address others by name. It makes a difference whether a woman calls her little son *David Featherstonhaugh* or simply *Dave*. Names may change with the objects they designate. The Chinese, for instance, traditionally have special names for each period of their lives, even one for the time after death. The name of a place may change after (the significance of) the place has changed. This phenomenon has been called “the law of relative preservation of the adequacy of a name” (Eichler & Walther 1986, 149). So it will come as no surprise that identity plays an increasingly important role in name studies. Names have been utilized, for instance, as markers of cultural, social, ethnic or national identity (Alford 1988; Clark 1995; Härtel 1997; Virkkula 2001; Postles 2002; Beech et al. 2002; Hagström 2006). On the other hand, identity of names, or rather “identity of name”, has hardly been dealt with explicitly although it has been implicitly present as a methodological problem from the very beginning of modern name studies. It is the explicit purpose of this paper to introduce identity of name, also called “onymic identity” or “isonymy”, as a crucial problem of name studies that is worth, and indeed in need of, being recognized as a principal onomastic concept.

[2] BASIC CONCEPTS

Let me first briefly outline the concepts of *identity*, *name* and *identity of name*. To begin with, by *identity* I mean a kind of relative identity, that is, x is the same as x' if and only if x' is a replication or copy of x ($x = x'$, $x \equiv x'$). By *name* I mean a word, including a complex one like the *United States of America*, which in contexts that are typical of it, signifies an object as a particular individual. It has grammar/grammatical structures (such as phonology, morphology, semantics, etymology) and functionality, or referential potential (to denote the particular individual object). A name is a name only in its entirety of grammar and functionality. Considering, for instance, one or a few structures of a name at a time is not considering the name but considering part(s) of the name. Grasping the name in its entirety is most important for developing and understanding identity of name as a principal onomastic concept. Consequently, *identity of name* is understood as a kind of relative identity, which is tentatively defined as N and N' being the same name if and only if N' is a replication or copy of N ($N = N'$, $N \equiv N'$). In other words: two “names” are identical if and only if both their grammar and functionality agree.

[3] KINDS OF IDENTITY OF NAMES

Identity of name may look like a trivial thing. It is, however, not as trivial as it seems at first sight. In onomastic publications the problem of identity of name(s) is often complicated by colloquial language. Identity of name(s) appears in the guise of so-called “equations of names”, and different kinds of identity of names have traditionally been taken for identity of name, such as

(i) etymological identity of names

(a) German names like *Chemnitz* (the name of a city north of the Ore Mountains, Saxony), *Kemnitz* (the name of a village south-east of Löbau, Saxony) and *Kemmlitz* (the name of a village south-east of Oschatz, Saxony) are considered identical because they are all derived from Old Sorbian **Kamenica* ‘the settlement on the Kamenica’.

(b) German *Nahe*, the name of a river left to the Rhine, and Lithuanian *Nóva*, the name of a river right to the Šešupė (Šakiai), are identical because they are derived from the same Indo-European etymon **Nāvā* ‘the (navigable) river’ (alternative etyma have been suggested, which however do not deprive the two names of their etymological identity).

(ii) formal identity of names

(a) German names like *Kummer* (the name of a farm north-east of Unterneukirchen, Bavaria), *Kummer* (the name of a village west of Ludwigslust, Mecklenburg-West Pomerania) and *Kummer* (the name of a village south-east of Schmölln, Thuringia) are declared identical because their present forms agree. The name in Bavaria is of German origin, the names in Mecklenburg-West Pomerania and Thuringia are of Old Polabian and Old Sorbian origin respectively.

(b) German *Koblenz* (the name of a city in Rhineland-Palatinate) and German *Koblenz* (the name of a village in Saxony) are formally identical, regardless of their different origins. The former is from Latin *Confluentes* ‘the settlement at the confluence (of the Moselle and the Rhine)’, the latter from Old Sorbian **Kobylno/Kobylna* ‘the settlement where mares are bred’.

(iii) semantic identity of names

(a) On the one hand, there is identity of etymological meaning as in the case of several personal names from different languages, the etymological meaning of which can be translated as ‘bear’ (other names of this meaning could be added): Gaelic *Art* ‘bear’ = Danish *Bjørn* ‘bear’ = Estonian *Karu* ‘bear’ = Udmurt *Gondir* ‘bear’ = Mari *Maska* ‘bear’).

- (b) On the other hand, there is identity of present connotations in such names as German *Kummer* (the name of a farm north-east of Unterneukirchen, Bavaria) and German *Kummer* (the name of a village south-east of Schmölln, Thuringia). Both have the connotation of German *Kummer* sorrow (the former is from Middle High German **Kumber/Kummer* ‘the settlement at the rubble’, the latter from Old Sorbian **Komore/Komory* ‘the settlement where there are many midges/mosquitoes’).
- (iv) functional/referential identity of names

A classical example is the English names of the second planet from the sun in the solar system, namely *Morning Star*, *Evening Star* and *Venus*. A hill west of Ostritz, Saxony, is known as *Knorrberg* and *Peter-Links-Berg*.

Name students do come across “true” identity of name everyday though without necessarily being aware of it, among other things, when collecting written evidence of names. So the name of a peasant liable to tax in (Klein-) Weikersdorf, Lower Austria, in the second half of the fifteenth century is recorded, for instance, as *Bertl Menhart* and *Partl Menhart*. The name of a brook that runs to the river Hahle, Lower Saxony, is recorded as *Chrebick* and *Crebeck*.

A few quotations from onomastic publications may further illustrate the present approach to identity. In an essay on name theory we read “the proper name (e.g. *John*) never loses its identity when used of different individuals” ([Trnka 1982\[1958\]](#), 84). The author has formal identity in mind. A typical entry in a dictionary of place-name is as follows: “KESWICK [...] ‘The cheese (dairy) farm’, O[ld]E[nglish] cēsewīc [...], the same name as the London *Chiswick*” ([Whaley 2006](#), 195). The author has etymological identity in mind. We are informed by a surname student that it “is obviously dangerous to assert that a [sur]name can have only one origin” ([Redmonds 1973](#), 144). The author has formal identity in mind. Again, different kinds of identity of names have been taken for identity of name, which indicates that we do not express ourselves unambiguously when it comes to identity of name (we have terminological problems) or that we may not know exactly what we are doing in such moments. On the one hand, different ideas of name and interest in different parts of names are indiscriminately referred to as “names”. Different ideas of identity are another problem. We certainly agree with Roger Lass who emphasizes that it is most important “to know at all times exactly what we are doing” ([Lass 1976](#), 220). One way to live up to this demand is to become aware of identity of name.

[4] BECOMING AWARE OF IDENTITY OF NAME

Awareness of identity of name raises some fundamental methodological problems concerning, for instance,

(i) etymology

In names derived from other names by conversion, suffixation, composition or the like, we may have to take two identities into account such as in Old Sorbian **Kamenica*, the etymon of the settlement name *Chemnitz*, which is derived by conversion from the Old Sorbian stream name **Kamenica* ‘the stony stream’. Now, is **Kamenica*, the etymon of the settlement name, adequately paraphrased as ‘the settlement on the Kamenica’ or rather as ‘the settlement on the stony stream’? Once the identity of the stream name is considered, the answer is obvious (‘the settlement on the Kamenica’).

(ii) statistics

Counting names belonging to a certain type of name, such as settlement names in *-ingen*, usually does not cause any problems. Counting names as such is something quite different. Here the question is what we count as a name. It is very common to count names with identical forms, phonological structures or graphological structures as one name regardless of the names’ designating different places or people, such as in statements like “In Saxony the most frequent settlement names are *Naundorf* (43), *Hermsdorf* (20), *Neudorf* (18) and *Cunnersdorf* (17)” (compare [Eichler & Walther 2001](#), 254) and “The surname *Smith* is found 422,733 times in the 1881 British census”. So this kind of counting of names is about selected parts shared by two or more names rather than about names (in their entirety).

(iii) the so-called “geography of names”

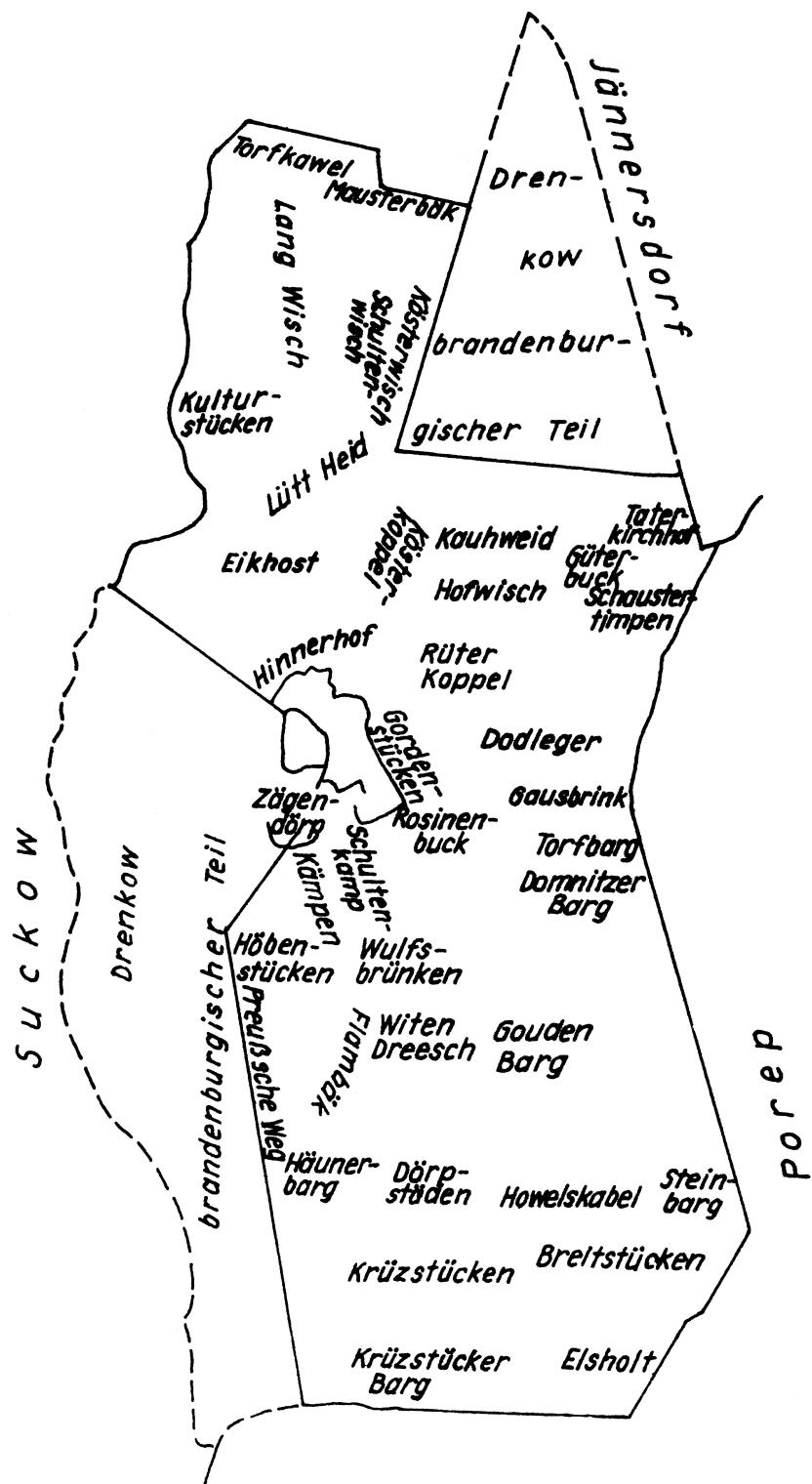
As mapping the distribution of names is based on statistics, the problems are similar. It is true that names (in their entirety) are occasionally mapped but this procedure does not get us anywhere beyond locating the names visually (see map [1 on page 35](#)). So the answer to the question what is usually mapped (see map [2 on page 36](#)) is: selected parts shared by two or more names rather than names (in their entirety).

In exemplifying a selection of methodological problems, it has become evident that identity of name is not generally recognized in name studies. In some areas of name studies we seem to gain more from dealing with identical parts of different names than from dealing with names in their entirety, that is identities of name. Lacking in awareness of identity of name and in explicit identity statements, different kinds of identity are taken for identity of name, which presents a serious problem of identity.

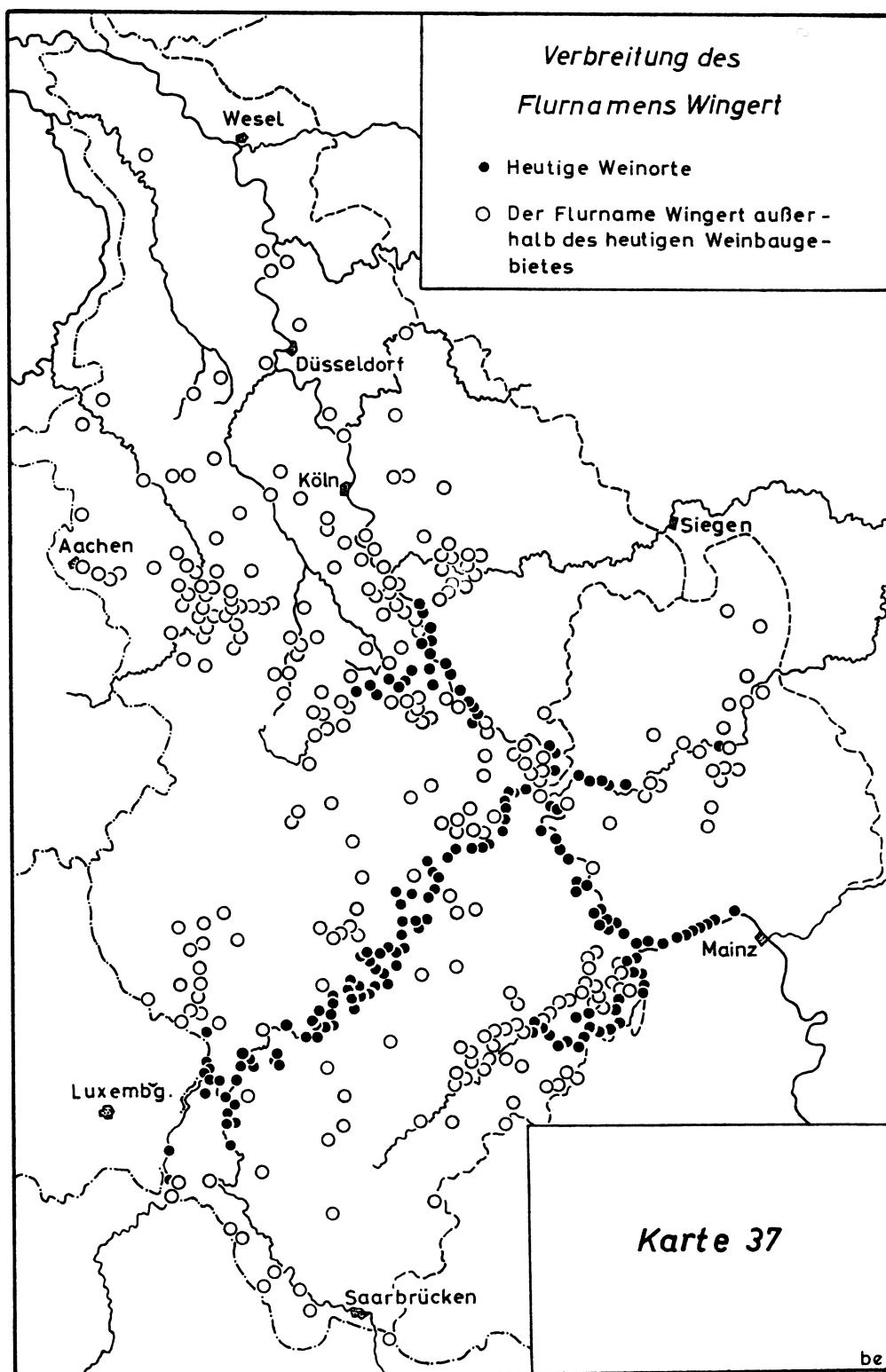
[5] INTRODUCING AN ANALYTIC SYSTEM FOR ESTABLISHING ONYMIC IDENTITY

To get to the heart of this problem, a clear picture of identity of name is needed. Such a picture is available from nomematics [Brendler \(2008\)](#), an analytic system for establishing onymic identities. This system is a completely revised version of approaches to onymic identity by Gulbrand Alhaug and especially by Volker Kohlheim ([Alhaug 1992, 2004](#); [Alhaug & Thorvaldsen 2002](#); [Kohlheim 1977, 2002, 2005](#)).

Nomematics is based on a dynamic model of language (DML), the centre of which (see figure [1 on page 37](#)) is formed by the processes of concretization, realization and systematization, connected and driven by abstraction and specification. The cycle of concretization, realization, systematization and again realization delivers torque to the dynamics and development of language. Concretization takes place in communication. It represents both innovative and traditional tokens/occurrences/instantiations of structures of the language system, with the former being integrated into the system by classification, the latter resulting from replication of systemic structures. Concretization corresponds to John Algeo's "utterance of a type (a token, a speech act)" ([Algeo 1973](#), 51). The process of realization concerns the classification or replication of subtypes/variants/subschemata as expressions of variation. It corresponds to John Algeo's "use of a type (which is a way the system can be applied)" ([Algeo 1973](#), 51). Last but not least, the process of systematization is about establishing types/patterns/schemata by saving realized structures and about assigning realized structures to established types/patterns/schemata. It corresponds to John Algeo's "type (which is a matter of the language system)" ([Algeo 1973](#), 51). Concretization, realization and systematization represent a level of language manifestation each. Whereas concretization is a perceptive level, realization and systematization are cognitive levels. The same name can be manifested on any level, thus having a range of manifestations. The correspondence between level of manifestation and manifestation of name is as follows (see figure [2 on page 38](#)): On the level of concretization the name is represented as nomes, which correspond to name occurrences. On the level of realization the name is represented



MAP 1: Field-names of Drenkow (Zühlsdorff 1988, 722)



MAP 2: Distribution of the field-name Wingert (Dittmaier 1963, 346)

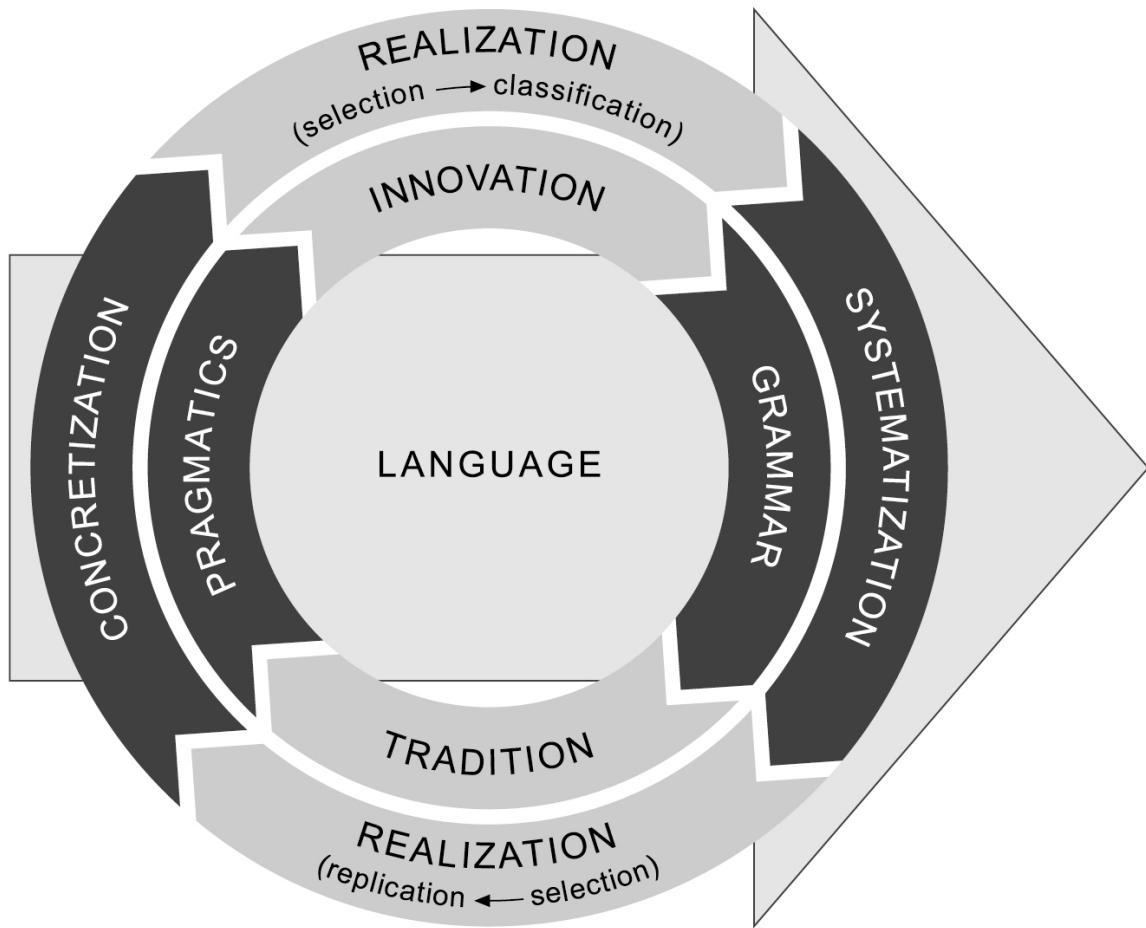


FIGURE 1: Dynamic model of language (DML)

as allomorphs, which correspond to name variants. On the level of systematization the name is represented as a nomeme, which corresponds to a name.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating. So what follows is a concrete example to illustrate how the subtle distinctions between the manifestations of name are made easily visible and how the manifestations are interrelated in the framework of nomematics. In the foundation charter of Quarr Abbey, written between 1141 and 1145 we find a line that contains an occurrence of the name of a manor in the Isle of Wight (see figure 3 on the following page).

When this occurrence is classified as a variant of the name *Heasley*, we have gone through the process of abstraction from the concrete occurrence via the less concrete variant to the more abstract name (see figure 4 on the next page).

Identity of name extends over all the manifestations of one name, that is the same name. The nomeme serves as an identification schema. Onymic entities are identical if and only if they match the identification schema (criterion of identity). Only in its entirety of grammar and functionality can the nomeme fulfil its

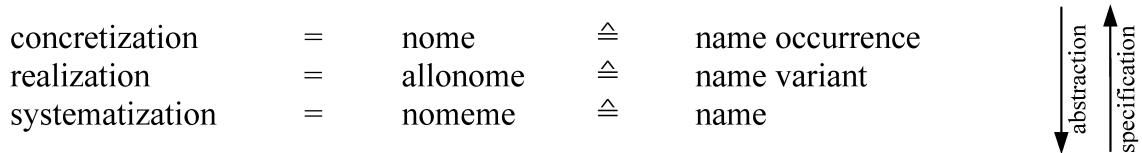


FIGURE 2: Correspondence between level of manifestation and manifestation of name

Et andem etiam libertatem concilio tene
 hæcque quam Engelgerus de Bohon predicti sacerdos consultit: quam & mei proprii elemosine concessi.

FIGURE 3: An extract from the foundation charter of Quarr Abbey, Isle of Wight, 1141x1145 (Public Record Office, Kew: E315/30/1[2])

function as identification schema. As nomematics is based on a dynamic model of language that considers language a process characterized by passage of time, the historical dimension of the entirety of grammar and functionality is allowed for.

Replication of one and the same name as well as classification of the resulting name occurrences and name variants produce onymic manifestations that are relatively identical — manifestations of (one and the same) name (see figure 5 on the facing page).

There is another process that forms a level of manifestation, namely archisystematization. It is central to human reflection on language, including on names. Differences between nomemes are neutralised by abstracting from the differences. What is left are the parts that names share, mostly name forms/lemmas, and that are often taken for names themselves in statistics, lexicography or geography of names. Archinomemes are not representations of names but are parts or structures of names that are often shared by at least two names. — For a full treatment of the concept *archinomeme* and the related concepts *archisystematization* and *archiallonyme*, see Brendler (Brendler 2008, 40–41, 112–125).

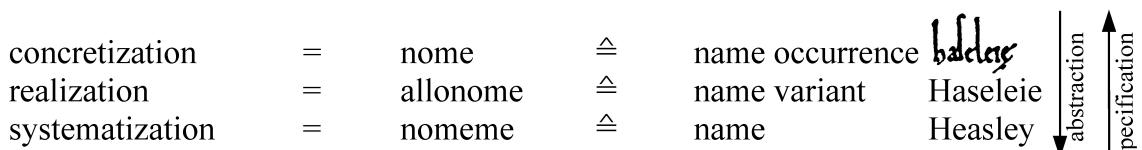


FIGURE 4: Manifestations of Heasley

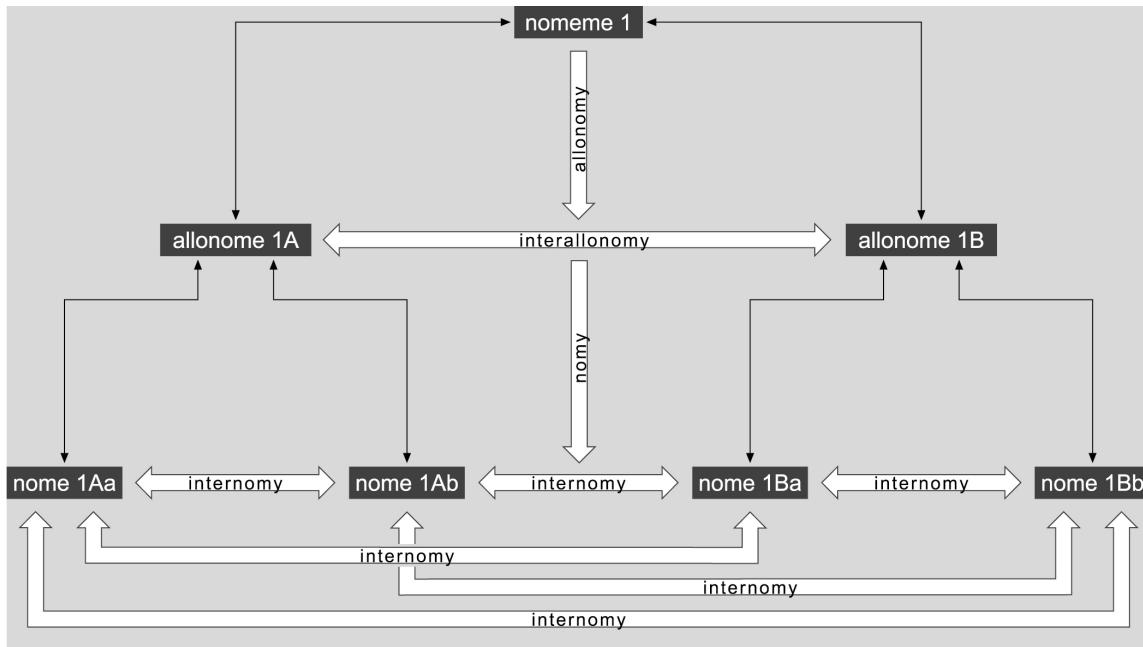
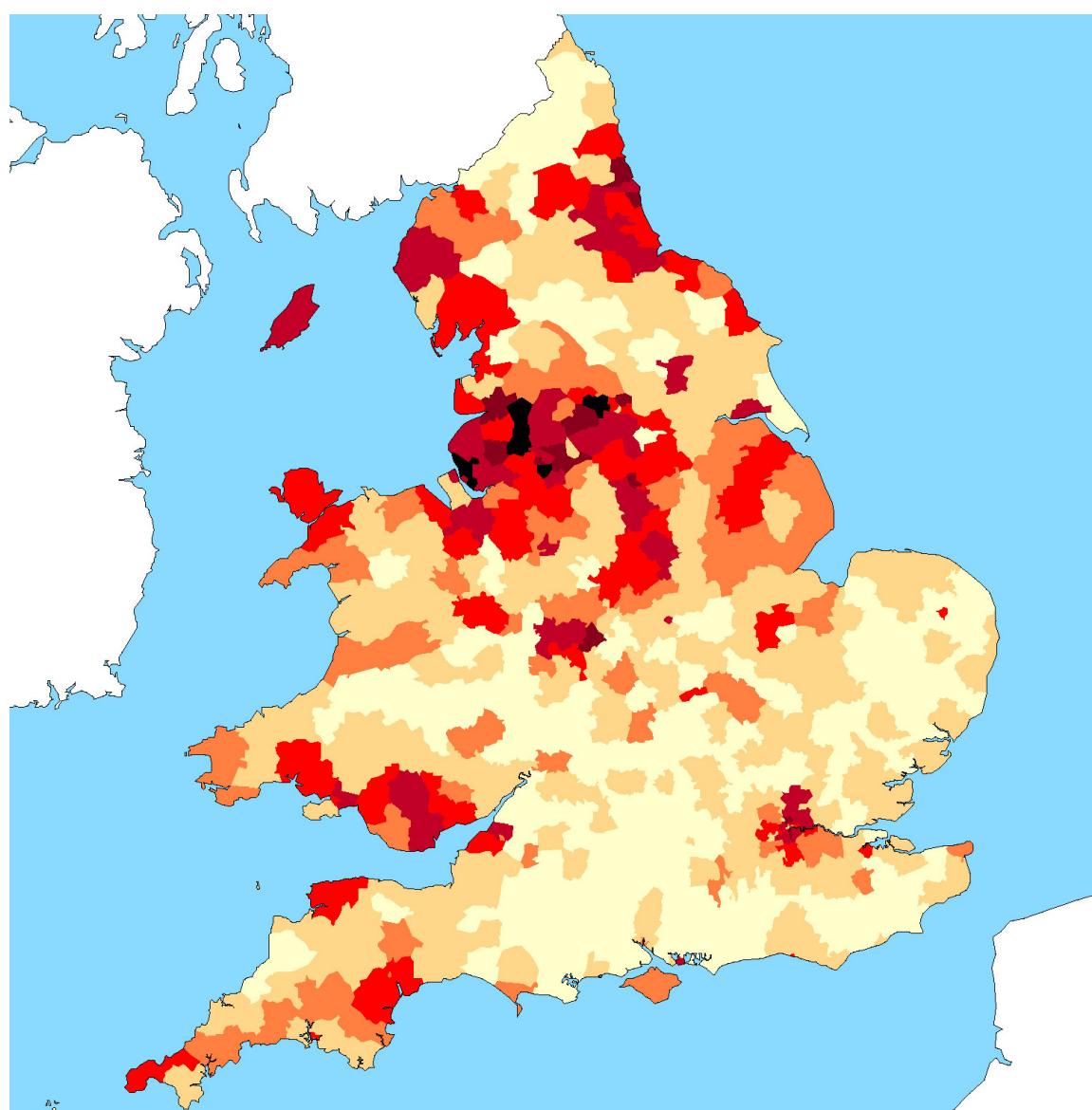


FIGURE 5: Manifestations of (one and the same) name and their relationships

[6] IDENTITY OF NAME AND NAME VARIATION

Recognition of identity of name challenges some traditional views of name variation. In not a few cases ostensible name variants (cases of allonymy) prove to be different names of the same object (cases of allonymy, heteronymy, polyonymy) or different names of different objects. If, for instance, one and the same person in Regensburg in the fourteenth century is called *Friedrich*, *Fridel* and *Fritz*, we recognize *Friedrich*, *Fridel* and *Fritz* as three grammatically different but functionally identical names of one and the same person rather than variants of one name. The same holds for *Ranteshofen* and *Rantesdorf* (1025 Rantesdorf sive Ranteshova), once two grammatically different but functionally identical names of one and the same settlement in Upper Austria, now called *Ranteshofen*.

Concerning name variation, a few more inevitable conclusions can be drawn from nomematics. I know three people called *John* and three villages called *Kemnitz*. As *John* is (apart from semantics) grammatically identical but functionally different in the three cases, there are three different identities of name, that is three different personal names *John*. The same holds for *Kemnitz*. The three cases are (apart from semantics) grammatically identical but functionally different. Again, there are three different identities of name, that is three different settlement names *Kemnitz*. There is, however, but one archinomeme/name form/name lemma *John* and but one archinomeme/name form/name lemma *Kemnitz*. So if we speak about the distribution of the personal name *John* in England and Wales in 1881 (see map 3), we actually speak about the distribution of



MAP 3: Actual distribution of the personal name *John* in England and Wales in 1881
(Archer 2003)

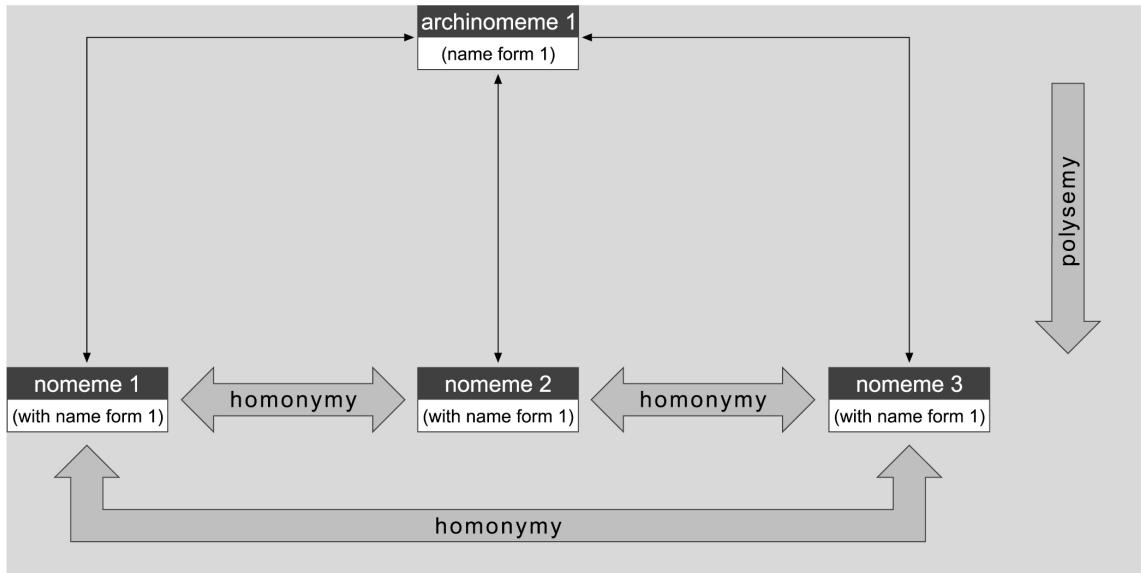


FIGURE 6: Relationship between polysemy and homonymy

the archinomeme/name form/name lemma *John*. In compliance with identity of name we could say “the distribution of the personal names *John*” instead of traditional “the distribution of the personal name *John*”. So the recognition of identity of name throws light on the problem of homonymy and polysemy with regard to names (see figure 6). There is homonymy between names of the same form and polysemy between, say, archinomeme/name form/name lemma 1 and names with name form 1.

[7] SUMMARY

- (i) Different kinds of identity of names have traditionally been taken for identity of name.
- (ii) We usually do not express ourselves unambiguously when it comes to identity of name.
- (iii) A clear picture of identity of name is needed for us “to know at all times exactly what we are doing”.
- (iv) Such a picture is available from nomematics.
- (v) Identity of name extends over all the manifestations of one name.
- (vi) The nomeme serves as an identification schema.
- (vii) Onymic entities are identical if and only if they match the identification schema (criterion of identity).

- (viii) Only in its entirety of grammar and functionality can the nomeme fulfil its function as identification schema.
- (ix) Awareness of identity of name raises some fundamental methodological problems.
- (x) Recognition of identity of name challenges some traditional views of name variation.
- (xi) It is worth recognizing identity of name as a principal onomastic concept.

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FEATURE NAMES AND IDENTITY IN ZIMBABWE

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ABSTRACT

This paper is about feature names in Zimbabwe. It focuses on the role played by place names in defining Zimbabwe, both as a physical entity and as a community of speakers with a remarkable history and a sense of nationhood. The paper thus focuses on two types of place names, that is, those that refer to the natural landscape, such as mountains and rivers, as well as those that refer to man-made features such as roads and streets, hospitals and schools. Regarding names that are bestowed onto the features of the natural landscape, we will look at how some place names vividly describe the outstanding features or characteristics of particular geographical features, that is, the extent to which the names are used as tools in describing the features; the way the eye meets the landscape. We will also look at how some names of physical features are coined in response to the landscape's 'behaviour' or in relation to the link the landscape has with historical event(s). The paper will also look at how the bestowal of commemorative names on Zimbabwean features has been used in concretising the Zimbabwean people's link with the country's history, that is, how Zimbabweans have tried to define themselves as a people through naming some of their popular places after names of the country's heroes and heroines, both living and dead.

[1] INTRODUCTION

Describing a place that existed a long time ago in the geographical area now called the United States of America, a famous toponymy scholar, Stewart, had this to say,

Once, from eastern ocean to western ocean, the land stretched away without names. Nameless headlands split the surf; nameless lakes reflected nameless mountains; and nameless rivers flowed through nameless valleys into nameless bays. ([Stewart 1945](#), 3)

With the peopling of the world today, and with features needing reference and identification, the place described by Stewart is only unimaginable. Such an unintelligible landscape can only be true of an uninhabited place. Once inhabited, the people start naming the various features in their local area. The features, both natural and man-made, have to be provided with names with which they

will be known or referred to in the people's daily lives. Once coined and applied, the names gain popularity and thus become permanent labels referring to phenomena of the landscape. It is thus through the respective names that the people will be able to identify and/or distinguish their surrounding features, one from the others of its category. It is probably after realising their significance that Hagström concluded that it is with the help of names that we can create order and also structure our conception of the world; that is, it is through names that we can classify and arrange our environment by separating it into named categories and filling the categories with named components ([Hagström 2007](#), 38). In the same spirit, Payne also notes that geographic names are of intrinsic interest because they are necessary for spatial reference in an otherwise confusing and often unintelligible landscape ([Payne 1996](#), 1133).

A cursory survey of literature on names in general and on feature names in particular (see, for example, [Kunene 1971](#), [Guma 1998](#), [Hagström 2007](#), [Payne 1985](#), [Payne 1996](#), [Goodenough 1965](#) and [Le Page & Tabouret-Keller 1985](#)) shows that the bestowal of names is not a haphazard process; every specific name reflects the intention of the person bestowing it. With the exception of a few that may be obscure, most names reflect the culture and philosophy of the cultural group that bestows them. The naming process is sensitive to various factors, some of which are physical, socio-cultural, historical, religious and political hence the conclusion that names are never neutral. As a result, whilst a few names may be oblique, some are descriptive, historical, and commemorative or transferred. Because of this and also following Le Page and Keller's conclusions on language and identity ([Le Page & Tabouret-Keller 1985](#), 247), we contend that feature names, like all other linguistic tokens, are socio-culturally marked and are used in a community because they are felt to have socio-cultural, historical as well as semantic meaning in terms of the way in which each individual member of the community wishes to project his/her own universe and invite others to share it. The same argument is made in Guma who notes that feature names and their naming processes are an interpretation of socio-cultural and historical events and also that the names embody individual or group social experiences, social norms and values ([Guma 1998](#), 266). Payne also argues that names are applied to landmarks in the development of our 'sense of place' or identification with a place, something that is important in our overall growth and development ([Payne 1985](#), 12). Viewed this way, therefore, feature names should not be seen merely as labels; they are not there to just tell people where they are in terms of physical location; there is a very intimate relationship between the name, the feature it refers to and the name-giver. More often than not, the names provide clues to our understanding of the name givers' history, their values and aspirations for the future, or simply their worldview. They are means through which we recognise and understand ourselves and the world that surrounds us.

Having noted the role played by names generally, in the subsequent sections of this paper, we try to provide a few examples of place names that refer to the Zimbabwean landscape and show how they are useful in depicting the relationship between the Zimbabwean people and their environment. The names that constitute our data include those of physical features such as mountains, rivers and streams as well as those of modern human settlements such as government buildings, schools, roads and streets. Not much has been done regarding the study and documentation of feature names in Zimbabwe. Unlike in other countries (see, for example, the United States of America, South Africa, Norway, amongst many others) where there exist thriving boards, councils or committees tasked with the responsibility of officially coordinating and overseeing the research and bestowal of names to features, no such official structures exist in Zimbabwe. To this researcher's knowledge, no comprehensive literature has been published that focuses on analysing place names, both as mere linguistic labels referring to features as well as reservoirs or symbols of socio-cultural and historical data about the place-namer. For these reasons, most of the research data on which this article is based is driven from oral traditions told by various people consulted.

[2] FEATURE NAMES IN ZIMBABWE

Like any other society, Zimbabwe defines itself through names. In doing this, it uses a variety of means and strategies. In this section, we assess the role played by place names in this defining process. Our point of departure is that cultural groups have their identity cemented by a common language and nomenclature; that Zimbabwean feature names are one of many means through which the Zimbabwean people express their linguistic and cultural identity. Like in many other African cultures, (see, for example, [Beier & Gbabasi \(1959\)](#) for Yoruba and [Kunene \(1971\)](#) for Basotho) Zimbabwean feature names are essentially expressions of some experience or attitude, usually local but sometimes national. Our investigation showed that most of the names express the name-givers' desire to create a group consciousness through the use of semantically and symbolically loaded names, the consciousness being necessary for the achievement of a common objective. It also showed that the names have an abiding interest, an interest that may be religious, cultural, historical or picturesque. In the language of the local people, the names of the respective features can either describe a feature physically or can provide insights into how the community of a specific group of people relates to its environment. In fact, our investigation showed that most names of geographic features are often localised for they come from the local people and through them, the people express their emotional attachment to their surroundings as experienced in their daily life experiences.

A linguistic analysis of place names in Zimbabwe shows that most of them are dithematic, that is, they are compound nouns combining two roots linked by

connecting vowels or affixes. An example of such a name in the Shona language is *Mabweadziva* (literally, the stones that belong to *dziva*, which is a compound name consisting of the plural noun *mabwe* (stones), the possessive affix *-a-* and the noun *dziva* (pool of water)). Another example is the Shona name, *Nyikavanhu* (literally, a country is people), which is a compound noun built up of the noun *nyika* (a country) and another noun, *vanhu* (people). The meaning of the name is that a country is defined or understood through the people who inhabit it. Yet another example is the place name, *Mudziwapasi* (literally, a root of the ground), which is also a compound noun consisting of the noun *mudzi* (root), the possessive prefix *-wa-* and the noun *pasi* (ground/earth). From a linguistic point of view, therefore, most of the names are sentential. In terms of meaning, their semantic value is usually not difficult to guess. More often than not, their meanings are easily inferable from the way they are composed, that is, the meanings are normally predictable from the meanings of their component elements as well as from the formula used in joining them; they are easily recoverable from simple rules of lexical and syntactic analysis. However, there are some names whose meanings go beyond the literal senses of the respective nouns and these may not be easy to retrieve. For such names, the researcher has to rely not only on his/her linguistic knowledge of the individual lexical items constituting the name but also on socio-cultural and historical information that is not accessible through the structure of the name. Historical and commemorative names are examples of names that normally need extra-linguistic information. To interpret these names, one has to be conversant with the entire historical or socio-cultural background leading to the choice of the name. Such names thus demand that the interpreter be knowledgeable about the circumstances under which they were coined. This is probably the reason why Pongweni argues that in analysing them one is essentially engaged in a linguistic investigation with social and political considerations predominating at various points. In the process of analysing them, one would be handling language data that has certain well-defined functions for the people who create and use it (Pongweni 1983, 4).

In the subsequent sections of this paper, we will focus on some of the types of feature names that came from our data. We should, however, precede our discussion by accepting the fact that we found it rather impossible to describe all the types of contemporary toponyms used in Zimbabwe in a paper of this scope; to describe the many and complex variables at work with appropriate examples would require an extended volume. We will only look at the most prominent types that we hope will help in showing the extent to which place names reflect the physical as well as socio-cultural and historical organisation of the Zimbabwean society.

[2.1] Descriptive names

From the data that we collected, we noted that most names of natural features such as mountains and rivers are descriptive. Most of them are picturesque; that is, they tend to capture or describe the photographic shapes of the respective features. They are forms of expressions through which the people summarise what comes to their minds when they look at their surrounding environment and its contents. They are driven from the respective features' shapes or outlook or from the features' relations to some important events. Writing about geographic names in the United States of America, Payne observes that some features, being unusual in their shape or appearance, evoke visions and an appropriate name describing the dream or vision is given (Payne 1996, 1134). Payne's observation is not far from what characterises the naming of physical features in Zimbabwe. A closer analysis of the country's feature names points to the fact that when coining them, people tend to select specific characteristics on an entity that they want to communicate or emphasise on. What is usually selected for emphasis is the unique or outstanding characteristic(s) of a particular feature. It is usually something about which people are concerned, something about the feature's identity or their own identity that they want to remember or entrench (Goodenough 1965, 275). The following are a few examples of descriptive feature names.

(a) **Nyarunwe** — this is a name of a mountain found in Masvingo province, Bikita district, which has one huge, tall and pointed rock at its peak and which literally means 'owner of one tall or long thin something'. To understand the link between the mountain and the name, one needs to note the linguistic analysis of this Shona name, where *nya-* is a possessive prefix meaning 'owner of', *ru-* is the class 11 enumerative prefix for tall or long concepts that are thin and *-nwe* is the enumerative stem for 'one'. Thus, conceived literally, one can easily infer that the name is driven from the fact that the mountain is said to own one tall something. This tall something is obviously the rock on the top part of the mountain which serves as its distinguishing feature, one that makes it unique from all the others that are neighbours to it. In fact, it is through this outstanding rock that one can easily identify it even from a long distance. The mountain thus got its name from this peculiar characteristic that the local people decided to emphasize on. Closely related to the philosophy behind the naming of this mountain is also the naming of another mountain in Zaka district called *Menomaviri*. The name consists of two parts, that is, the noun *meno* (teeth) and the enumerative *maviri* (two). Put together, the sum total of the meanings of the two parts is 'two teeth'. The name captures well the shape of the mountain whose peak is split into two protruding parts that resemble the shape of two front teeth (with some space in between them) planted in the gum of a person's mouth.

(b) **Mushonganeburi** — this name is a compound noun built up of the noun class 1 prefix *mu-*, the verb stem *-shonga* (dress, decorate), the conjunctive affix



FIGURE 1: Nyarunwe

-ne- (with) and the noun *buri* (a hole), which literally means ‘one who is decorated with a hole’. The name is driven from the fact that the mountain has a huge hole at one side of its slopes, a feature that is quite unique on Zimbabwean mountains. The mountain is thus distinguishable from other local mountains through this hole that the locals argue ‘decorates’ it. The hole on the mountain located in Mwenezi district is mysterious since no-one amongst the local villagers consulted knew whether it is natural or man-made. It is this peculiar feature on the mountain that the villagers decided to emphasise on, hence the derivation of its name.

(c) **Shayamavhudzi** — this is a name of another huge mountain in Mwenezi district. The name, also a compound noun, consists of the verb stem -*shaya* (lack something) and the plural noun *mavhudzi* (hairs). The name literally means ‘one who lacks hairs’. According to those who live close to the mountain, the name came from the unique fact that the mountain does not have any trees on it. This feature makes it different from other known mountains in the area, which have lots of trees on them, hence the reason why its treelessness had to be emphasised. To understand this name fully, one has to first understand the metaphorical sense



FIGURE 2: Shayamavhudzi

in which the trees on the mountain can easily be likened to the hair on a person's head. Conversely, the common concept of a bald head, which does not have hair on it, has been extended to vividly describe a treeless mountain. The same concept of naming has also been used to name a small mountain in Zaka district which is known by the name *Chevhudzi*, literally meaning 'the little one that possesses hair'. The name is built up of the diminutive possessive prefix *che-* and the noun *vhudzi* (hair). The little mountain does not have trees on its sloping sides but has a cluster of tall trees at its peak, resembling hair on a person's head.

(d) **Mudzimundiringe** – this is also a name of a very big and scary mountain in Manicaland Province. The name is a complex nominal construction built up of a combination of the noun *mudzimu* (ancestor spirit), *-ndi-* (object marker for 'me') and *-ringa* (watch). The sum-total of the literal meanings of the respective parts of this multiword name is 'the ancestor spirits watch me'. The mountain has very steep and slippery slopes that everyone who climbs on it should be extremely careful for any mistake can lead to an uncontrollable and fatal fall. Oral traditions behind the naming of this mountain point to the fact that many people were afraid of climbing it because of its very frightening lookout. As a result, anyone who

intended to climb on it had to ask his/her ancestors first so that they would give him/her the necessary protection so that he/she comes back alive and safe.

(e) **Gwindingwi** — this is a name bestowed on numerous mountains and places in Zimbabwe. Generally speaking, in Shona, a *gwindingwi* is a thick forest with tall trees and a lot of tall grasses. Before population explosion in the country, many places and mountains were characterised with this kind of vegetation. One is tempted to conclude that this might be the reason why this is a common name in Zimbabwe today, even at a time when the forests have disappeared following human encroachment.

A cursory look at the country's rivers also shows that there are a number of them whose names tend to be descriptive of their sizes or behavioural characteristics. Here are a few examples.

(a) **Runde** — this is one of Zimbabwe's biggest and/or longest rivers. Oral traditions point to the fact that its name is a contraction of the river's original name, *Runoenda* (one that goes on and on), it being built from the noun class 11 prefix *ru-* for nouns that are tall or long as well as thin, the present habitual tense-aspect marker *-no-* and the verb stem *-enda* (go). From those that were asked, the name was driven from the fact that the river is very long to the extent that no-one knows where it starts from or where it ends. From the name of this famous river also was driven the names of a local high school, a shopping centre and a clinic that were developed at specific points along the river.

(b) **Rusape** — This is a name of a perennial river located in the eastern part of the country. The river's name is a contraction of the name, *Rusingapwi* built up of the noun class 11 prefix *ru-*, the negative formative affix *-si-*, the verb root, *-pw-* (dry up) and the terminal vowel *-i* and literally meaning 'one that does not dry up'. The name came from the observation that this particular river does not dry up when all the others in the area stop flowing in the dry season. It is this unique characteristic of continuous flow that the locals decided to emphasize hence the source of the name. A town developed close to this river and was subsequently named after it. We can thus argue that the town got its identity from that of the river.

(c) **Mutorahuku** — We have just noted from the above example that some features get names from their behavioural patterns. Another example is this name, which has been bestowed on quite a few seasonal streams that flow across some parts of rural Zimbabwe. The name is a complex nominal construction built up of noun class 1 prefix *mu-*, the verb *-tora* (take) and the noun *huku* (chicken), literally meaning 'the one who takes chickens'. Oral traditions surrounding the bestowal of this name point to the fact that in the dry summer season free running chickens in the rural villages usually stray away in search of food and water. The chickens, which leave the foul run early in the morning, tend to do their hunting along local streams where they normally get green and fresh grass, grasshoppers and other



FIGURE 3: Mutorashanga

insects. Now, when it rains upstream and the streams overflow, the chickens are caught unaware and are eventually washed away. A lot of chickens, especially the small ones, have been lost this way. Some informants have argued that this could be the reason why the villagers along the respective streams eventually decided to coin this name as a warning to chicken owners to take care and possibly prevent this loss. Another closely related example is the name of a big river called *Mutorashanga*. The name is built up of the noun class 1 prefix *mu-*, the verb *-tora* (take) and the noun *shanga* (reeds), literally meaning ‘one who takes reeds’. When asked, some people who live close to the river argue that the idea behind the river’s name is the same as the one behind the name *Mutorahuku* discussed above. The only difference is that in the case of *Mutorashanga* it is reeds and not chickens that are washed away. The locals argue that the name originates from the fact that the river tends to wash away a lot of things, including its own reeds when it overflows in the early summer heavy rains. The name, therefore, is meant to emphasise this rare occurrence that results from the strength of the river’s tides.

Besides rivers and mountains, there are other man-made features that carry names that vividly describe the way the features meet the eye. One such name

is *Boterekwa*, the name of a highway that cascades down the steep slopes of the Shurugwi mountains into Chief Nhema's communal lands. The name of this road comes from the verb stem *-potereka*, which literally means 'wind around'. The name captures well the way the road winds around the mountain ridge, negotiating its way from one end of one mountain to another.

In concluding this section, we find it important to note that most of the names in this category are metaphorical. The process of creating them seems to be influenced by common things that people either see or experience in their lives, which they use to capture similar shapes or characteristics exhibited by the respective features.

[2.2] *Historical names*

Quite a number of features in Zimbabwe have their names driven from important historical events that the name bestowers felt should not be forgotten. Whilst some events are those that impacted the name-bestowers' lives positively others are those that affected them negatively. They could also be those that affected or involved prominent people in society. In this case, what happened historically is summarised and permanently frozen in the form of a name which is then bestowed on a feature that was either the physical location of the historical event or was related in some peculiar way to the event. When coining historical names for features, some name givers tend to be interpretive whilst others are objective. When analysing historical names, therefore, one has to ask himself or herself this question; 'How much and to what extent does the name tell us what actually happened?' To understand such names, the interpreter has to be conversant with the entire historical and/or socio-cultural background leading to the choice of the name. An example of a feature name that was coined in response to historical events is *Mukuvisi*, the name of a stream that flows close to the city of Harare. The name is a noun driven from the causative verb stem *-kuvisa* (cause to come to an end) by adding the nominalising class 1 prefix *mu-* and the change of the final vowel from *-a* to *-i*. The noun literally means 'one who causes something to come to an end or to stop'. Oral traditions as given in Kahari point to the fact that,

In the early days, there were two chiefs in the district named Mbari and Seki (Seke). They were constantly having minor arguments about territory. Eventually they agreed that the boundary between their areas should be this stream and so it was called Mukuvisi because it was the place where the fighting came to an end. ([Kahari 1990, 281](#))

The name thus has some historical significance because it identifies the place where the historical problem was brought to an end.

Another example is the name *Dzivarasekwa* (literally, the pool of Sekwa), which is built up of the noun *dziva* (pool of water), the possessive prefix *-ra-* and *sekwa*,

the corrupted version of a person's name originally known as *Sekwi*. This is the name of one of the oldest residential suburbs in Harare. Oral traditions say that a long time ago there was a very beautiful princess by the name *Sekwi* who quite often bathed in a water pool that was in that area. For this reason, the pool was eventually named after the princess. When a residential suburb was developed around the pool area, the pool's name was extended to be the name of the suburb as well. It is perhaps worthy noting that up to a few decades ago people from royal families were considered important hence anything associated with them could not go unnoticed or unrecorded. By bestowing the princess' name onto the pool and eventually to the suburb, therefore, the locals were actually trying to keep a record of some of the events that took place around this important figure in their society. Yet another example is the name of a small mountain in Bikita district called *Chinyamapere* (literally, the little one that owns hyenas). The name is a complex nominal construction built up of the diminutive noun class 7 prefix *chi-*, the possessive prefix *-nya-* and the plural noun *mapere* (hyenas). Interviews carried out with people who live close to this mountain point to the fact that on this mountain used to inhabit a lot of hyenas, which would wreck havoc by destroying large herds of cattle and other domesticated animals in the local area. Having established that the hyenas lived on this small mountain, the villagers decided to give it this name to summarise and concretise what was happening then. The mountain is known by this name even today when there are no more hyenas on it. The significance of the name today is to be a storage place for historical facts that surrounded this feature a very long time ago. Yet another example is *Marirangwe* (literal, the one that roar leopards), the name of a mountain that was famous for being home to a lot of leopards. The name is a noun built up of the nominalising prefix *ma-*, the verb stem *-rira* (cry/produce sound) and the noun *ngwe* (leopard(s)). Leopards were usually heard roaring on this mountain hence it was designated a dangerous place to visit. The villagers then decided to coin this name that depicted the events and fears of the time.

[2.3] Commemorative names

A commemorative feature name is one that is bestowed on a feature in honour of a person, place or event. To fully characterise commemorative feature names in Zimbabwe, we have to look at them from a historical point of view. There is need to note that before the occupation of the country by the British in the late nineteenth century the concept of land ownership in Zimbabwe centred around chiefdoms or kingdoms. Stretches of land and its inhabitants belonged to a particular chief or king. Boundaries were not fixed, and wars were often fought around areas of perceived boundaries, with one or the other chief claiming more land. However, with the coming of the British, the land was divided into administrative areas with clear and fixed boundaries and 'legal' names attached to each piece of

land. Besides the creation of boundaries on pieces of land, the new settlers also brought new concepts such as towns and cities, roads and streets, mines, churches and schools, all of which needed identification through names. The mere fact that the British settlers had a written aspect of their language meant that more places had to be named so that features could be recorded on their maps, and also that stories about Africa could be narrated in relation to more specific and easily identifiable areas.

As also noted in Chabata (2007), an important aspect in the settlers' naming of all these features was the concept of commemoration, a concept which was rare in Zimbabwe before their coming. Names of important or famous people or places in Britain and Europe were bestowed on towns and cities, roads, schools, residential suburbs, etc. They, thus, gave the features the names that told their history, names that identified them with their origins. The concept of naming places after names of prominent people in society continued even after independence in 1980 where features are named after Zimbabwean and/or African heroes and heroines, both living and departed. At the same time, those names that celebrated colonialism are replaced with those that celebrate the newly hard-won independence. Colonial names are viewed as symbols of colonialism; hence they have to be replaced with those that have an African or Zimbabwean anti-colonial flavour. As noted in Raento & Douglas (2001), Basso (1996) and Hendry (2006), this is typical of newly independent societies. To show how the British symbols of colonialism were eradicated through renaming of places in Zimbabwe, we can start with the name of the country itself, *Zimbabwe*, formerly *Rhodesia*. The new name, *Zimbabwe*, was derived from Great Zimbabwe, the country's national shrine, which was an important spiritual place for those who ruled the vast empire of Monomotapa before the arrival of the British settlers. This name is a symbol of national unity, and is of socio-cultural, historical and religious importance to black Zimbabweans. The country's name, therefore, shows the people's return to their origins or roots, their original identity and also their resistance to domination. Names of many towns and cities were also changed from their symbolic colonial labels and were replaced by locally relevant indigenous names that were symbolic of the new order and new ownership of the land. For example, *Salisbury* was renamed *Harare* after the Shona chief, Neharava and *Fort Victoria* became *Masvingo*, again linked to the Great Zimbabwe stone structures. Other names were simply new transliterations to reflect the correct local pronunciation and the local languages' newly developed orthographies. For example, *Gwelo* became *Gweru*; *Selukwe* became *Shurugwi*; *Sinoia* became *Chinhoyi*; *Umtali* became *Mutare*; *Matopos* became *Matobo*; *Marandellas* became *Marondera*; *Que Que* became *Kwekwe*; *Gatooma* became *Kadoma*; etc.

As already intimated above, the founding of the 'new nation' in 1980 after the two protracted liberation wars also created opportunities for expressing some pa-

triotic fervour that were non-existent before. For example, most colonial street names which were symbols of colonisation were replaced by names of legendary figures who had distinguished themselves during the two liberation wars the country fought against colonialism. A look at the streets of Harare, for example, shows that street names such as *Rhodes*, *Livingstone* and *Charter* have been replaced with those of Zimbabwe's celebrated war heroes and heroines such as *Josiah Tongogara*, *Herbert Shitepo*, *Mbuya Nehanda*, *Sekuru Kaguvi*, *Leopold Takawira*, *Josiah Chinamano*, as well as *Robert Mugabe*, whose name appears on street signs as frequently as that of *Rhodes* once did. Other streets have been named after former or current leaders of neighbouring countries, such as *Samora Machel* of Mozambique, *Julius Nyerere* of Tanzania, *Kenneth Kaunda* of Zambia, *Nelson Mandela* of South Africa and *Sam Nujoma* of Namibia. Others have a general pan-Africanist theme, such as the *Africa Unity Square*, formerly *Cecil Square*. Important government buildings were also named after national heroes such as *Mkwati*, *Chaminuka*, *Karigamombe*, etc, all of whom were heroes of the first liberation war of 1896–7. As late as 2005, the Zimbabwe Ministry of Education also came up with a proposal to replace all school names in the country, which have colonial connotations with those of the country's heroes and heroines. The following are only a few illustrative examples; *Prince Edward* was renamed *Murenga*, *Queen Elizabeth* was renamed *Nehanda Nyakasikana*, *Churchill* was renamed *Josia Tongogara*, and *John Cowie* was renamed *Zororo Duri*.

Another form of commemoration now common in Zimbabwe is the idea of naming new developments such as schools, hospitals and clinics and growth points after names of chiefs under whose jurisdiction the developments are taking place. *Nyahunda*, *Gutu*, *Bengura*, *Gudo* and *Mazungunye* are examples of schools named after the respective local chiefs. *Ndanga* and *Gutu* are names of big hospitals also named after the chiefs in whose areas the two hospitals are respectively located.

[3] CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have tried to show that feature names in Zimbabwe are coined in ways that summarise the way the people understand themselves vis-a-vis their environment. We have noted that whilst some names describe the shape or behaviour of their respective features, some are historical records and others are sources of inspiration in the process of building a better future for the country. Our research has also established that most feature names, especially those of the natural landscape, are coined and bestowed by people who live in the respective surrounding areas. In a way, we have tried to show that feature names are not names for their own sake; they are coined and applied by a particular group of people for a particular reason and are relevant to the bestowers' daily lives.

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ENDONYMIC PLACE-NAME ALTERNANTS AND THEIR CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCES

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ABSTRACT

Many places have more than one simultaneously current name within the same linguistic community, usually an official one and at least one unofficial one. In England, there are several sources of place-name alternation, and the first purpose of this paper is to categorize them. In most cases, where there is a clearly unofficial form it can be simple-mindedly characterized as the form used by local people with local people in a way which asserts their shared identity and community values. In some cases, alternating usage is well entrenched, and serves stylistic ends. Where there is instability of usage, the direction of change is almost always in favour of a spelling-pronunciation. But there is sufficient evidence that simplistic assessments of the situation in England are inappropriate, and some cases are discussed which pose difficulties for the idea that informal alternants have always been produced by the same kinds of historical process.

[1] INTRODUCTION

In his novel *Maps for lost lovers* (Aslam 2004), Nadeem Aslam writes of a fictional town in the north of England known to its Urdu-speaking inhabitants as *Dasht-e-Tanhai* ‘wasteland of loneliness’, apparently in allusion to a poem by the Pakistani poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz. They also refer to other local places using names which have resonances of southern Asia. Much has been written about such use of different names for the same place by members of different language-communities, including the relation between endonyms and exonyms, as illustrated for example by *Köln* vs. *Cologne* (with the latter used only outside the place and indeed outside its country), or *Chennai* vs. *Madras* (with both names in competition locally for the right to denotational primacy).¹ There is much less in the literature about the use of place-name variants by members of the same language-community, although very interesting and systematic work has been done, for example,

[1] We might call this “right” to denotational primacy *kyrionymy*, following the spirit of Fred W. Householder’s technical term *kyriolexia* (Householder 1983) – the *kyrionym* is the name accepted as the “real”, often but not necessarily official, name of the place.

on the alternative local toponymy of Helsinki by Terhi Ainiala and Jani Vuolteenaho ([Ainiala & Vuolteenaho 2006](#); [Ainiala 2008](#)). Such culturally and stylistically significant variation involving paired endonyms (which may shade into the *Chennai/Madras* type of case when the latter is no longer perceived as a matter of bilingualism) is the topic of the present paper, and names in England are the object of investigation.²

[2] ALTERNATION OF ENDONYMS

A number of English places have more than one name simultaneously current among English-speakers. In such a set of names, one can usually be characterized as official and at least one as unofficial, though the facts may not always be as straightforward as that. It is certainly true that different significances of some kind attach to such alternating names. There are at least seven broad types of alternation, set out below. Throughout this article, A ~ B means ‘A alternates with B’. The differences which are exploited in the alternation often, but by no means always, arise from change in the spoken form whilst the written form remains unchanged, with the new spoken form then competing for written status (and therefore kyrionymy; see note 1); or conversely, a new transparent pronunciation develops from the written form. Accordingly, type 6 below is probably the most frequent, but that is just an impression and no proper count has been done.

Sometimes in popular writings long-standing alternative names are listed alongside apparent nonce-forms (like *Seaton Carew* ~ *Seaton Canoe* created in response to the faked disappearance of a man who abandoned his canoe on the beach there in 2002), including both puns and other sorts of joke (like *Wavertree* ~ *Shake-a-bush*). I have avoided such apparent nonce-forms in this article since I have no idea how widespread their use is, but the same processes are responsible for the creation of some alternative names in both categories. There is also clear evidence for a “system” of place-nicknames having been in use among Citizens’ Band radio users ([Dills 1981, passim](#)), and I have found patchy evidence for other cases in the usage of people who need to work with place-names regularly, such as railway clerks. I have tried to restrict myself to names which I believe are not confined to special-interest groups, though the criterion is not easy to operate (as in the case of *Guz* below, (iii)-c).

This paper is not about the kind of variation which is predictable from dialectology. *Pudsey* can be pronounced with /u/ or /ʌ/ in the first syllable, the former being the local spoken form in West Yorkshire, and the latter in effect a spelling-pronunciation based on the norms of Received Pronunciation. Similar

[2] *Chennai* (sometimes romanized as *Chhennai*) is the Tamil name. *Madras* was perceived as Portuguese and therefore colonial, and suffered official replacement in 1996. (In fact, it is Portuguese-mediated Arabic.) See [Tharoor \(2002\)](#).

considerations apply to *Bath* with /a:/ or /a/ or /æ:/ (the local form having /æ:/) and *Exeter* with or without an audible final /r/ when spoken in isolation (the form with /r/ being local). The names investigated here are those where there is more at stake than mere accent-related variation. Both names may be used by the same speaker or writer in different circumstances and for different effects, for example expressing different aspects of identity. Accent-related variation can of course be manipulated in similar ways; that is simply not the province of this paper.

[3] SOURCES AND CATEGORIES OF ALTERNATION

In England, there are arguably seven sources, and resultant types, of place-name alternation as just defined. The first five types are sometimes lumped together in popular writings as *place-nicknames*. This term has also been used in a somewhat distinct sense in an article by Jones-Baker (Jones-Baker 1981), in which adjectivally modified place-names such as *Merry Wakefield* and *Wychwood-Always-Late* are the main subject, but such structures are not what this paper is about (with a partial exception under (ii) below, the first example borrowed from Jones-Baker's paper). Not all the names mentioned below are necessarily still in use, but all are well recorded.

- (i) Specialization of a categorizing noun in the function of a name *par excellence*:

London ~ *Town*, *Newcastle upon Tyne* ~ *Toon*

She used to work in Town 'she used to work in London'

The Toon Army 'supporters of Newcastle United Football Club'

The two words in question here are both variants of the word *town*, but are not intersubstitutable, and to that extent function as proper names.

- (ii) Specialization of another (grammatically modified) place-name in the function of a name by metaphor:

Tring ~ *Little Manchester*, *West Marsh* (Grimsby) ~ *Little Russia*, *Brighton* ~ *London-by-the-Sea*

Some such names are not nicknames but independent place-names, such as *Petty France* and *Little Venice* (and indeed *Venezuela*).

- (iii) Application of an expression as a name by some species of metonymy:

- (a) Specialization of a referring expression in the function of a name, by metonymy:

London ~ *The Smoke* (now obsolete); almost analogously *Edinburgh* ~ *Auld Reekie* 'old smoky' in Scots

Canterbury ~ CT (from the letters of its postcode derived from its being a Royal Mail post town)

Cleethorpes ~ Meggies

For discussion of the last, a metonymic application of a term originally denoting the town's inhabitants (cf. *Essex and Wales*), see Dowling (Dowling 1995, 35) and Coates (Coates 2008, 53–4).

- (b) Combining an expression for a circumstance with a generic term for a place, in the function of a name:

Melton Mowbray ~ Pork Pie Town (from its most famous manufacture)

Macclesfield ~ Sticky Town (from an event involving treacle spillage)

Wokingham ~ Louse Town (from a myth about its mayoral selection method)

Cf. *Chicago ~ Windy City*, which however seems to have arisen as an onymized version of the expression *the windy city* (see evidence adduced in Popik (2004)). It shows loss of the definite article, i.e. showing that it originated in a fully-articulated referring noun phrase. I know of no evidence for such a prior phase in the three instances in England, which seem to have originated as names.

In the instances in 3b., the alternative names originate in an accidental (in the Platonic sense – ‘descriptively true but not necessarily so’), incidental or mythical circumstance associated with each place in question, respectively. They might also be viewed, in a sense, as involving metonymy, but they are not purely metonymic expressions; rather the key element — often a noun or adjective — is used as a specifier. For pure metonymy, one would need to find *Melton Mowbray ~ Pork Pie*, etc. Accordingly, I have proposed a partly separate category.

- (c) Pure metonyms where the expression is not in any sense etymologically descriptive of the place:

Devonport ~ Guz, Portsmouth ~ Pompey

These items are not on the face of it what might be called instances of the “factual metonymy” of (iii)-a and (iii)-b, but instances of the application of an expression for a circumstance directly as a name. The first example has been variously explained, but *Guz* appears to originate in a call-sign identifying a naval radio-station at Plymouth (GZX = Mount Wise radio-station),³ geographically near enough to suggest

[3] Dykes, Godfrey, no date. Other radio callsigns of the 1930-1931 period. Online at <http://www.godfreedykes.info/other%20radio%20callsigns%20of%20interest%201930-31.htm>, sourced from “the [?Royal Navy] 1930 book of callsigns” (accessed 15 April 2009).

metonymy. The second, and particularly complicated, example is explained as fully as is currently possible in Coates (2009), but there is not enough space here to deal with the facts as known.

The names in sub-groups (iii)-b and (iii)-c have in common the fact that the relationship between the alternative name and the place may be locally expressed through folk-onomastic narratives; such narratives may also involve an explanation of the relationship between the alternative name and the official one (as in some variants of the Pompey story). I quite accept that the relation between groups (iii)-a, (iii)-b and (iii)-c is capable of refinement. But they share a property akin to metonymy.

- (iv) Use of a morphological variant of the name (1): simple abbreviation by truncation or initialism:

*Bristol ~ Briz, Chichester ~ Chi, Skelmersdale ~ Skem
Milton Keynes ~ MK (if this is not like CT in (iii)-a above)*

There are also occasional suggestions of acronymy: a children's group in Westbury-on-Trym is known as WOT'S TOTS.

Bristol is locally pronounced, by some people, though not with the authority of local dialect, /'brizl/, which gives rise to the truncated form *Briz* (NB pronounced with /z/ not /s/). *Chi* is pronounced /tʃai/. The loss of the /l/ in the truncated form of *Skelmersdale* represents a continuation of an ancient pattern in English syllable structure (cf. *Helmsley*, Yorkshire, locally pronounced /'emzli/, and the case of *Cholmondeley* mentioned below).

- (v) Use of a morphological variant of the name (2): abbreviation + affixation:

Doncaster ~ Donny, Skegness ~ Skeggy, Kidderminster ~ Kiddy, Bedminster ~ Bemmy, Darlington ~ Darlo

These exhibit a simple truncated form of the generally-used name plus a suffix, normally -y or -o, with occasional phonological adjustments of a kind analogous to that seen in *Skelmersdale*.

- (vi) Use of a phonological variant (1): especially a spelling-pronunciation replacing a local traditional pronunciation which is etymologically related to but phonemically distinct from it

There are cases where the spelt form represents the modern general pronunciation, which competes with the authentic local pronunciation, as in

Birmingham ~ /'brumədʒəm/ (also reduced to /brum/), *Brightlingsea* ~ /'brikl-si:/, *Pontefract* ~ /'pɒmfret/. There are sometimes interpretational complexities in such cases, as with *Southwell* ~ /'sʌðəl/ and *Shrewsbury* with stressed /əu/ ~ /u:/, to both of which we will return below.

Such alternants may become totally onymically separated, with specialization of the competing names to denote different, though adjacent, places, as with *Churchdown* and *Chosen (Hill)* in Gloucestershire and *Trottiscliffe* and *Trosley (Country Park)* in Kent. In both these instances, the second name in the pair is a phonological development of a form which has come to be represented in writing by the first, and the two have competed, with differing degrees of success, for the territory before being deflected from the main target. *Churchdown* is now always pronounced as the spelling suggests, whereas *Trottiscliffe* is still widely pronounced as the spelling of the alternant suggests, /'trəuzli/.

Sometimes one alternant becomes lexicalized. In the case of /'brumə-dʒəm/, the traditional pronunciation gave rise by metonymy to an adjective *brummagem* meaning ‘cheap and flashy’ [of goods] (compare *pinchbeck* and *tawdry*, both also derived from proper names: a detoponymic surname, and a saint’s name used in that of the great medieval fair at Ely). The word is now obsolete, but clearly became detached from its etymological source before disappearing; the name-form *Birmingham* has not suffered the same pejoration (connotational decline).

- (vii) Use of a phonological variant (2): especially a prosodic variant which is hidden by not being represented in the spelling

Following a general English pronunciation rule, Sussex names such as *Rottingdean* are stressed on the first syllable. However, there is a competing local variant with final stress in names with certain distinctive final elements, including *dean*, whose history, status and significance are explored fully by Coates (Coates 1980).

A somewhat separate matter is the antiquarian revival of ancient spellings of a name for narrow local purposes. For instance, the name *Ormersfield Farm* in Dogmersfield (Hampshire), is a modern interpretation of the Domesday spelling of the village-name, *Ormeresfelt*. This is a scribal mangling of the authentic form that eventually results in *Dogmersfield*. Strictly speaking the new-old form *Ormersfield* does not compete with the name of the village; they are not variants or alternative

names for the same place, but the new-old name is applied to a farm *within* Dogmersfield and evokes that name for those with sufficient historical knowledge.⁴

[4] ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION: USER-GROUPS

In most of the cases dealt with above, where there is a clearly unofficial form it can be characterized simply as the form used by local people with local people in a way which asserts and reinforces their shared identity and community values. But the unofficial form may operate in the named community alone, or over a wider region (e.g. the relevant county) or user-group, representing the possibility of different levels of, or different criteria for, self-identification. Compare the different user communities of the following names:

- *Brighthelmston* ~ *Brighton* (originally a 17th-century local truncation, adopted by the late-18th century smart set who visited the place seasonally; now universal)
- *Devonport* ~ *Guz* (not originally local at all; popularized by and among Royal Navy and Merchant Navy personnel, but not widely known by others)
- *Doncaster* ~ *Donny* (a hypocoristic apparently of local origin, adopted especially by railway enthusiasts)
- *Lawrence Weston* ~ *El Dub* (a complex re-spelt initialism-cum-truncation, hardly known, and certainly hardly used, outside the physical confines of the community itself and those of local communities with similar social profiles)

[5] ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION: LOCALITY AND HUMOUR

Some unofficial forms, but not all, are regarded as humorous – in much the same way as dialect has historically been, and continues to be, treated as a source of humour in England – and may be used “in inverted commas” by non-members of a local in-group who can thereby show local knowledge without identifying themselves wholeheartedly with the place in question.

[6] ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION: INSTABILITY OF ALTERNATION

Where there is instability of usage, in the cases of (vi) and (vii), the direction of change is almost always in favour of the spelling-pronunciation. Spelling-pronunciation operates in different ways symbolically and may acquire different cultural meanings; *Brightlingsea* (Essex) pronounced as the spelling suggests is now

[4] The revival of this name is likely to have been precipitated by the title of the character the Earl of Ormersfield in the novel *Dynevor Terrace* ([Yonge 1857](#)) by the prolific Hampshire author Charlotte M. Yonge, who was born at Otterbourne, a few miles from Dogmersfield.

general and official whilst the ancient /'briklsi:/ is merely local (if it is still in use at all). On the other hand, *Wymondham* (Norfolk), if pronounced as spelt, would be universally characterized as an error and a trap for the unwary, because the pronunciation for all people with knowledge of the place, in all circumstances, is the traditional /'windəm/.

The fluctuation of pronunciation in the cases of *Southwell* and *Shrewsbury* is a paradoxical problem.

- *Southwell (Nottinghamshire)*

Gover et al. ([Gover et al. 1940](#), 175) gives only the historically expected local pronunciation /'sʌðəl/; and this pronunciation is the one heard on national radio and television for the local racecourse, and even more widely for the place's cathedral. But inquiry on the spot reveals that local people now appear to call it /'sauθwel/, and refer to /'sʌðəl/ as the “BBC pronunciation”.

- *Shrewsbury (Shropshire)*

A pronunciation of the name with /əu/ (<ow>) in the first syllable is the historically expected one (from OE *Scrobbesbyrig*), and is therefore the one to be expected locally. Spellings with <ew> are found only from the late 14th century onwards. They are presumably to be compared with the spelling-alternation <ew> ~ <ow> found in lexical words like *sew* and *show*. Such spellings must have come to be interpretable as representing /u:/, as in *shrew*, but unambiguous spellings of the place-name indicating /u:/ appear only from the 1720s onwards. This appears to be a local development, and it is now the universal local pronunciation. /əu/ is regarded as “upper class” ([Gelling 1990](#), 270), and is the form until recently most often used by outsiders.

These two instances are paradoxical because spelling-pronunciations are, unusually, the local forms, whilst the ancient forms whose pronunciation departs from the spelling are regarded as “foreign” to the place in question or inauthentic. They show that a mechanical account of the cultural meaning of spelling-pronunciation is impossible.

Usage at both ends of the social scale may reveal conservatism. There is some suggestion that the older “expected” forms are preserved by the upper class, as in the stereotypical upper-class pronunciation of the surname *Cholmondeley* /'tʃʌmlɪ/ (derived from a Cheshire place-name) and the aristocratic title *Burlington* (from Bridlington, East Riding of Yorkshire); note also *Ravengingham* as /'rævɪŋəm/, a pronunciation “particularly associated with Ravengingham Hall”, i.e. the aristocratic house in this Norfolk village ([Miller 1971](#), s.n.). On the other hand, spelling-pronunciation is typically an innovation of the literate middle classes, and may

be resisted by locals, including local gentry, in favour of the historical form. This onomastic fact is paralleled by facts about accent, for example the phenomenon of /h/-dropping, reviled by the literate but stereotypically continued in large areas of England by the local members of the working class (Orton et al. 1978, maps Ph220-1) and until relatively recently in some words (e.g. *hotel, humour*) by certain members of the aristocracy or gentry (see e.g. Mugglestone 2006, 289).

[7] CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions to be drawn from this survey of English endonymic alternants are that such forms do not exist in an interpretational vacuum, and that they are culturally significant. Alternating forms may be in use by different user-groups, unsurprisingly, and may acquire social colouring in that way; and one alternant may often be a marker of local in-group identity permitting psychological distinctiveness (as in the social identity theory originally introduced by Tajfel & Turner (1979)). These meanings allow for their use with different stylistic import (formal vs. informal or familiar). It is noteworthy that the complexity of alternation-patterns in English place-names does not allow the automatic equation of written form or spelling pronunciation with *official* or *socially superior form*.

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PLACE NAMES IN MULTICULTURAL SOCIETIES

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ABSTRACT

It is not unthinkable that in a not too distant future, citizens of Oslo 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.

Historical change may lead to politically motivated changes in place names, although often slow and uneven, and major upheavals such as revolutions tend to entail a total renovation of the names of streets, parks and other urban fixtures. The names of towns and villages tend to stick more stubbornly.

This short essay looks at these three modes, drawing on examples from Tehran, Trinidad and Toronto, eventually relating them tentatively to the emergent multiethnic reality in Oslo and the future prospects for place names in the city.

[1] INTRODUCTION

While semantics has a long history in social anthropology and related disciplines (see e.g. [Parkin 1983](#)), and personal names have been studied by [Alford \(1988\)](#), [Geertz \(1973\)](#) and others, the semantics of place names has rarely been studied by anthropologists or other social scientists interested in identification. Perhaps this is because the issues of place names may superficially appear to be irrelevant to social processes. The significance attached by people to geographical names can often be put down simply to mental associations with no direct connection to the actual name. Most people are oblivious of, or indifferent to, the etymology or origin of a particular place name, giving it emotional or cognitive significance on the basis of personal knowledge or experiences. Few give much attention to the historical connection of *New York* to the north English city at the confluence of the Ouse and the Foss (or the fact that the great world city was, in an earlier stage of colonialism, called *New Amsterdam*); and London is far better known for its pubs and double-decker buses than its Latin origin as *Londinium* (incidentally, some scholars have unearthed an even older etymology linking it to a certain pre-Roman chieftain bearing the moniker *King Lud*).

In Norway, few natives of *Kristiansand* think seriously about implications of their hometown being named after King Christian IV (1577–1648); and few are even aware that the smaller town *Kristiansund* was named after another, less well

known Dano-Norwegian king, namely Christian VI (1699–1746). In the capital Oslo, however, the city's name, originally honouring Christian IV, was changed for political reasons from *Kristiania* in 1925: it became ideologically imperative for the country to have a capital city with a historical lineage pointing backwards, not towards the long period when Norway was a mere Danish province, but beyond to the Middle Ages, when Norway had been an independent kingdom of European significance ([Wetås 2000](#)).

Presumably, not a few inhabitants of Oslo (and of Norway) would have reflected critically on the change of name in the first years after its adoption, and the debate ending in the final decision to change the name of Kristiania, taking place both in the City Council and in the Parliament, had been long and passionate. Deliberately changing a historical place name is a dramatic act which is highly likely to lead to controversy and disagreement, disregarding the particular circumstances.

Changes in place names may reflect new political circumstances (Volgograd to Stalingrad and back; St. Petersburg to Leningrad and back, etc.), but can also be caused by changes in the population. When new place names are needed, as in recently built suburbs of modern cities, careful deliberation is often needed to capture the *genius loci* in ways presumed to be acceptable for the public in the years to come. At the Oslo university campus at Blindern, which was largely built after the Second World War, a treacherous, winding road connecting different parts of the campus was simply named *Problemveien* ('Problem road') after years of languishing in the no-man's land of bureaucratic register numbers (for years, it was merely called Road 1074 or some such thing). In 2005, as part of her campaign to be elected as Rector, Prof. Fanny Duckert unsuccessfully tried to rename the road *Løsningsveien* ('Solution road').

In new Oslo suburbs, dating from the 1950s onwards, many more or less imaginative streetnames have established themselves in the popular mind, ranging from *Ole Brumms vei* ('Winnie the Pooh road', located very near *Kristoffer Robins vei*, by the way) and *Kortbølgen*, *Mellombølgen* and *Langbølgen* ('The Short Wave', 'The Medium Wave' and 'The Long Wave' — this clump of streets was located near a large radio transmitter) to descriptive names denoting landscape features and street names solemnly commemorating great men (and a few women), urban planners among them, but also people like the UN's first general secretary Trygve Lie, whose *Trygve Lies plass* is appropriately the main square of Furuset, the area where Lie grew up in the beginning of the 20th century — then a semi-rural cluster of wooden villas just outside the city, now a bustling suburb connected to the city by metro — appropriate because, as it happens, the majority of Furuset's population has a minority background and can thus be depicted, with no acrobatic leap of the imagination, as a mini-United Nations.

Transitions are rarely as smooth and successful as this — nobody could have known, when Trygve Lie Square was named in the 1960s, that most of the people walking across it in the early 21st century would have a non-Norwegian background, yet the name seems perfectly appropriate and indeed, at a time when xenophobia and a culture of suspicion surrounding the new demography are rife, can work a reminder of the fact that all of Norwegian history has not been centred on ethnic nationalism; in fact, that cosmopolitanism has a fairly substantial lineage even in this remote corner.

Changing the names of streets or squares, or inventing new names for new locations, is never uncontroversial (see [Ainiala \(2000\)](#) for Finland, [Abramowicz & Dacewicz \(2009\)](#) for Poland). Place names give a *Heimatsgefühl*, a sense of belonging and attachment. Attributing names to physical entities is generally a task left to gods (indeed it seems to be one of their main duties), but today it has increasingly become the domain of city councils and municipal administrations. Seen against this backdrop, it becomes evident that the responsibility of naming represents a substantial challenge, and — one might add — this is more evident than perhaps ever before in our era of transience and complexity, when local inhabitants represent different cultural backgrounds, local history bifurcates and the cultural identities of the population cannot even be expected to remain stable in the years to come.

It may well be that future citizens of Oslo will have the opportunity to meet for appointments at Salimi Square, to shop for vegetables in Kharian Street, to take their picnics in Rubina Rana Park and to drive to Drammen on Mogadishu Road. (Salimi is the family name of two siblings originally from Lahore, Khalid and Fakhra, who have pioneered antiracism and cosmopolitan values in Norway since the late 1970s; Kharian is the area in Pakistani Punjab where most of Norway's more than 30,000 Pakistani immigrants originate; Rubina Rana, a Pakistani-Norwegian woman, was the first non-white Norwegian to chair the 17 May (Constitution Day) committee in Oslo.) However, resistance to such changes can be stubborn and vehement, as witnessed in the many unsuccessful initiatives over the years to have a street or small square in Oslo named after Knut Hamsun, one of the country's finest novelists but also a man widely seen as a traitor to the nation because of his open sympathies for the German occupying forces during the Second World War.

Historical change may eventually lead to change in place names, although this need not happen, and if it does, it is normally the work of a megalomaniac dictator or the grinding machinery of local politics, and major upheavals such as revolutions tend to entail a total renovation of the names of streets, parks and other urban fixtures. The names of towns and villages tend to stick more stubbornly.

On this background, it may be interesting to take a brief look at some of the processes which have actually led to changes in (and the devising of new) local

names, and the name situation in old multicultural societies, to see if it may be worthwhile to extrapolate from recent historical experiences to a possible future for an increasingly multiethnic Norwegian capital.

[2] TORONTO

Canada is known for practising one of the most inclusive multicultural policies in the world, in the sense that considerable effort is made to create a common national space that does not discriminate on the basis of ethnicity or religion. Along with Montreal and Vancouver, Toronto is the most multicultural city in one of the world's most overtly and self-consciously multicultural countries.

Street names in Toronto still have old names (many going back to the 18th and 19th century), and there have been few changes in spite of a problem arising from the extension of the city boundaries in 1996, leading to over a hundred duplicate street names. Yet, a certain tendency can be observed, as when a street was renamed *Hakim Street*, after the founder of Hakim Optics, in 2008. However, on the whole, Toronto streets remain 'very Anglo', as one commentator put it. The city authorities have a conservative policy on renaming, stating in no uncertain terms that 'The general policy is that the names of streets and lanes should not be changed.' However, in the list of criteria for the naming of streets as such, the fifth and final point states that a street name may be justified if it can lead 'to recognize communities which contribute to the ethno-racial diversity of Toronto'. This has already led to some debate in the city concerning possible solutions to the duplicate problem.

Regarding quarters and urban areas, the City Council has been considerably less conservative than with street names proper. In the 1980s, it decided that the names of important locations and urban regions should reflect the recent (and evolving) multiethnic situation in the city. One part of downtown Toronto was solemnly baptised *Little Italy*, complete with a small Italian flag adorning the placard. There is also *Gerrard India Bazaar*, *Greektown*, *Portugal Village*, *Korea Town* and, of course, *Chinatown*. In these quarters, the legitimate street names still appear, although sometimes bilingually, but are superimposed by a sign and a small symbol indicating the ethnic designation of the quarter.

In a city with considerable mobility both internally and externally, such policies are not introduced without a certain risk. Bureaucracies everywhere tend to be sluggish in implementing plans which in turn have been decided in painstaking and cumbersome ways by councillors, and by the time the new names were in place, the ethnic composition of the city had changed somewhat. When I visited Toronto in 1988, after having been impressed by the twelve-language municipal flier distributed to all households and announcing reduced rubbish collection during the summer break, I biked down to Little Italy only to discover that it ap-

peared to be a very West Indian neighbourhood. My fellow cyclists (Portuguese and Ukrainian, as it happens, but simultaneously a hundred per cent Canadian) explained that most of the Italians had moved up the social ladder and bought condominiums in a different part of the city. The Italian cafes and restaurants were still intact, though.

The case of Toronto reveals a willingness, among the city authorities, to tamper with the symbolic universe enabling the inhabitants to develop a sense of home; or, put differently, to adjust the map to make it fit the territory better. Yet, we should note that changes in street names appear to take much longer, and to be more difficult to achieve, than changes in the designation of urban quarters. In fact, no major Western city has so far, to my knowledge, changed the names of many streets, parks and squares following immigration. The likelihood that they will in the future is nonetheless considerable, given that local place names do change as society does, but slowly. More commonly, however, new place names appear with new places or following dramatic upheavals and political change.

[3] TEHRAN

The latter is what happened in Tehran following the Islamic revolution in 1979. Street names, to which considerable importance is always attached, can have strong political connotations. No German city has an *Adolf-Hitler-Strasse* today, while virtually all of them had one in 1940. Similarly, the number of streets named after Joseph Stalin in Russia declined sharply after 1991. In the republics of the former Yugoslavia, where the relationship to the socialist federation is generally less unequivocal than in the ex-Soviet Union, a number of streets and squares are still named after Josip Broz Tito, although many have been renamed; and it is probably no coincidence that these names are most common in Croatia (Tito was a Croat) and Bosnia-Hercegovina (the republic that suffered the most from the breakup of the country).

Street names can be contested. In Belfast, someone pointed out to me, ‘everywhere you go, you are reminded of British imperialism’. There is *Cromwell Avenue*, *Churchill House*, *Queen Elizabeth Bridge*, the *King’s Hall*, the *Royal Victoria hospital* and scores of other examples of localities reminding the inhabitants of Belfast of Northern Ireland being politically a part of the United Kingdom. Naturally, all other things being equal, these place names mean something very different to a Protestant than to a Catholic.

In Tehran before the revolution, streets and avenues were often named after international leaders such as Roosevelt and Churchill — in fact, a surprising number of Third World cities have an imposing *Roosevelt Avenue*, or, in a number of cases, had one until the name was changed to honour the current president. In the case of Tehran, many local place names would change in the years following

the revolution ([Feizabad & Abbasi 2009](#)). The largest square and busiest traffic hub in the city is now called *Imam Khomeini Square*, and a great number of other street names have also changed.

At the same time, popular usage does not always correspond to official naming, especially in societies where oral communication tends to take precedence over the written word. A fact sometimes mentioned by foreigners visiting Tehran is that locals still tend to use the pre-revolutionary names, and are in many cases oblivious of the new ones. In a number of cases, a third, informal name is the most common reference. *Khalid Islambouli Street*, which is a rather posh street in North Tehran, was renamed *Intifada Street* some years ago, but taxidrivers and locals know the street under the name *Vozara Street*, meaning ‘Ministers’ street’. This is explained by the fact that several government ministers used to live there a few decades ago.

Several interesting controversies over renamed streets have taken place around Islamic Iran (although they have rarely been enacted publicly in the country). The aforementioned Khaled Islambouli was in fact the assassin of Egypt’s secular and Western-oriented president Anwar Sadat, and naming the street after him clearly reflected the bad diplomatic relations between Egypt and post-revolutionary Iran. The official renaming of the street, after twenty-five years of honouring Sadat’s murderer, in order to honour Palestinian martyrs instead, must be understood in the wider context of diplomatic thaw.

A deeper and more enduring conflict was expressed through the renaming of *Churchill Street* to *Bobby Sands Street*; all the two men had in common, it could be argued, was living in the same century, having the same gender and hailing from the same part of the world. Robert ‘Bobby’ Sands (1954–81) was an IRA militant who had devoted his life to fighting the British state and the local Unionists, seeing the former as an occupying force and the latter as traitors. Imprisoned in 1977, Sands died at the age of 26 in a Belfast prison during a hunger strike. On the official blue and white street sign denoting ‘Bobby Sands Street’, the words ‘militant Irish guerilla’ appear in English underneath the name of the street. As if this weren’t enough of a provocation to the main accomplice of the Great Satan, the city authorities made certain to locate Bobby Sands Street so that the British Embassy would be located there, hoping no doubt for an official letterhead giving Bobby Sands Street as the address of the Embassy. However, following the local practice of maintaining usage of obsolete street names, the Queen’s representatives erroneously state their street address as *Ferdowsi Avenue* (under which name the street is popularly known anyway).

If the Iranian example is anything to go by, changed street names may just as well be used to honour enemies of one’s enemies as one’s famed sons and daughters. This practice may have been followed in Albania and possibly the Soviet Union during the Cold War, but I have been unable to find good examples. Besides,

to my knowledge, no country has yet had the nerve to announce the inauguration of *Osama bin Laden Street*.

[4] TRINIDAD

In Toronto, the composition of the population has changed rapidly (from largely Anglo-White to nearly 50% immigrants from all over the world); in Iran, the revolution heralded a new beginning and a need to leave the recent past as far behind as possible — in both cases, names of localities have come under scrutiny and have in some cases been changed. My third example, or vignette, is different. The Caribbean island-state of Trinidad and Tobago has a multilayered history, but scarcely a homogeneous, simple past when society was ‘authentic’ and devoid of modern decadence and complexity. Well, actually, there is a small group of Trinidadians claiming Amerindian descent, but neither do others take them very seriously, nor do they encourage everybody else to ‘go home’. The history of Trinidad (Tobago has a different history and must be left out of this discussion) can be divided into five distinct periods. Before Columbus, who discovered the island for the Spanish Crown on his third journey in 1498, a few patches of the island were settled by indigenous Amerindians. The Spanish colonial period lasted three centuries, followed by British colonisation from 1797 and independence (with Tobago) since 1962. Towards the end of the admittedly half-hearted period of Spanish colonisation, Trinidad was settled by numerous French planters (whose descendants are still called ‘French creoles’), and between 1847 and 1917, tens of thousands of Indians arrived to work in the cane fields, followed by traders of various origins. The contemporary population of Trinidad, briefly, reveals a great diversity of origins — African, Indian, European, Chinese and Lebanese.

Place names in Trinidad, accordingly, can be Spanish, French, Hindi, English or Carib. Their pronunciation is usually adapted to Trinidadian Creole (the English-lexicon spoken vernacular), so that, for example, the urban agglomeration of San Juan between Port-of-Spain (English) and Arima (Carib) is pronounced, roughly, *Sangua*.

It might be expected that local place names in Trinidad would somehow reflect the island’s turbulent history and patterns of settlement. In that case, dozens of villages in the central part of the island would have had Hindi names, which is not the case; as a matter of fact, Indian place names are notoriously underrepresented, given that a full forty per cent of the Trinidadian population has an Indian origin. The author V.S. Naipaul grew up in what was then a largely Hindi country town near the western coast between Port-of-Spain and San Fernando, the town’s name being *Chaguanas* (which may sound vaguely Spanish or Hindi, but is in fact Carib.)

In fact, Trinidadian place names only reflect historical facts to a very limited degree. Carib names are scattered throughout the island, and there are French

names in areas where few Frenchmen ever settled. For example, almost inexplicably, there is a cluster of villages and small towns in the southwest with names like *La Brea*, *Point Fortin*, *Cap-de-Ville* and so on, although the area was never settled by many French planters. Similarly, in the north-east, villages exclusively inhabited by Afro-Trinidadians are called *Matelot*, *Grande Rivière* and *Sans Souci* (which are all generic names for French colonial places). Names of diverse origins are juxtaposed in seemingly random ways. It is only a short drive from *Rio Claro* to *Plaisance*, and another short stretch down to *Guayaguayare*. Two of the up-market suburbs in Port-of-Spain are called *Diego Martin* and *Petit Valley*, whereas *Chaguramas* is a bit further west. *Fullarton* is very near *Buenos Ayres*, and a bit further up the road one passes both *Siparia* and *Penal*, villages whose etymology was never clarified to me, despite numerous attempts. A crossroads in south-central Trinidad is named, simply, *Busy Corner*. Just to give a sense of the layers of history characterising Trinidad. In Tobago, by contrast, where the population is almost exclusively Afro-Caribbean, most place names are English.

[5] OSLO IN THE NEAR FUTURE

With these three examples in mind, one may begin to consider future scenarios for European cities, such as Oslo, where the composition of the population is changing fast and dramatically. Past experiences of naming and renaming may also give a cue as to what the future may bring. In Trinidad, naming has taken place slowly as a result of changes in colonial regimes and the actual peopling of the island, which has taken place at an uneven pace essentially from the mid-18th century to the early 20th century. Thus, layers of history are revealed through the choice of names. In Toronto, changes in place names in response to changed demographics has begun to include new Canadians into the national identity, while the Iranian situation reveals a sense of self-identity largely dependent on the maintenance of an external enemy image. Toronto is self-consciously multicultural; Tehran is marked by a revolutionary rupture with the past; and Trinidad has a multilayered history which has slowly unfolded and left its traces in the names of localities and streets.

At the time of writing, about a quarter of Oslo's c. 600,000 inhabitants have a non-Norwegian origin (meaning that they are first- or second-generation migrants), and the proportion is bound to rise. Until now, there is scarcely a single visible onomastic indication of this change, although the public space has changed in a few ways through the building of a beautiful mosque in central-eastern Oslo, the emergence of scores of shops which in no uncertain way betray the cultural identities of their owners and the selection of goods. Since the Islamic revolution still seems to be a few years off, notwithstanding alarmist propaganda from the extreme right, the changes are likely to take some years, given what we know about the logic of street onomastics in this part of the world. Yet in 2006, the city's

inhabitants got a preview of things to come through the re-naming of a modest street at Grønland in Oslo's immigrant-dense East End after the aforementioned, late Rubina Rana, the first non-white chair of the city's prestigious Constitution Day Committee.

The cumbersome, slow and bureaucratic process involved in changing place names in non-revolutionary contexts suggests that the naming of streets, squares and parks is not an innocent activity but one which simultaneously carries a deep cultural resonance and is a statement about official identity politics. To what extent street names carry strong connotations of significance for people's identity, is an empirical question. There is good reason to suppose that established street names are taken for granted, whereas new ones may be the subject of controversy. In Mauritius, I once lodged with an elderly lady and her son in *Rue Swami Sivekananda*, but Madame, a French-speaking white woman, insisted on retaining the colonial name, *Rue Evenor Mamet*, after a Franco-Mauritian poet, although the new name had de facto been established two decades earlier. There may be a parallel between this modest act of resistance and the confusing everyday mixing of old and new street names in Tehran. In this short analysis, I have tried to show that proper research on place names and, in particular, changes in place names, can indeed be a valuable and not least original contribution to the literature on belonging and identification, adding a new dimension to an otherwise crowded area.

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NAMING ME, NAMING YOU. PERSONAL NAMES, ONLINE SIGNATURES AND CULTURAL MEANING

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ABSTRACT

Every day we talk and speak and chat to people. We write and listen to each other, refer to each other, describe to each other what we and others have done and said. Doing this, we sometimes use our given names, sometimes we go by our nicknames, which often indicate or clarify who we are or are made up by ourselves to draw other people's attention. Nicknames can be official or informal, known by many or only by a few, real monikers or made up pseudonyms or signatures. Where ever there are people there are names, since names are and have always been part of human life. Sociologist Richard D. Alford states that ethnographic research has not found a single society whose members do not have names (Alford 1988, 1). Names are cultural universals, something all humans have in common, no matter where or when they live.

This article focuses on personal names and naming from a cultural ethnographic perspective. It begins with reflections on the link between name and self, continues with a discussion of how names are used to culturally structure our surroundings and interpret the world, and concludes 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 participants recognise and identify each other.

[1] MY NAME AND YOURS

While working on a project on personal names Hagström (2006), one question of interest was how the informants viewed their own names and what the name meant to them. A person's own name is important because it distinguishes her as a unique person and identifies her as herself. One informant explained his thoughts about names and personal identity in the following way: "The name really doesn't have anything to do with identity but as it is a word that means oneself it gets an enormous importance".

This is something good coaches and pedagogues understand and make use of. Several sports clubs and organisations state in their instructions for coaches

and leaders the importance of addressing players and team members by names. A Swedish basketball club writes under the heading “Leadership Policy” that coaches should “Address the players with their first names at least once every practice. It is important that they feel included.” (Ängelholm basketball’s website, ([Ängelholm 2009](#)), my translation), while a jujutsu club encourages their instructors to play name games: “Name games are games where you learn each other’s names, and are particularly important at the beginning of the semester and in new groups. When everyone has a name to their face s/he also has an evident spot in the group”. (Älvsjö jujutsu club website, ([Älvsjö 2009](#)), my translation).

The same approach is used in class rooms and schools, but not always as a means to acknowledge a child or youth in a positive way. In her dissertation on teachers’ work and knowledge creation, Ann-Sofie Wedin points out how several of the teachers interviewed say they benefit from knowing the names not only of their own but also other teachers’ students: “It’s something that makes students feel comfortable and important when they are in conflict with each other in the corridor. If you can address them by their name you can do so with a lot more authority than when you say “you there”, which is something they had had to do every now and then and experienced as a much less successful approach” ([Wedin 2007](#), 135), (my translation). Being addressed by your name means that you are seen and recognised; you are not just another person in the crowd. The coach (or teacher or instructor) sees what you do and it is your performance that is approved. This makes a difference when it comes to building up self-esteem and confidence.

Naturally, the opposite is equally true. To have your own name questioned is to be questioned as a person. Informants with immigrant background have often experienced this. One woman, who as a child bore her father’s African family name, said teachers almost always mispronounced it. It was not a big issue, but she felt the comments that often followed were said in a derogatory manner and made her upset: “or however it is to be pronounced”. They felt abusive and insulting. Another informant used to sing in the same choir as a girl with a French name. The choir master could never learn to pronounce it correctly and used different versions at every rehearsal. The girl found it very disturbing, feeling she caused problems and was embarrassed by this. The informant says she has talked about this with her friend now as they are adults and “...how stupid it was that it was she who would feel ashamed! It was *he* who should have felt ashamed because he couldn’t pronounce her name! And it wasn’t she who was a problem or caused trouble, *he* was the trouble. But she actually had to feel ashamed because she had this strange name”.

Other persons’ names are also important. They function as a means for us to form an opinion about who the person, whose name we see or hear, “is”. Erving Goffman describes how people, when they stand in front of a person whom

they do not know, “can glean clues from his conduct and appearance which allow them to apply their previous experiences with individuals roughly similar to the one before them” and “apply untested stereotypes to him” ([Goffman 1969](#), 13). This is applicable also to their reactions to personal names. A Swede who learns that a person’s name is Mohammed will sort him into categories such as “man”, “Muslim” and “immigrant”. A Tuva will be sorted into the categories “female”, “young” and “Swedish”.

Our images of who Mohammed is and who Tuva is, based on their names, may be true. But they can also turn out to be erroneous. To find that the new neighbour called Berit, which is a very unusual name for Swedish girls but common among women in their 60’s, is only 5 years old may be amusing. Or, as a teacher, to find that the Japanese student in your class named Akira is not a woman as you reckoned, based on the fact that almost every name ending with an “a” in Swedish is female, probably does not matter. But this does not mean that the categorisations we make, consciously or unconsciously, are unproblematic.

[2] CATEGORISATION AND SYSTEMATISATION

A statement frequently made by informants is: it does not matter what you are called, it is what you do and say that counts. Most people would probably agree that this is how it should be. Whether you are called Jutta or Joline, Pierre or Pentti you should not be judged, treated or measured differently. But that is *not* how it is. Based on our preconceived notions about other people’s names we draw conclusions about their gender, age, ethnicity, nationality, social positions, and maybe even religious beliefs. The “name factor” influences our behaviour and attitude towards them as well as our expectations of their attitude towards us. From this follows that it *does* matter what you are called.

To categorise animals, people, plants, objects and everything else that we encounter helps us comprehend and understand the world. Social anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss states that names are essential in this process ([Lévi-Strauss 1996 \[1962\]](#)). With the help of names we create order and we structure our conception of the world. Through naming we make the world understandable. We classify and arrange our environment by separating it into named categories and filling them with named components. For example, a category of activities called “sports” is separated into sub-categories like “team sports” and “individual sports” and although not all “team sports” and all “individual sports” are the same, these categories can still be distinguished from one another and a certain order achieved. Within the team-sports category, sub-divisions exist, for example, football, handball and so on. In our language, there are complex systems of main and subcategories; all of them are named and thus distinguishable from each other.

The process of systematisation and categorisation does not only help us structure our lives and make the world comprehensible; it also regulates our thinking and restricts our perspectives. It thus renders other possible systems of categorisation invisible or even unimaginable: “Although categorization may normally be a useful tool for processing the social world, it can sometimes result in unfair or incorrect inferences” write psychologists Jennifer T. Kubota and Tiffany A. Ito ([Kubota & Ito 2009](#), 335). For example, is it possible to un-think gender, to envision an everyday life where the categorisation of people into men/women does not exist? Labelling children as boys or girls rather than children is often done in a routine-like way, and their behaviour and manners are understood and interpreted in terms of gender; a boy is expected to behave – or not behave – in a certain way because he is a boy. As Kubota and Ito points out there is a link between categorisation, stereotyping and prejudice (*ibid*). When gender categorisation is applied by a teacher or other pedagogue in a school or pre-school, thus resulting in the reinforcement of stereotypes, he or she acts in direct contravention to what is stated in the *Lpo 94*, the curricula and the government’s ordinance for the Compulsory School System, the Pre-School Class and the Leisure-time Centre: “Democracy forms the basis of the national school system [...] The inviolability of human life, individual freedom and integrity, the equal value of all people, equality between women and men and solidarity with the weak and vulnerable are all values that the school should represent and impart” ([Lpo94 2006](#), 3).

Since 2006, all schools and pre-schools must set up an equality plan with a policy on how to handle issues concerning gender, diversity, discrimination etc. One way to counteract the negative effects of gender stereotyping is making oneself aware of how to address the children: “When addressing someone the staff uses the children’s names and avoid gendering animals or things” one pre-school state in its annual quality report (*Kvalitetsredovisning läsåret 2007/2008*, Svartöstaden förskola, ([Kvalitetsredovisning 2008](#)), my translation). Another school writes under the heading “Equality” in their work plan that they “address the child by its name, not by, for example, ‘the boy or the girl’” (*Arbetsplan för Gläntans förskola 2008*, ([Arbetsplan 2008](#)), my translation). The fact that these pre-schools have found it important to formulate their naming policy in writing demonstrates how we seldom reflect upon the fact that we constantly categorise our environment; we take the way we address people, things and animals for granted.

We also favour certain ways of classifying and systematising the world before others; our own schemes and structures do not only seem normal but also natural. If the categories are questioned, it is often difficult to explain exactly what makes them so natural: they just *are*. A Norwegian or German probably does not reflect very often on the fact that people in Norway and Germany have surnames. In the same way, a Chinese does not think about the fact that s/he places his or her family name first. To have a surname, or to place the family name first, comes

naturally. Not until we come across other naming practises do we recognise our own systems of categorisation as just that, a system firmly in place.

Different people have different tastes in names, often based on personal experiences: we tend to like the names of people we like, while we dislike names associated with people we do not like. But the personal aspect is only one factor; our conceptions of names are primarily based on cultural knowledge. There are vast differences as to what is considered a possible and suitable name. While Swedish and Dutch names are, more or less, specific words used only for identifying a person, Chinese names are also common words. Jian Guo is a name, but it also means “establish” and “country”.¹ The context determines if the expression is referring to a person, a place or a word. This means that it is sometimes possible to deduce the age of a person through his or her name. The meaning of Jian Guo reveals it is a name given around the time of the establishment of the People’s Republic of China (see also [Lu & Millward 1989](#)).

As we constantly see and hear names of people around us, we learn to connect them with gender, age, class, and so on. But this knowledge, our “sense” of a particular name, may not be at all relevant in another cultural context. For example, Magnus was one of the most popular names among boys born in Denmark in 2008 (Danmarks Statistik’s website, ([DST 2009](#))). In Sweden, however, the name was not given to a single newborn boy that year (Statistiska Centralbyrån’s website, ([SCB 2009](#))). From a Swedish perspective Magnus is a name that belongs to a different generation; the father of the newborn boy is more likely to bear that name, or even his grandfather.² Thus, despite the fact that these two countries have a lot of things in common, among them a relatively similar naming custom, the cultural knowledge and experience amassed in one of them is not necessarily translatable to the other.

Names help us navigate in social and cultural spheres. Names are not neutral. We use names to identify ourselves and others, to make the world understandable and to create order.

[3] VIRTUAL NAMES

But how, then, do names and categorisation work in a setting where the name is not only one of several factors distinguishing a person from other, but sometimes the *only* factor? This is often the case in various virtual milieus and on-line communities. Questions such as what kind of names are used, why, and how they are perceived, seem all the more relevant as more and more people spend more and more time in virtual worlds, such as *Second Life*, and different massively multi-user online role-playing games, MMORPG’s, such as *World of Warcraft*. People also

[1] Thanks to Hanzhi Jiang for providing this example.

[2] Since 1998 Magnus has not been on the top 100 list of names of newborn boys in Sweden. That year it ranked number 89. At the same year it ranked number 16 Denmark and in 2005 it rose to number 2.

write and read blogs, they join virtual communities, send e-mails, do business on-line, share photographs and films, and so on. Whatever they do and for whatever reason, they do it under a specific name.³ These names may be their own real names, but are often particular names coined for a particular setting. On-line and in virtual worlds, names are not only as necessary and essential as they are off-line and in the so-called real world. They are even more important and indispensable. I will here present some brief examples from two different projects on how names are being used and perceived on-line. The first is a completed project, which resulted in the article “Playing with Names. Gaming and Naming in World of Warcraft” ([Hagström 2008](#)). The other is an on-going project called *Behind the Names. Experiences and Consequences of Names used in Virtual Settings*.

Creating a character, an avatar, in *World of Warcraft*, the world’s biggest MMORPG with over 11,5 million users, includes settling on a name for it ([Blizzard 2008](#)). The game producer, Blizzard Entertainment, has issued a name policy, and as long as the individual player does not violate it she is free to choose whatever name she wants. The possibilities to create a visibly unique avatar are not endless and thus a player may now and then find her own character facing another character, run by another player, looking very much the same. The name, on the other hand, *has* to be unique as there cannot be two avatars with the same name on the same server.⁴ This means it is the name, not the appearance, which distinguishes characters from each other. It is through their names players identify each other ([Hagström 2008](#)).

Finding people willing to share the narratives behind the names of their avatars turned out to be easy. Apparently there were lots of players just waiting to get a chance to tell their stories! A call for informants was placed on my university webpage, inviting who ever wanted to send me the history behind the name, and I soon received answers. The first was followed by another, then another and another. They came from all over the world and from people of all ages. Even though the article those stories were solicited for is long since published, and I have a new official webpage which says nothing about the project, I still receive stories. The old page is still out there somewhere and now and then it is found by someone who has a story to share. For example, in August 2009, a 22-year-old woman from the Netherlands sent me an e-mail explaining how she used to include variations of Tigris in the names of her characters. The name “I simply found one day years ago in geography class when we talked about the rivers Eufraat [the Euphrates] and Tigris”. In January the year before, another

[3] In the following discussion I make no difference between nicknames, names of avatars, pseudonyms or signatures but refer to all of them as “names”. All quotes are verbatim.

[4] It should be noted there are other areas where names also need to be exclusively individual. One is the world of harness racing. The naming of a trotting horse has to follow certain rules and every horse has to have a unique name. ([Berglund 2006](#), 159), personal communication with Rolf Hedquist (2010-07-01)

player, introducing herself as a 37-year-old mother, wrote about how she at first had tried to use a name generator but soon realised “that NONE of the names fit me, my toon, what I felt I wanted to be represented by in the game” and decided to come up with one by herself.⁵

Other stories reached me in the form of responses to the same call for informants posted on the blog *jill/txt* ([jill/txt 2006](#)). This is run by one of the editors of the book where the first article eventually was published. As of April 2010, there were 251 responses to this thread, the last one posted the same month. The posts consist mainly of replies that contain explanations of various names and the history behind them, and replies that plainly list names, occasionally leaving short comments. There are also replies that use the thread not for telling about a name but for finding one, like *Bloodreaperr* who in July 2007 wrote: “Hey im havin trouble with gettin a good name for an orc warrior i wanna make, any suggestions?” In November 2008, *Ivan* presents a list of 16 names with explanations. He writes that he sometimes “sit for long periods of time just to come up with a new name. It’s a time consuming process sometimes” but “[I hope] ive enfluenced your toon naming in a positive way”.

From reading the names and the explanations in e-mails and blog posts, it can be concluded that people are tremendously creative and imaginative. Inspiration comes from almost all sources imaginable: board games, Greek dramas, J. R. R. Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*, Nobel laureates, gods and goddesses from ancient Roman, Celtic, Greek, Norse and Egyptian religions, medicine, sports, video games, the Bible, Manga literature, films, childhood memories, comics, other languages than English, stars, places bearing a personal meaning, family pets, and so on ([Hagström 2008](#)). Whichever name that finally is chosen for the avatar, it is through this name the player is recognised by other players. Just like in the world outside of the game, one and the same name can be perceived differently by different players. Several informants explain how some types of names are perceived in a negative way and even can affect game play. Nonsense names, such as *Hgrwhsjx*, or names taken from real life objects, such as *Lampshade*, are considered stupid and ruining the “feeling” of the game. The same goes for names that are too obviously influenced by somebody else’s imagination, like names reminding very much of the ones invented by Tolkien. Players using these kinds of names are probably, they say, not people who view the game in the same way as they do. As a consequence, they sometimes avoid to group, chat or interact with these players.

Names function the same way in virtual settings like forums and communities. Unlike in the off-line world, where names are one of several factors through which we recognise and differentiate people, here it is often the only distinguish-

[5] E-mails received 2009-08-08 and 2008-01-19.

ing factor. It is of course possible to learn to recognise a person one chats with frequently through her personal style of writing, like vocabulary, repeated grammatical errors, expressions and so on. But, in general, a person, who logs into a web community and finds 58 new posts written by other members, has no other means to know who has written which post than going by the names.

Some names can look very similar: there can be one *4JackM* and one *M4Jack* writing in the same forum. This means spelling is crucial. In “real” life, it may not make a big difference if we forget an H in *Elizabeth*. In virtual life, it can be of extreme importance: one letter forgotten in the recipient’s name and the e-mail bounces back – or goes to the wrong person!

The names used in on-line computer games, virtual worlds, and web communities are often very different to the ones used in the “real” world. To meet someone called *Wlmth52* or *Hulahoop* online is not uncommon. But does it not matter, then, what name you choose for yourself on-line? Is *Honeybaby* or *MumboJumbo* as functional and sensible as *Sam Williams* or *Lisa*? How does it influence your job-seeking process, when you submit your application from an e-mail address like *Party_Pete@hotmail.com*? How do we form an opinion of somebody, when all we have to base our interpretations on is their name?

[4] JIMMY91 AND BARCA_10

Questions like these were in focus when I, one afternoon, met with a group of four children, two girls and two boys aged 10-11, for an interview about names on the internet. The children, who had met me before, were all in the same class and thus knew each other when they sat down at my kitchen table, a little nervous but mostly excited about being interviewed. We had cookies and juice and soon they forgot the recording device and plunged into a discussion on names, games and the internet. One of the girls and one of the boys played *World of Warcraft*, the two girls played *Go Supermodel* and all of them chatted regularly with friends on MSM. It also turned out that currently all the children in the class where involved in the browser game *Travian* where they ran a village together, fought wars and formed alliances with neighbours. All players had to choose a nickname and they explained to me which classmate had which name. One of the girls present explained her choice of name, *Tennisbollen* [The Tennis ball], with her being interested in ball sports and thus often choosing that type of name: in another online environment she used the name *Basketbollen* [The Basketball].

Before meeting the children, I had prepared a paper with 9 groups, each consisting of 10 names. These I had collected from various discussion forums and communities on the internet. I presented them to the children together with another paper where I had listed the names of the communities and asked them to place each group of names under the correct heading. While my main objective was to learn how the children reasoned around and discussed the names, and their

motivation for placing them in one group or another, they found the exercise an exciting challenge. When I afterwards told them they had found the right heading for each group they cheered and shouted “full score!” obviously very pleased with themselves!

The names used by the members posting in the various forums consisted of real-world names in various combinations, such as *Albin*, *YlvaA* and *Jimmy91*, and made up names of all kinds, such as *zerounozero*, *Rosenmannen* [The Rose Man] and *Regndroppe* [Raindrop]. They were collected from threads concerning a specific topic within each web community or discussions group, which in turn were focused on a broader subject: film, poker, tango, family, EPA-tractors⁶, gardening, video games, football and Harry Potter.

In a study of how Chinese internet users, who frequent the bulletin board *Qiangguo Luntan* (QGLT), construct themselves as politically active, Robert G. Tian and Yan Wu discuss the participants’ choices of names. Here, they say, pennames play an important part as they are used for expressing and underlining opinions. Examples are “Zhonghua shi wo qin’ai de jia (China is my beloved motherland)”, “Ti xiagang shiye zhigong shuoju gongdaohua (speaking out for the unemployed workers)” and “Minzhu qingchu fubai (democracy eradicates corruption)” (Tian & Wu 2007, 244). A tentative hypothesis for the project *Behind the Names* is that participants and members of online discussion groups often choose a name related to the overall theme of the group. By doing so they show other participants that they are familiar with the topic, aware of potentially shared knowledge (which can be very specific and exact) and eager to contribute to strengthening the group as a cultural community.

The children’s’ discussions about where to place which name supported my idea that this feature is apparent even for an outsider who does not necessarily possess all the previously shared knowledge. That *Volvo740turbo* and *chevy64* were names used by people posting in the community focusing on cars was not very difficult to guess, neither was deducing that *Barca_10* belonged to the football community and *Spelpojken* [The Gameboy] to the one about games. Other names were more difficult to place; in the tango community in fact none of the names were related to dance.

The discussion among the children and the arguments they presented to each other showed that a single name was often felt to fit under more than one heading. It was in relation to other names in the same group that it became characteristic or typical. Thus *Smaragd* [Emerald] could be placed in any of the categories, but together with names such as *Hedwig* and *mona.riddle* it had to be about Harry Potter as all three together did not fit any of the other groups. In some communities the topic-specific names were more common than in others. In the car commu-

[6] An EPA-tractor is type of customized car – often a rebuilt Volvo.
See <http://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/EPA-traktor>

nity more than half of the names were associated with cars while the children found only one such name in the garden community. Not surprisingly, the discussion also showed that the more familiar you are with a topic, the easier it is to recognise and connect a sometimes obscure name with that topic. Thus the children, who had visited enough websites and forums concerning films, games and the Harry Potter universe to be familiar with the prevalent naming customs, easily identified several names as belonging to such communities even though they sometimes were rather obscure and far-fetched. Similarly, there were names that they did not connect to a certain topic but which someone more familiar with it would have identified at once.

The use of names in virtual settings, such as online communities and games, has previously not been the focus of much scholarly interest. It is rather surprising as the naming, of yourself or of your avatar, usually is a necessary step to go through before participating in any such activities. Without a name you cannot play, chat or post. Similarly, other players' and participants' names are essential as it is through their names we recognise and identify them. Though there are some studies addressing these issues, such as Haya Bechar-Israeli's study on nicknames and identity on IRC (internet relay chat) ([Bechar-Israeli 1995](#)), and Heisler & Crabbill's study of how different e-mail names are perceived ([Heisler & Crabbill 2006](#)), there is still a lack of knowledge. As sociologist Katja M. Guenther writes in an article on whether to use real names or pseudonyms in fieldwork and research, and the effects and result these choices have, the issue of naming is essential: "The act of naming is an act of power. Parents naming children, conquerors naming new lands, and organisations naming themselves all involve the assertion of authority and control" ([Guenther 2009](#), 412). See also [Alderman \(2009\)](#). Studying names found in virtual environments, and exploring the motives behind the users' choices, the methods they apply for deciding upon them and how they interpret and conceive others' names and their choices, not only gives us information on naming customs and habits. It also helps us understand how people – as users, players and participants – see themselves and their place and position in relation to others.

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PLACE NAMES AND IDENTITIES

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses various approaches to the topic “place names and identities”, addressing the meaning of place names, their role as links to the past as well as their identity-building capacity. The author argues that there is an intimate relationship between place and place name, and he discusses how place names may reflect or give rise to feelings of individual and collective identity attached to the places in question. Three particular personal experiences of the identity role of place names are given, two at the beginning of the paper and one in the conclusion.

[1] INTRODUCTION

Some time ago when travelling by train from Oslo to Bergen I happened to sit next to a charming elderly lady. As often happens during a long journey we started a conversation, and after having agreed upon the pleasure of a relaxing railway trip through a varied landscape we started to talk about names. Born and still living in Bergen, my travel companion expressed her strong ties to *Frammarsvik*¹, a farm and village in Førde in Western Norway. It turned out that her father was born there and had kept the farm name as surname, which is a very common practice in Norway. *Frammarsvik* had also been her surname before she married. When asked about her relationship to the village of *Frammarsvik* she said that she used to spend the holidays with her parents in this place. The name of *Frammarsvik* identified a very particular place to her, at the same time as the name itself was a part of her identity. To her, *Frammarsvik* represented the dearest place in the world, a name which opened up a world of memories and experiences, of people, of joy as well as sorrow. These feelings were becoming more distinct as she grew older, she admitted. Obviously this incident is not unique when it comes to the identifying and identity function of a name. Recently I met a married couple of about 50 years, and when we touched upon the topic “roots” and our joint West Norwegian background, the woman exclaimed: “We have a hut in Reinsnos and have spent many of our holidays there for 25 years. The place is part of our identity and means a lot to us.” When I asked what first came into her mind when

[1] The first element of *Frammarsvik* is possibly a male name Old Norse *Framarr*, whereas the last element is *vik* ‘bay, inlet’ (Rygh 1919, 334); for a detailed map presentation search in <http://www.norgeskart.no/adaptive2/default.aspx?gui=1&lang=2>.

thinking of the hut, the place or the name, she said “both, simultaneously, they are interrelated”. The identity role of a place name may even be demonstrated by a slogan, like the one I noticed some years ago on the T-shirt of a young woman from Botswana: “Serowe is home”.

In this article I will discuss some aspects relating to the double notion of “place names and identities”. Although name research is considered primarily a linguistic discipline, it is associated with a number of other research fields, like cognitive linguistics, anthropology and history, to mention a few more. The topic place names and identities also calls for a number of approaches, but the limited space here does not allow me to go into this in depth. However, as we will see, several of the other contributors to this volume have treated the topic from various angles. Some of the key terms to be dealt with from my point of view are *meaning, historical and social value, identity, place name, space and place, name attachment and place attachment*.

Anthropologists in particular have investigated the role of place names as references to and symbols of acts and experiences both in tribal and Western contexts. As stated above, place names are social signals of belonging to a group, and the more names that are shared, the stronger the bonds are within the group. In recent years there has been an increasing interest among onomasticians to deal with the identity aspect of place names, partly inspired by the achievements of anthropologists and geographers.

Most people would agree that it is fundamental for the wellbeing of individuals to be familiar with places and place names in their surroundings in the same way as it means a lot to have close relationships to one's family and neighbours. To know the places and the names of the places in one's neighbourhood is part of the spirit of community. The names and their stories “create the spirit of the place, its ‘genius loci’” ([Viljamaa-Laakso 1998](#), 364). In their capacity as synchronic and diachronic expressions attached to smaller or bigger places, place names are a vital part of everyday language as well as of the individual and collective memory and collective identity ([Eskeland 2001](#)). The Finnish name scholar and poet Lars Huldén puts it like this (my translation):

Name and place belong together, regardless of how the name is formed etymologically. The name is a key to memories and experiences. To be familiar with the same name is to know a little about each other. Names are social signals of solidarity. The more names one shares with others, the stronger the solidarity with them is² ([Huldén 1994](#), 33).

[2] “Namn och plats hör ihop, oberoende av hur namnen etymologiskt sett är bildade. Namnet är en nyckel till minnen och uppleva intryck. Att känna samma namn är detsamma som att veta lite om varandra. Namnen är en social signal för samhörighet. Ju fler namn man delar med någon, dess större är samhörigheten.”



FIGURE 1: Map of southern Norway. The names *Frammarsvik*, *Reinsnos* and *Ullensvang* which are referred to in the text are marked on the map.

It is also a trait of human mentality that place names should be consistent and permanent. When it is proposed to substitute a place name with another name, or even only to change its spelling, people may react with discontent and sometimes anger. And when a street, a park or another public area is to be named, intense discussions may arise. In fact, settlement planners are to an increasing extent preoccupied with the identity role of place names. Thus it is mentioned in the plans for a park area in Copenhagen some years ago that “Nørrebropark lends name and identity to the whole quarter.”³ (Holmgren 2005) Domain names on the Internet are attributed much attention in terms of identity too, with firms for instance valuing the maintenance of a consistent domain name identity instead of perhaps introducing a more “fancy” name (Zook 2000).

Place names play an important role on a regional and national level too, and name changes may create strong feelings among large groups of people, especially in multi-ethnic areas. For example, during the 20th century a number of ideologically motivated name conflicts arose as a consequence of warfare and occupation (Lietz (2009), see also Radić in this volume). In Arseny Saparov’s words, place names are “some of the most durable of national symbols ... [They] are important features of national and territorial identity” (Saparov 2003, 179). Duncan Light (Light 2004) posits that names which commemorate important events or personalities from a country’s history can be significant expressions of national identity with powerful symbolic importance. In 1924, when the former name of the Norwegian capital *Kristiania* was changed back to its medieval name *Oslo*, there was quite a struggle (Wetås 2000, 34 ff.), and even more so when the parliament voted in 1929 to replace *Trondhjem* with the medieval name *Nidaros*. The subsequent struggle forced the parliament to withdraw its resolution and, in 1931, *Trondheim* was agreed to as a compromise name. Today the names of Oslo and Trondheim are generally accepted and looked upon as icons of those cities.

The relationship between names and identity, here more precisely place names and identity, is a complex subject which has been discussed from many viewpoints within various disciplines. It is often argued that names, especially place names, are not only a source of linguistic knowledge, but also of geographical, historical, anthropological, ethnographic, social, psychological, and other knowledge and may be of interest to these respective sciences. In their turn, name scholars may take advantage of data from a broad range of sciences when dealing with names. There are numerous examples demonstrating the value of such interdisciplinary approaches (e.g. Gelling (1990), Helleland (1990)). When applying onomastics in geographical studies we must take into account that we are dealing with fundamentally different levels on which “landscape”, or more precisely “place”, and “place name” occur. The former may be examined and described as a measurable

[3] “Nørrebropark giver navn og identitet til hele kvarteret”.

physical entity, whereas the latter consists of a linguistic expression and as such is an abstraction of the named object. Nevertheless there is an intimate relationship between place and place name, and I will discuss below how place names may reflect or give rise to feelings of individual and collective identity attached to the places in question.

[2] FUNCTION AND MEANING OF PLACE NAMES

Place names, like other names, are an indispensable part of human language. We use names when we refer to individual objects, such as people, animals, buildings, organisations, artefacts and places. Names are used in a variety of functions, not only as expressions referring to particular objects but also as a way of communicating cognitively, emotionally, ideologically, and socially (Andersson 1994, 8). Within toponymic research the etymological discussion and the historical bearings of place names have traditionally attracted the widest interest among scholars, especially in Europe. The main focus was placed on the linguistic structure and the semantic identification and grouping of various elements. Besides, it was seen as important to dismantle the meaning of names in order to use place name material as a historical source, especially for settlement history but also in the study of a wide range of natural and cultural phenomena that are reflected in place names (Christensen & Sørensen 1972; Ziegler & Windberger-Heidenkummer 2011). This kind of name studies is still on the agenda, but over the last few decades there has been a noticeable shift in onomastic interest with increasing focus on the socio-onomastic and socio-psychological functions of place names and other names.

Naturally, the terms “meaning” and “sense” have been discussed ardently in the course of the debates on theoretical onomastics. One of the great issues regarding the content and function of a name is whether it has a “meaning” or “sense” beyond its reference. This question is also relevant when it comes to the identity aspect of a name. It is not my intention here to retrace the extensive discussion of name and meaning; for a survey, see Willy Van Langendonck’s book on this topic (Van Langendonck 2007). I will confine myself to making a few comments pertaining to the two main approaches to the question:

- a name has reference, but is empty of meaning
- a name is “brimful” of (connotative) meaning

It is well known that philosophers like John Stuart Mill (Mill 1884) and, in more recent times, Bertrand Russell (Russell 1940) and Sir Alan Gardiner (Gardiner 1954) maintained that names have reference, but are empty of meaning. The latter’s often quoted claim “the purest of proper names are wholly arbitrary and totally without significance” (Gardiner 1954, 19) has been contested by many

other scholars, for instance Gottlob Frege ([Frege 1962](#)), who claims that there is much more to the meaning of a name than simply the object to which it refers. John R. Searle, who does not agree with Frege on all theoretical aspects, comments upon the role of proper names in the following way:

But the uniqueness and immense pragmatic convenience of proper names in our language lies precisely in the fact that they enable us to refer publicly to objects without being forced to raise issues and come to an agreement as to which descriptive characteristics exactly constitute the identity of the object. They function not as descriptions, but as pegs on which to hang descriptions ([Searle 1969](#), 172).

Similar positions are advocated by scholars like Otto Jespersen and Holger Steen Sørensen. The German scholar Klaus Hilgemann notes that a name through its connotations and associations acquires an extended meaning, maintaining that:

Die Größe der Information [eines Namens] richtet sich nach der Bekanntheit des Trägers und nach dem Grad des Bekanntseins mit dem [Namens]Träger. Die Bedeutung eines Namens ist für jeden Sprecher/Hörer verschieden ... ([Hilgemann 1974](#), 382).

The precondition for a name must still be that it carries a sufficient number of identifying descriptions agreed upon by a sufficient number of name users ([Vonen 1986](#), 67). It is also reason to believe that the meaning of a name depend on the context, differing from one individual to another and from one social group to another. A place name not only points out a place, it also mediates a cluster of qualities and meanings attached to that place, partly valid for a single individual, partly shared by a given social group. “Place-names do refer ...[but] they are used and valued for other reasons as well” ([Basso 1984](#), 26). If a person has had positive experiences with a named place, then the name will tend to awake positive connotations, and conversely negative connotations will tend to emerge if he or she has had negative experiences with a place. I agree with Christopher Tilley when he posits that “place names are of such vital significance because they act so as to transform the sheer physical and geographical into something that is historically and socially experienced” ([Tilley 1994](#), 18). Everybody over a certain age who has spent sufficient time in the village of Lofthus in western Norway will identify the hill of *Børvehovden* (see picture) when the name is mentioned. Certainly not all of these will associate its name with the farm Børve behind the hill or with its function as a former defensive site or a place for the Midsummer’s Eve bonfire, but some would more or less be able to make this association, depending on their linguistic experiences and on the contextual situation. Another example from this

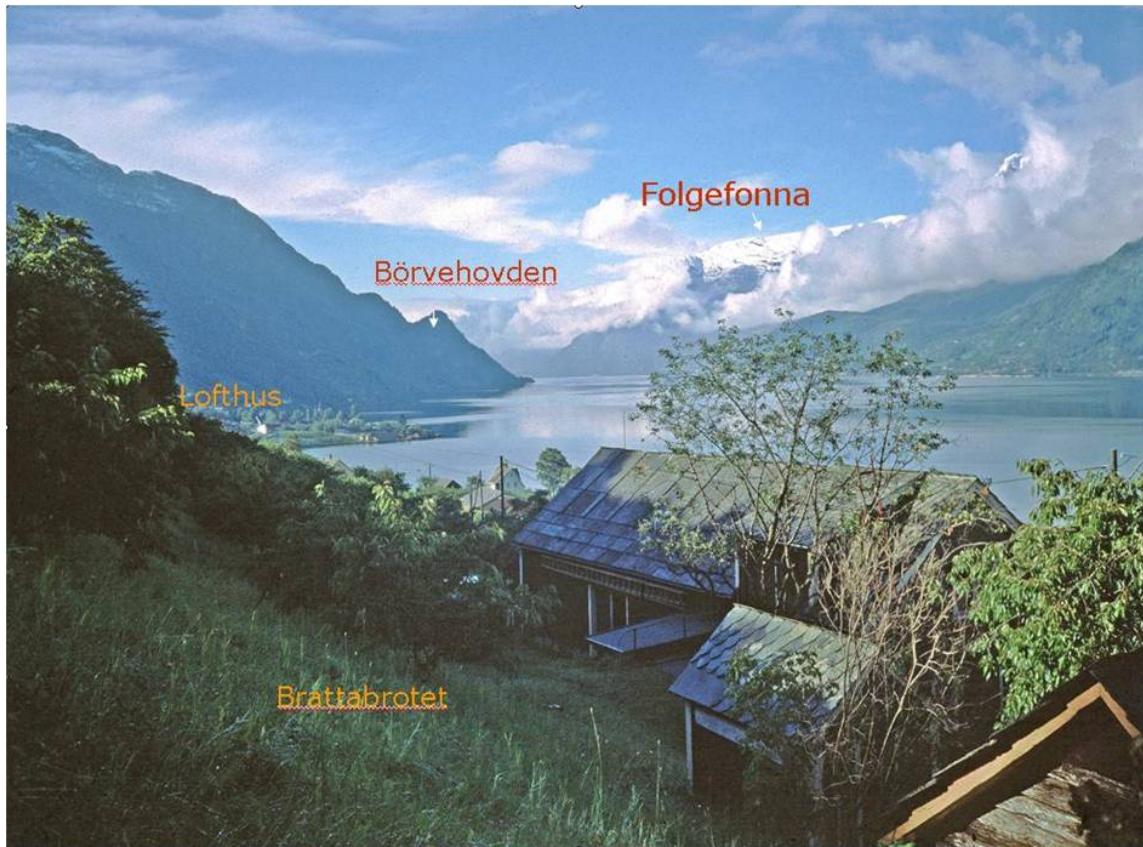


FIGURE 2: The farm Helland in Lofthus. In the background the hill Børvehovden and the Folgefonna glacier. In the foreground the field of Brattabrotet.
Photo: B. Helleland.

setting is the field name *Brattabrotet* “the steep slope” on the small farm of Helland. This name is known only by the family occupying the farm and is associated with the difficulty of mowing and harvesting this field due to its steepness. For me and my brothers the name also carries memories of sledging on sunny winter days in our childhood.

[3] PLACE NAMES — A LINK TO THE PAST

Place names may be said to represent the oldest living part of human cultural heritage, in the sense that they have been handed down orally from generation to generation for hundreds or thousands of years at the place where they were coined. They are a special part of our cultural heritage in that they tell us something about the place to which they refer and about the name givers. Thus they provide important supplements to the history of the places where people settled, as ties to the past. Many place names are also identified with past events and are pegs upon which stories both written and oral can be hung. One can also see

geographical names as a reflection of the interplay between humans and nature through different periods of time. Besides, if a person has some meta-linguistic and historic awareness, he may listen to place names as voices of the past, which in its turn may strengthen his feeling of home. Thus place names can function as a textual representation, often in an obsolete language, of the historic landscape.

When one takes into account that many place names have been coined as descriptions of the area or place in question, it becomes evident that we are dealing with material of immense historic value. Place names are links to the past, mirrors reflecting various scenarios and activities of the past. More recent names like names of dwelling places, streets, and fields and other microtoponyms also form a part of our collective onomastic memory and heritage. Although many people do not seem to be particularly aware of the historical richness of the place names in their surroundings they may still feel that the name stock contributes to their rootedness. People who have become acquainted with the etymological contents of names will of course appreciate their historical value to a greater degree. Through the place names of a district small or large, in particular its settlement names, it is possible to read many details of the area's history. A way of elucidating the historical contents of place names is shown in Figure 3.

At the top of the drawing in Figure 3 samples of existing place names are shown, each dating back a certain distance into the past. The suggested period of coinage is based on written sources and typological characteristics of the names and of the named places. The vertical lines, moving upwards, follow the passage of time. New names may be coined at any time, as old names sometimes fall out of use and become obsolete. The places to which the names refer are also constantly changing, sometimes unnoticeably, sometimes noticeably, but they may still be considered to be the same place.

If we look at the names mentioned in Figure 3, it is clear that their referents are something else today than they were in the past. *Legene* on the left is, for instance, used for a settlement which is only a couple of decades old. The etymological meaning of this name is "the place where the cattle rest", and that is what the name most probably referred to when it was coined. The name is not testified in writing before the 19th century, but it is no doubt much older. *Brekke*, reflecting Old Norse *brekka* f. "slope, steep road" is now used in reference to a farm. It is recorded in the 14th century, but the importance of the name and its onomastic typology indicate that it could be several hundred years older. The last example I will mention is *Ullensvang* on the far right of the drawing, the name of a parish and the farm on which the parish church was built (see also the picture and map below). It is recorded many times in the 13th and 14th centuries. As the name is apparently composed of the pagan god's name *Ullin* and *vang* "meadow where people assemble", there is reason to believe that it was coined in the centuries before the introduction of Christianity in Norway around the year 1000. Today – as

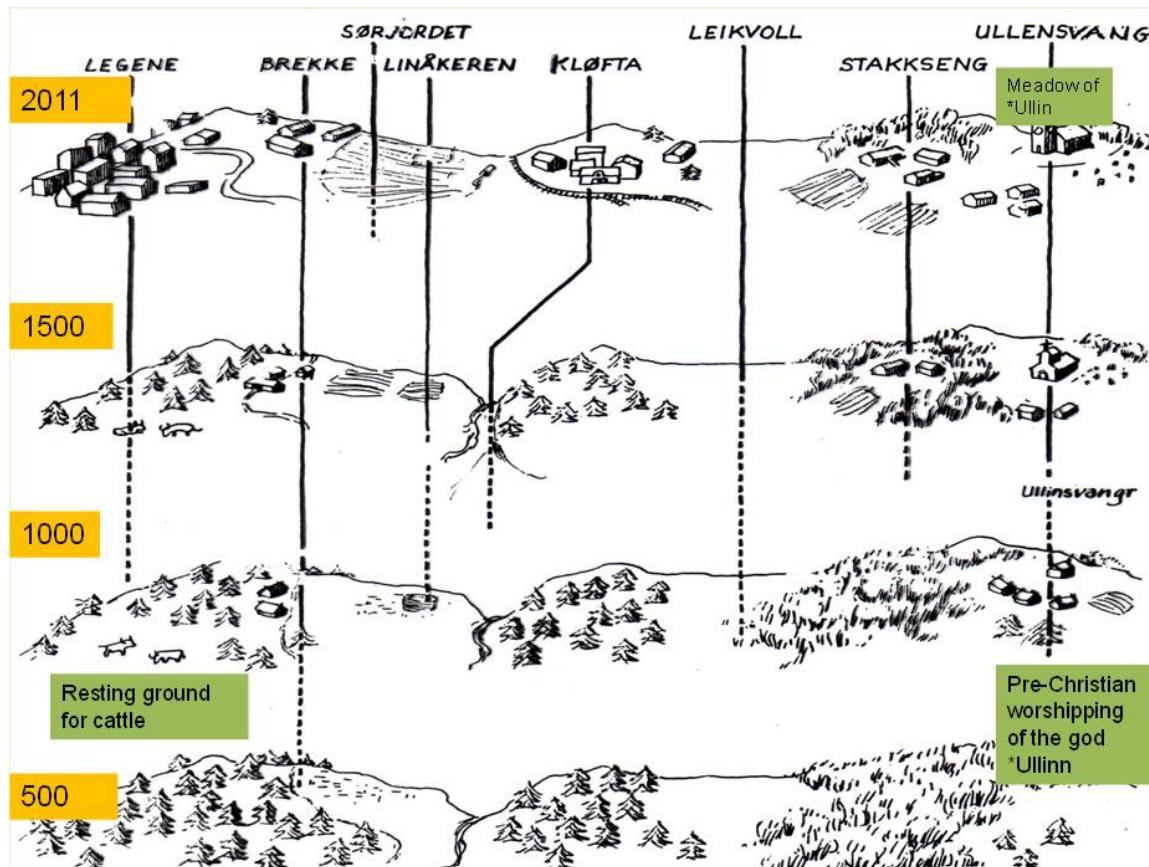


FIGURE 3: A named historical landscape as imagined at various periods of time.
Drawing: B. Helleland.

probably a millennium ago – people use the name without thinking of its heathen background.

A representative expression of the viewpoints of communities of name scholars in this field is to be found in a report that came out of a symposium on place name care and planning held in Finland in 1977:

Place names are an important part of our geographical and cultural environment. They identify localities of different kinds and represent irreplaceable cultural values of vital significance to people's sense of belonging and well-being (Zilliacus 1978, 211).⁴

Place names function as a social consensus or a sort of an agreement reached over many generations. This quality, I feel, is another contribution to the well-being and ease of people who are familiar with the area and its names, although

[4] "Ortnamn är en viktig del av vår geografiska och kulturella miljö. De identifierar lokaliteter av olika slag och representerar oersättliga kulturella värden med avgörande betydelse för människors hemkänsla och trivsel."

the name users may not be very conscious of it. Orally the place names of a local area are mostly used in a dialectal form, at least in Norway, which also reflects a social consensus. When local people see place names written on road signs and on maps they often react negatively because they feel that the standardized written forms of the names break with their idea of the correct name. This conflict, which sometimes makes the standardization of place names problematic, is an issue which needs to be discussed in relation to the preservation of place names as an intangible part of cultural heritage. This lies, however, outside the scope of this paper.

In 1999, Finland chose “Place Names – The Memory of Places” as theme for its European Heritage Days. The aim of Heritage Days is to awaken people to see and evaluate the environment built around them, and to help them appreciate its beauty and variety. Place names constitute an indispensable part of the environment, and the aim of Finland’s 1999 Heritage Days was to make people aware of the use of such names in the planning process. The Heritage Days activity was used as a means of educating the public about the importance of standardizing geographical names without losing their historical value. During that year a number of events took place, with many people involved, and the organizers had good reason to call the arrangements a success. As part of these activities, a video was prepared by the Research Institute for the Languages of Finland, which was shown on Finnish television.⁵

[4] SHARING OF PLACE NAMES

Every speaker or group of speakers has at his or her disposal a certain number of place names (onomasticon) which constitute a referential system for the speaker(s) in question. Some names are known only by a small group of people, for instance those living in a single settlement, while others are known by people in a town or a district, and again others are known by people in a greater society. The Norwegian name scholar Magnus Olsen ([Olsen 1939](#), 9 ff.), pointed long ago to the stratification of place names based on user groups. He suggested three levels: A) the names used within a single farm or village, B) the names used within a parish or municipality/local area, and C) the names used by those who travel long distances or have a bigger overview. Whereas the knowledge of names belonging to level A) is mostly limited to the locals, the names on level B) and in particular on level C) are also known to those on lower levels. The range of the place name

[5] “Place Names – The Memory of Places. The theme of the European Heritage Days in Finland 1999”. UNGEGN, 20th Session, New York, 17 – 28 January 2000, Working Paper No. 22, submitted by Sirkka Paikkala, Finland. See also Sirkka Paikkala: “Place names in Finland as cultural heritage” in *Onoma* 35, 2000, pp. 145-164.

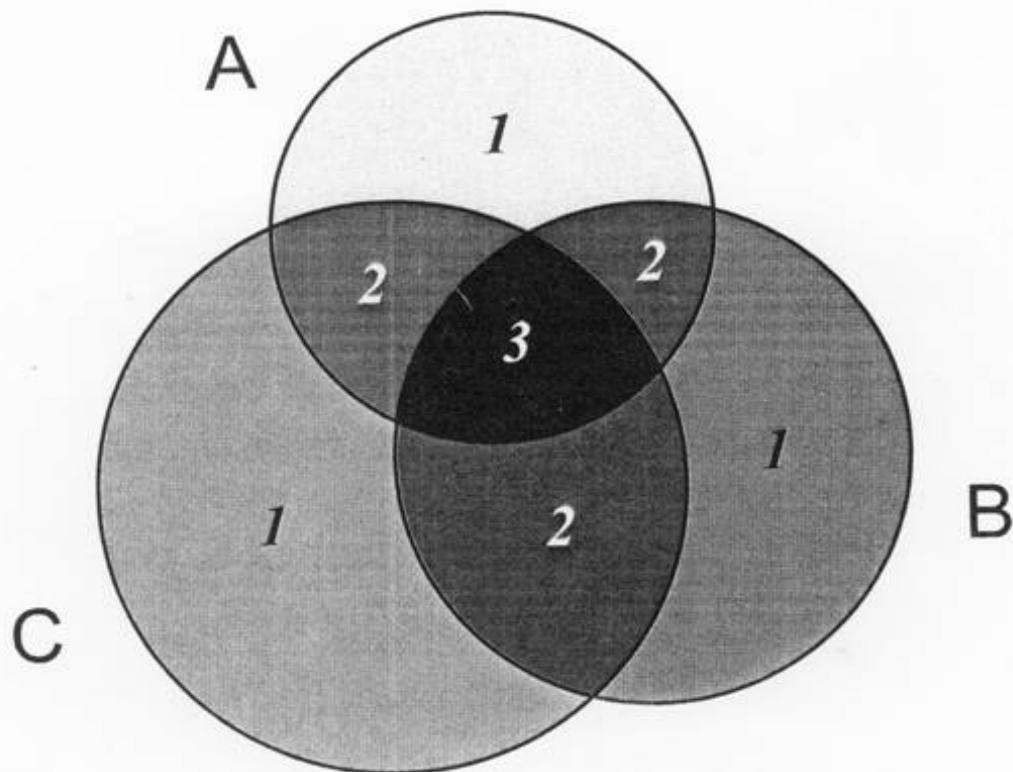


FIGURE 4: Sharing of place names.

competence of various name users may be illustrated by the model on the next page ([Helleland 2006](#), 124).

In Figure 4, each of the three circles A, B, and C represents a name user or a name user's onomasticon. The sections marked 1 in each circle cover names which are known only by the single name user in question. The sections marked 2 cover names that one name user shares with another name user, for instance A with B or B with C. The section marked 3 covers names which are known and used by all three name users. On the basis of this simplified model it is possible to imagine innumerable circles and sections to define the degree of shared place name competence of various social, geographical, linguistic, or other groups.

[5] IDENTITY

It is scarcely controversial to maintain that there is an intimate relationship between a person's self and her or his name, and other names to which the person may feel attached, including place names, and that such a mental relationship may be described as *identity*. Nevertheless *identity* is a complex and vague con-

cept which is used in various meanings and contexts, such as personal identity, ethnic identity, place identity and so forth. The word *identity* goes back to Middle French *identité*, from Late Latin *identitat-*, *identitas*, probably from Latin *identidem* “repeatedly”, contraction of *idem et idem*, literally “same and same” (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary).⁶ The *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) defines *identity* as 1) “The quality or condition of being the same in substance, composition, nature, properties, or in particular qualities under consideration; absolute or essential sameness; oneness;” 2) “The sameness of a person or thing at all times or in all circumstances; the condition or fact that a person or thing is itself and not something else; individuality, personality.” In his discussion of identity, Otto Krogseth (Krogseth 1992, 100–103), singles out continuity, coherence, and individuality as key elements, and all these may be represented when speaking about names and identity. For Jacobson-Widding (Jacobson-Widding 1998, 157), *identity* means two things, “sameness/continuity” and “distinctiveness/uniqueness”.

We see that the term *identity* is used about stable and permanent conditions as well as processes; that which is embraced by identity often changes over time according to external circumstances and according to the mood and current state of mind of individuals or group of individuals. The identity concept of one generation may not be the same for the next generation (Hagström 2006, 19, 21). Many people who have lived in a city like Oslo since they moved there decades ago will often maintain bonds to their original home place, like the lady in the introduction above. However, Solveig Wikstrøm has shown that younger people living in Oslo who have farm names as surnames are, in emotional terms, more closely attached to their family through their surname than to the homestead from which their names are derived (Wikstrøm 2009).

Some of the scholars who are often cited with regard to the modern individual's self-understanding, are Anthony Giddens and Pierre Bourdieu. The first one posits that the modern individual is to a great extent independent of tradition, and the name plays an important role in the shaping of self-identity (Giddens 1996, 71). The second sets out to demonstrate how social structures curtail the choices of the individual. He defines the name as a kinship status with a symbolic capital (Bourdieu 2000, 54). Both theories imply that the individual has to shape her or his own identity. The linguist Brit Mæhlum claims that there is an opposition between personal and social identity and explains this double quality by positing that the identity of an individual becomes crystallized in the cross-currents of the individual and the collective spheres (Mæhlum 2008, 108).

[6] <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/identity?show=0&t=1322499383>.

[6] SPACE AND PLACE

When talking about place names and identities it is also necessary to see place in relation to space. The two terms are interrelated but should be used separately as is common in, for instance, geography and anthropology. Space may be defined as “[s]uperficial extent or area; also, extent in three dimensions”; “extent or area sufficient for some purpose; room” (OED), whereas place may be defined as “[a] particular part of space, of defined or undefined extent, but of definite situation”; “[t]he portion of space actually occupied by a person or thing; the position of a body in space, or with reference to other bodies; locality, situation”. One way of separating place from space is to name it: applying a name to a piece of space means creating a place. One of the frequently cited scholars regarding humans’ adaptation to nature is Claude Lévi-Strauss, who defines space as “[a] society of named places, just as people are landmarks within the group. Places and individuals are designated by proper names, which can be substituted for each other in many circumstances common to many societies” ([Lévi-Strauss 1966](#), 168). Yi-Fu Tuan puts it this way: “What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value” ([Tuan 1979](#), 6), “it is an object in which one can dwell” (op. cit., 12), or simply “localities on the surface of the earth” ([Basso 1996](#), 89, note 10). Christopher Tilley suggests the following distinction between place and space in an identity perspective:

Personal and cultural identity is bound up with place; a topo-analysis is one exploring the creation of self-identity through place. Geographical experience begins in places, reaches out to others through spaces, and creates landscapes or regions for human existence ([Tilley 1994](#), 15).

Still it is not so easy to delimit a “place”, “as there can be a range of different ways in which specific places are represented” ([Holloway & Hubbard 2001](#), 144). Many places are defined according to their particular function, for instance properties and streets, but many others are features with unclear boundaries. Nevertheless they are felt as places as soon as they are brought into mind and become an object of interest.

[7] PLACE ATTACHMENT AND PLACE IDENTITY

The question of place attachment and place identity has become a popular topic in cultural geography and environmental psychology over the last couple of decades ([Altman & Low 1992](#); [Lewicka 2008, 2010](#)). Place attachment may be defined as an affective bond that people establish with specific areas where they prefer to remain and where they feel comfortable and safe ([Hidalgo & Hernández 2001](#), 273 f., [Lewicka 2008](#), 211). Place identity may be said to encompass an individual’s per-

sonal identity in relation to the physical environment ([Proshansky 1978](#), 147). It is therefore a component of personal identity, a process by which, through interaction with places, people describe themselves in terms of belonging to a specific place ([Hernández 2007](#), 310), thereby creating “the source of meaning for a given setting by virtue of relevant cognitive clusters that indicate what should happen in it, what the setting is supposed to be like, and how the individual and others are supposed to behave in it” ([Proshansky et al. 1983](#), 67).

There are several ways of studying humans' mental relationships with their surroundings, here more precisely with place, and there seem to be different approaches according to definition of place ([Godkin 1980](#), 73). Laura Kostanski ([Kostanski 2009](#), 65) suggests a stratification in which sense of place is an umbrella comprising place attachment, which in turn embraces place dependence and place identity, with this latter pair each slightly overlapping each other. These nuances are very fine and difficult to extract, but they may be useful when examining place name dependence and place name identity.

The term *landscape* is also frequently used when describing humans' physical surroundings. The relationship between humankind and landscape has been, and remains, a major topic for research. The simplest way of defining a landscape could be, in the words of J. B. Jackson ([Jackson 1986](#), 67), “a collection of land”, the arrangement of various natural and agricultural features. Christopher Tilley describes landscape, almost poetically, as “an anonymous sculptural form always already fashioned by human agency, never complete, and constantly being added to” ([Tilley 1994](#), 23). But he also argues that landscapes, as well as places, are created by names (op. cit., 19). Sometimes the term *mental landscape* is used to describe different kinds of feelings which a landscape evokes in a person. Within environmental psychology there has been a shift in focus from here-and-now perception to how we think about landscape ([Craik 1986](#), 51 f.). It is hardly controversial to maintain that a person's mental bond to a landscape is stronger when it is a familiar landscape than when it is a less familiar or unknown landscape. The term *memorial landscape* is used by some geographers ([Dywer & Alderman 2008](#)) when examining the landscape as a text based on geographical and cultural processes. As more and more people live in urban areas there is now an increasing focus on the role of collective memory in urban space ([Rose-Redwood et al. 2008](#)), as well as on the role of urban place names as group building identity ([Pounonen et al. 2009](#)). *Landscape identity* may thus (in my context) be defined as “oneness between self and landscape as experienced by human beings in given circumstances”. I would argue that a person's landscape identity (or place identity) is strengthened if he or she knows the place names of the area, or at least some of them.

[8] PLACE NAMES AND IDENTITIES

When performing an Internet search for a combination of “identity” and “place name”, millions of hits are returned, which shows that those terms are widely perceived as related. Both in scientific publications as well as in more popular literature, the role of place names as identity markers often comes to the surface. We see that the term “identity” is connected to personal names as well as place names and, as indicated above, it is used with a variety of meanings. When a person or a group of people feel a sort of identity through a name, it is not used in the same sense as when names are claimed to be markers of national, regional, or local identity.

Names are not only linguistic expressions referring to an object in the real or imagined world; they are also symbols that bring about a variety of feelings depending on the relationship between the name user(s) and the named object or person. Names are an important part of an individual’s language and personal vocabulary, and as such of that individual’s own self. So not surprisingly, personal names, place names and other names are increasingly being approached from a cognitive and mental point of view. Place names contribute to the feeling of belonging to an area and to a social group within that particular area. Whether people grow up and live in rural or in urban landscapes, they become familiar with their surroundings at an early stage and establish bonds to places. If they move and make their homes elsewhere they gradually also become acquainted with that area and its own place names. It is certainly possible to feel attached to a place without knowing the place names of the area or bearing them in mind,⁷ but as I see it, place names are abstractions of the places they refer to, substituting physical features with a wide range of impressions; they open up for a broader and more intimate knowledge of places. As has been demonstrated above, place names constitute links between name users and the named objects, as well as with the past.

What does it mean that a place or a place name creates a feeling of identity, and how are “place” and “place name” interrelated? When thinking of a named place, what comes first into mind, the place or its name, or do they appear simultaneously? To some extent, it is a “chicken-and-egg” dilemma, but it is still of some interest when approaching the relationship between place and place name. One of the most important contributions to the discussion of place names and identities in recent years is Laura Kostanski’s doctoral thesis on the Grampians (Gariwerd) National Park name restoration process in Victoria, Australia ([Kostanski 2009](#)). Another important recent publication about the implications of naming

[7] Per Thomas Andersen ([Andersen 2006](#)) uses the term *Identitetens geografi* [The geography of identity] to express the bonds to a place in a literary context.

for social identity is *Critical Toponymies: The Contested Politics of Place Naming* (Berg & Vuolteenaho 2009).

James F. Weiner (Weiner 1991, 45) emphasizes that place names act “as mnemonics for the historical actions of humans that make places singular and significant”. I agree with this view: without their place names it would indeed be more difficult to recall what happened at Verdun or Beaver Creek or any other named place. Keith H. Basso highlights the qualities of place names in the following way:

Because of their inseparable connection to specific localities, placenames may be used to summon forth an enormous range of mental and emotional associations – associations of time and space, of history and events, of persons and social activities, of oneself and stages in one’s life (Basso 1990, 144).

Basso underlines the capacity and compact power of place names to evoke personal and cultural experiences. In his view, place names acquire a functional value “that easily matches their utility as instruments of reference” (*ibid.*). Certainly one of the qualities of place names lies in their ability to create a feeling of belonging to a certain community and feeling at home. But their symbolic function is important, too. In her thesis, Laura Kostanski examines if a person’s attachment to a place is distinguishable from her or his attachment to the symbol of the place, i.e. the name, and on the basis of her research project she is able to conclude that this is the case (Kostanski 2009, 146). Her theory also includes that place name dependence (“toponymic dependence”) exists as long as the place name provides a unique representation and people are dependent on a place for certain facilities. As I see it, the theoretical framework in Kostanski’s thesis has contributed considerably to a better understanding of identity function of place names.

[9] CONCLUSION — A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Above I have introduced the landscape of my childhood, including some of the place names which I encountered at a very early age. I was once asked which place name I would regard as my favourite. Among the big stock of place names which mean something to me, *Skutull* is the one that counts the most. It is the name of a rock on the upper side of the farmhouses. When I was a little boy, I used to play there with the other boys and girls at my age, and we used to climb the rock to play Cowboys and Indians or to build stone huts. When I mention the name of Skutull to my playmates of that time they also express a certain amount of nostalgia. To some people Skutull means a happy childhood, surely mixed with fights and tears, with victories and defeats. To others it may mean a dwelling place with a nice view, a house with good or difficult neighbours and so on. The



FIGURE 5: Skutull. Photo: B. Helleland.

name makes up part of the toponymic identity of the locals, evoking partly joint and partly individual experiences and feelings. So, as we get older and less capable of experiencing, the name of Skutull is the gateway for visiting the place – in our minds.

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PLACE NAMES AS INGREDIENTS OF SPACE-RELATED IDENTITY

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ABSTRACT

The article¹ highlights 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 (culture makes use of natural resources; culture reflects itself in space, shapes space creating a cultural landscape; a cultural group receives a part of its identity through the cultural landscape) the paper investigates in which of these relations place names play a major role. It is found that place names have important functions in all three relations: in making use of natural resources when they reflect natural characteristics, in cultural transformation of the geographical space when they shape it both visually and mentally as well as in identity building with individual members of a cultural group and with a cultural group in total when place names function as labels and support emotional ties between man and place.

[1] RELATIONS BETWEEN THE CULTURE OF A SOCIAL GROUP AND GEOGRAPHICAL SPACE

If culture is understood as a comprehensive concept², as the complex of all human expressions, as all the specific ways in which human activities can be exerted, not only in the sense of elite culture (music, literature, fine arts), then, from a cultural-geographical perspective the relation between the culture of a social group and geographical space can in modification of Carl Sauer ([Sauer 1925](#)), ([Sauer 1941](#)) and George W. White ([White 2004](#)) be defined as threefold (see also Fig. 1). Culture of a specific group

- makes use of natural resources (offered by geographical space);
- reflects itself in space, shapes space creating a cultural landscape;

[1] This article is an amended version of [Jordan \(2009\)](#), published in Wiener Schriften zur Geographie und Kartographie, vol. 18 (see references). Also this version profits from English language editing kindly provided by Catherine Cheetham for the former version.

[2] For concepts of culture see a.o. [Lévi-Strauss \(1949\)](#), [Kroeber & Kluckhohn \(1963\)](#), [Lévi-Strauss \(1966\)](#), [Mitchell \(2000\)](#).

- receives identity through the cultural landscape.

It would seem beneficial to explain these three relations briefly in principle, before the role of place names within these relations is brought in.

[1.1] *Relation 1: Culture makes use of natural resources*

Natural resources of a certain place (vegetation, fauna, water, climate, morphology, soil, geology, location etc.) offer certain opportunities to inhabitants. Places rich in wood will very likely prompt the construction of wooden houses and also churches (Fig. 2 on page 120); barren and rocky places will rather lead to buildings made of stone. In lowlands clay is the construction material most easily available. And indeed, in most lowlands (Po Plain [Pianura Padana], Valachian Plain [Tara Romaneasca], Great Hungarian Plain [Alföld], North German Plain [Norddeutsches Tiefland]) clay brick houses or adobe houses (air-dried clay bricks) are the traditional type. Places rich in fish will encourage inhabitants to develop a dining culture with fish playing a major role.

But it depends on the individual and on the social group, whether and to what extent the natural offer is accepted and in which (selective) way it is used. Nature offers opportunities and a certain choice, but does not really determine the result (Sauer 1941). Places similar in nature are likely to have broadly similar cultural landscapes and dining cultures rather close to each other, but they will rarely be completely the same.

It is, however, also true that in our globalising world, the natural offerings of a certain place are now far less limiting. Modern means of transportation and the networks of trade make it possible to transfer commodities easily from one place to another. In consequence, most modern housing or dining cultures have approached each other. It is nevertheless even nowadays hard to imagine that, e.g., the Finnish lifestyle will ever become exchangeable with the Italian (Mitchell 2000). Less developed parts of the world will anyway remain more dependent on local resources due to their economically restricted capacity to import goods. From empirical research it is evident that, e.g., nutrition in large parts of Africa has remained much closer to local natural resources than in the “developed Western World” (Liouty 1998, table 169).

[1.2] *Relation 2: Culture reflects itself in space, shapes space creating a cultural landscape*

Cultural elements (specifics of a certain culture) express themselves in the cultural landscape. The cultural element religion, e.g., manifests itself visibly by places of worship, in Christian countries usually by churches of varying architectural style (Fig. 2), by chapels and field crosses as well as by cemeteries and places of pilgrimage. The architectural type of a church very often allows a guess to which

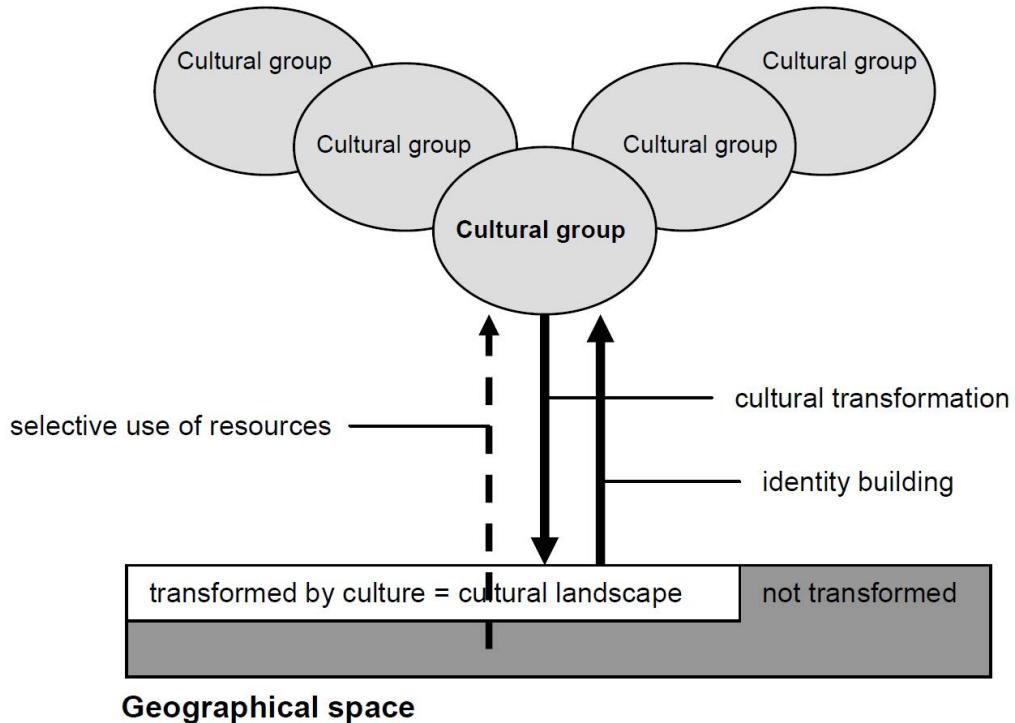


FIGURE 1: Relations between culture (of a group) and geographical space.

denomination it (and the population in its catchment) belongs. Language and script are visualised in the landscape by advertisements, shop names, sign posts, etc. The historiography of a certain culture is visibly reflected by monuments and museums. Architecture is, of course, a cultural element shaping geographical space most significantly and in various ways, which range from the popular architecture of farmsteads to rather elitarian architectural manifestations as, e.g., representative buildings. The way a social group uses the land for agricultural and other economic purposes has also a strong impact on the character of a landscape: vineyards or olive groves are able to shape a landscape very specifically. But this is not much less true for foresting and pasturing, also for more recent types of land use like industry or road traffic.

Even the social stratification of a society including the question “who dominates?” can be answered by a look into the landscape. Societies with a dominance of large enterprises let cities with large office buildings and spectacular advertising emerge (Fig. 3), while the dominance of social aspects may result in large-scale housing estates. Economic wealth is also sometimes very visibly reflected by beautiful suburban villa quarters, gated communities, etc. When religion has a strong position in society, the density of churches will be high, they will occupy prominent and symbolic places and perhaps outweigh other buildings also in size forming the most significant landmarks.



FIGURE 2: Wooden Greek-Catholic church in Lukov, Slovakian Carpathians (Photo April 2009).

In a way, each landscape tells a story about the culture by which it has been shaped. When the historical layers of a landscape are analysed, a temporal sequence of cultures can also be traced. The fact, e.g., that Vienna was for a long time the residence of an empire and that this has been its main urban function in a very formative period, can easily be deduced from the architectonical dominance of palaces over other buildings. Large social housing estates from the interwar period in turn may lead to the (very justified) conclusion that social aspects have dominated urban policy in this era.

Another striking example in this respect is Cluj-Napoca in Romanian Transylvania [Ardeal]. Although this city is today predominantly Romanian by nationality and Orthodox by denomination, the Catholic church of the Hungarians is located right in the centre of the city, at its main square, unmatched by any other landmark (Fig. 4). This reminds us of the fact that Roman-Catholic Hungarians have been the dominant societal force up to World War I and have remained remarkable in numbers even thereafter.



FIGURE 3: Skyscrapers and advertising near Times Square, New York (Photo April 2007).



FIGURE 4: The Roman-Catholic church of the Hungarians dominates the face of downtown Cluj-Napoca, Romania (Photo January 2005).



FIGURE 5: The only standard-type mosque in Vienna hidden away in the suburbs and behind a major road (Photo 2006)

But it also happens that social groups in a non-dominant or even clearly suppressed position share a place with a dominant culture. In this case manifestations of their culture are not allowed to express themselves in the cultural landscape, have to be reduced in size or are banned to less prestigious places. Up to the Charter of Religious Toleration by Joseph II (1781), e.g., Protestants in Catholic Austria were not allowed to have churches. Also by the Charter they were only allowed to have churches without spire and bells and without a direct entrance from the street. Today, Vienna with its appr. 160,000 Muslims has certainly a lot of hidden places of Islamic worship, but just one standard-type mosque. This is located far from downtown at the less prestigious left bank of the Danube behind a dam and a major road (Fig. 5).

- [1.3] *Relation 3: A cultural group receives a part of its identity through the cultural landscape*

Personal as well as group identities are composed of various layers.

The identity of every person is composed of multiple layers. Usual components are gender (male – female), education (primary, secondary, tertiary; direction), profession, social status, political and religious orientation. They may be ranked in various ways, and even other layers, not mentioned here, may dominate.

Group identity is in turn composed of language, religion and all the other cultural elements shaping a social group. Also here the ranking of the various aspects may vary. While, e.g., for Croats denomination is a more important characteristic of their group identity than language (their language is close to other South Slavonic languages like Serbian, Bosnian or Montenegrin), for Albanians it is the other way round, since the Albanian nation is split into several denominations (Muslim, Orthodox, Roman-Catholic), while it is distinct from other nations by its common and very specific language.

Personal as well as group identity are in addition shaped or at least supported by the cultural landscape. Having been born into a certain cultural landscape and having been socialised in it, a person becomes familiar with a specific type of architecture, scenery, land use, vegetation, climate (including typical weather situations), also with specific smells and sounds. He/she learns to interpret the processes, to read the symbols and codes of a cultural landscape. Most things happen as they are expected: the church bells ring at certain times of the day; it rains when dark clouds appear in the west; the smell of a pulp and paper factory will be in the air when southeasterly winds blow; cars start moving when traffic lights switch to green. This regularity conveys a good feeling, a feeling of security, predictability and safety. The cultural psychologist Ernest Emmerich Boesch expressed it in this way: "Home is where the living is easy" (Boesch 1983, 353).

Apart from this feeling of familiarity and safety the cultural landscape also conveys by this very reason culture. Having been shaped by the culture of a social group (in practice rather by some more active or respected individuals or by the driving and dominating forces of a group) it reflects this culture back to the group and – this time – to all its members. As regards this effect, it differs only in kind from the educational system or from grandmother's narrative, just to mention two other (rather divergent) conveyors of culture. The landscape, into which a person has been born and in which he/she has been socialised or to which he/she has become acquainted and familiar in his/her later life, is (including its symbolic code) usually unconsciously "read" and reminds the individual day by day of his/her cultural identity and conveys it from generation to generation.

Yi-Fu Tuan, a disciple of Carl Sauer, the founder of the Berkeley School of Cultural Geography, formulated it in this way:

„[Place] is made up of experiences, mostly fleeting and undramatic, repeated day after day and over the span of years. It is a unique blend of sights, sounds, and smells, a unique harmony of natural and artifi-

cial rhythms such as times of sunset, of work and play. The feel of a place is registered in one's muscles and bones." (Tuan 1977, 183f)

Now let us bring place names in and try to find out which role they play within the three relations between culture and space mentioned.

[2] THE ROLE OF PLACE NAMES WITHIN CULTURE-SPACE RELATIONS

[2.1] *Geographical names reflect spatial characteristics, most frequently natural characteristics, but also characteristics of settlement history, land use and economy, former feudal relations, historical events, etc. (Relation 1)*

When place names reflect natural characteristics, they refer mostly to location, exposition, morphology, waters, vegetation, soil conditions and mineral resources. They highlight in this way what was by a certain culture considered remarkable for a certain place and/or important under the aspect of human use and appropriation. Farming cultures used to have approaches different from, e.g., shepherds. While soil conditions are certainly important for farmers, shepherds may rather be focused on vegetation cover or morphology.

The Slavonic name Bistrīca, for instance, which occurs not only in areas where currently Slavonic languages are spoken, but appears – mostly in derivations like, e.g., German Feistritz – also where a former Slavonic substratum has later been superimposed by other languages, characterizes a river or brook running quickly and has clear water. Javorník(y), in a German derivation also Jauernig, characterizes a specific of the vegetation (javor, 'maple').

The meaning of many names, however, is not transparent for people using these names today. Many belong to older layers of the own language or have their origin in other languages spoken earlier at the place.

This is true for most names of larger rivers. They have always been important features and were named very early. Later, their names were transferred from one language to another just by morphological and phonetic adaptation. A case in point is the name Danube, which can be traced back at least to Celtic, perhaps even to pre-Indo-European languages.

[2.2] *Place names contribute to shaping the cultural landscape (Relation 2)*

But place names shape geographical space also mentally by labelling spatial concepts (space-related ideas and images). In this way they support structuring geographical space, since name and concept are mostly closely linked. The name attributed to a concept cannot easily be exchanged against another one without modifying the concept. It would even be possible to state in general that place names identify places, if there was not the major exception of place names on maps: on maps a place is already sufficiently identified by the cartographic symbol positioned on the two-dimensional map face. The location of the cartographic

symbol indicates undoubtedly a certain place. The place name has in this case only a clarifying, facilitating function – it makes identification easier, especially for map readers with a less precise mental map.

Structures in geographical space called regions are anyway results of mental processes. They exist, since the complex and vast variety of (really existing) features have been classified under certain (human) aspects. Would the aspects be others, different structures or regions would result from the classification. There is nothing like “natural” geographical regions. All divisions of space are in fact mental constructs, i.e. spatial concepts marked by names (see [Weichhart et al. \(2006\)](#)).

Many spatial concepts coincide with other imagined features like functional relations (e.g. administrative, economic) as in the cases of communes, provinces, states and other administrative units or in the cases of catchment areas of central places in the sense of Walter Christaller ([Christaller 1933](#)). Others correspond to natural features like to the land/sea divide (in the case of islands), to distinct morphological barriers (in the case of basins) or to clear climatic divides (in the case of climatic regions). But even when they seem to be shaped by nature (by the land/sea divide, morphological barriers, climatic divides), they do this only because nature is interpreted in a certain way, i.e. under the aspect of a resource for human activity.

But there are many spatial concepts lacking even such a coincidence. They are indeed pure projections of ideas onto a certain geographical space. This is especially true for the feature type of a cultural region in the sense of a region not (necessarily) defined by functional relations and administrative or natural boundaries, but by common history and cultural traditions. They may have been political units in the past and developed their common traditions during this time.

Two cases in point are the Croatian cultural region Dalmatia [Dalmacija] and the Austrian Salzkammergut. They functioned as administrative units in history (albeit with varying territorial reference, in the case of Salzkammergut even differing from the current concept), but are currently neither administrative nor functional, nor natural units. They have currently neither administrative boundaries nor a distinct centre, to which a catchment area gravitates in the socio-economic sense. It would also be difficult to draw boundaries according to natural features around them. The names are in fact the only carriers of these spatial concepts. These concepts are nevertheless well associated with a specific imagination and rich in content. They are deeply and widely rooted in public consciousness, used by the local population, in scientific and popular literature as well as in the media and especially in tourism as brands. Hotels, restaurants, dishes, ships, newspapers a.o. are named after these regions, for these names have a favourable appeal. Nobody would say that these regions do not “exist”.

Not only in these rather specific cases, when names are actually the only carriers of spatial concepts and regional identities, but also in all other situations, when they just support identities carried also or mainly by other factors like boundaries, functional relations, land use (as it is with settlements), morphology (as it is with mountains, hills or plains) or the land/water divide (as it is with seas, lakes, rivers or islands) place names are most important for the definition of mental maps. The (more or less correct) mental map every one of us carries with him/her is certainly also shaped by lines for boundaries, rivers, coasts, roads and railways, by dots and circles for settlements and by areal colours and patterns for altitudes, lakes and seas, but the essential links between these cartographic symbols and the spatial concepts and geographical features they mark are the names.

It is very true that this mental shaping of geographical space (not the least by place names) has no direct impact on the (visible) cultural landscape. But indirectly it has. If, e.g., a place is conceived as being a part of a certain cultural region, inhabitants may be inclined to construct their houses in the style typical for this cultural region.

[2.3] *Place name functions in space-related identity building (Relation 3)*

In space-related identity building place names have the function both of labels and of supporting emotional ties.

Label function

In the symbolic function of a label a place name represents a space-related concept filled with contents. The name conveys these contents to inhabitants of the place as well as to people from the outside insofar the latter know these contents or have learned about them (as this is, e.g., the case with tourism marketing). In this function place names are very similar to flags or coats of arms. It is characteristic for strong space-related identities that their names are reflected many times, e.g. in names of restaurants, hotels, dishes, ships, trains, newspapers etc.

How burdened with emotions the label function is can be derived from two facts: (1) administrations often refuse linguistic minorities the official use of their names and interpret this use as a territorial claim; (2) in multilingual areas official use of minority names frequently stirs up conflict among the local population. Naming is conceived as having the power of defining the identity of a place. A second name on the signpost is seen as conveying the impression that this place had a double identity and was not under the control of one group exclusively.

There are many conflicts arising from these grounds, even if only Austria and its closer neighbourhood are regarded.

In the Austrian province of Carinthia a law and a decree of 1976/77 ruled that 91 settlements had to have bilingual (German/Slovene) signposts (BGBL. Nr. 396/1976, BGBL. Nr. 306, 307, 308/1977), but only 70 signposts are so far installed



FIGURE 6: Damaged bilingual signpost in the Resia Valley. The Italian name Oseacco has been extinguished, only the Resian name (with a letter ë not used in Slovene) has remained (Photo May 2008).

(see also Jordan 2006: 103ff). This is partly due to resistance of the majority population, partly also to the fact that the linguistic minority hesitates to declare itself. This again is mainly because the minority used to be the lower strata of society.

In the bilingual (Italian/Resian³) Resia Valley [Valle di Resia] of the autonomous Italian region Friuli-Venezia Giulia many bilingual signposts have been damaged (Fig. 6).

In the Italian autonomous province of South Tyrol [Südtirol/Alto Adige] inhabited by a German-speaking majority which dominates politically and economically, a place names law has not yet been able to be passed because a large part of the German speaking group demands that Italian place names introduced after WWI are not to remain official. This attitude does not recognise that these place

[3] Local speakers classify a Slavonic idiom written in an alphabet differing from the Slovene as a language of its own and call it Resian while in Slovenia it is usually classified as a Slovene dialect (see e.g. Logar & Rigler 2001).

names have in the meantime acquired an important function in space-related identity building for the third, fourth and fifth generations of Italian immigrants.

Function of supporting emotional ties

The function of supporting emotional ties affects only persons well-acquainted with a certain place. These are in the first line inhabitants; secondly also people, who have been socialised in a certain place and later left it; thirdly also persons, who have only in a later stage of their life found a certain emotional relation to a place, e.g. as frequent vacationers.

For them mentioning or memorising a name means to strengthen “the feel of a place” as Yi-Fu Tuan puts it (Tuan 1977, 183f) and to let the emotional tie with it grow. In this function place names are an important factor of “feeling at home”.

Both functions are especially important for linguistic minorities. While the identity of cultural majorities is usually (except in border regions) not challenged day by day, minorities are usually in a more defensive position and feel therefore a special need to demonstrate that they exist, have been present for generations, and have co-shaped the culture and cultural landscape of a certain place. Place names in their own language on signposts, on maps, in official documents are most likely more than for others important in their symbolic function as a label as well as in their function to support emotional affiliation. For the member of a minority, place names in his/her language in official use (e.g. on a signpost) very often symbolise recognition, a confirmation to be accepted by the majority and to be at home at this place. For this very reason it would be wise of administrations to admit minority names officially. For this very reason also, Romania goes as far as to represent Ukrainian and Russian place names in their original Cyrillic script on signposts and not to transliterate them (Fig. 7). They are to address in the first line the Ukrainian/Russian inhabitants and make them feel at home, and are not so much meant as information for external visitors.

[3] CONCLUSION

Place names have important functions in all three relations between cultural groups and geographical space: in making use of natural resources when they reflect natural characteristics, in cultural transformation of the geographical space by shaping it visually and mentally, in identity building with individual members of a cultural group and with a cultural group in total as labels and in supporting emotional ties.



FIGURE 7: Signpost of a bilingual Romanian/Ukrainian village in the Romanian district [județ] Maramureș. The Ukrainian name is rendered in Cyrillic script (Photo May 2008).

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THE POST-COLONIAL IDENTITY OF DURBAN

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ABSTRACT

Many scholars have pointed out that when changes in political regimes take place, these are frequently accompanied by politically-inspired changes of place names. In this article, I look at the naming of the South African east coast city Durban, starting with the name *Durban* itself, and the various suggestions that have been mooted for its replacement. In particular, I look at the Zulu name for Durban (*eThekwini* – ‘the place of the bay’) and its suitability as a new name for the city.

The article then goes ‘inside’ the city and looks at the recent re-naming of a considerable number of Durban’s streets, and the public reaction to this. Both the re-naming and the public reaction are placed within the context of re-naming globally.

[1] INTRODUCTION

Maoz Azaryahu, in a seminal article about the politics of renaming streets, says that the French Revolution “set an example for the use of streets and squares for the purpose of political representation” (Azaryahu 1996, 313). According to Azaryahu, in 1792 the statue of Louis XV, erected in 1763 in the square named *Place Louis XV*, was demolished. In its place a “colossal” figure of Liberty was erected, and the square renamed *Place de la Revolution*. Today the same square is named *Place de la Concorde*.

In a later article, Azaryahu sees the renaming of this square in 1792 as starting a trend:

The French revolution set a model, and renaming streets has since become a common feature of major changes in political regime and ruptures in political history. Renaming streets has become a conventional ‘ritual of revolution’, in David Kertzer’s suggestive phrase. (Azaryahu 1997, 481)

In the example of Paris above, the name *Place de la Concorde* is apparently the third name for that particular square. In other cities, names may change even more frequently. (Azaryahu 1996) says of street name changes in the city of Berlin that

The transition from a monarchy to republic, the rise of Hitler to power, the surrender of Nazi Germany, national division, and reunification were all manifest in corresponding renaming of streets ([Azaryahu 1996](#), 318).

While [Azaryahu \(1996\)](#), [Azaryahu \(1997\)](#), [Yeoh \(1992\)](#), [Light \(2004\)](#) and [Alderman \(2000\)](#) have concentrated on the renaming of streets specifically, place names of all sorts may undergo change as a result of political regime change. Catherine Nash is talking of place names generally when she says that “[o]ver the last two centuries, government bodies have systematically named and renamed places in Ireland” ([Nash 1999](#), 457). [McCarthy \(2002\)](#) gives a specific example of the renaming of a coastal town in County Cork in Ireland, known as the Cove of Cork until 1849 when it was renamed Queenstown in honour of a visit by Queen Victoria. In 1921 the name of the town reverted to Cove, “with the Irish spelling Cobh.” (p. 37)

[Horsman \(2006\)](#) gives examples of the renaming of mountains and peaks in the Pamirs, “a mountain range and high plateau area in the Tien Shan, Karakoram and Hindu Kush mountain complex” (*op.cit.*, 281). He shows (*op.cit.*, 282) that these mountains have gone through five distinct historical periods: the ‘traditional’ period (pre-Tsarist), the Tsarist period, the Soviet Period of 1917 to 1953, the Soviet Period of 1953 to 1991, and finally the Post-Soviet Period. Horsman says of the name changes that have taken place that

Political regimes have often sought to represent and manipulate landscapes in order to promote their own ideological and political objectives. This has been carried out in order to affirm their legitimacy, control of their territory and promote their ideological norms. ([Horsman 2006](#), 279)

South Africa has undergone two political regime changes in the 20th century. In retrospect the regime change of 1948 can be considered as a minor change, as one minority government, led by the United Party and its mainly English-speaking white supporters, was replaced by another minority government: the National Party with its mainly Afrikaans-speaking white supporters. A limited amount of renaming of places took place at that time. A good example is that of the main thoroughfare in the city of Bloemfontein, which changed from *St.George's Street*, a name redolent with English symbolism, to *Voortrekkerstraat*, a name just as powerfully symbolic of Afrikaans nationalism¹ ([Lubbe 2003](#)). The name of Hendrik Verwoerd, prime minister of South Africa from 1958 to 1966, and widely

[1] The voortrekkers were the various groups of Dutch-speaking farmers who ‘trekked’ (migrated) with their ox-wagons, away from the English-dominated Western Cape, to find new homes in the hinterland of present-day South Africa.

known as the ‘architect of apartheid’, became the new name of several major roads, towns, dams, and so on during this period, for example the Hendrik Verwoerd Dam on the Orange River, the H.F. Verwoerd Airport in Port Elizabeth, and the town of Verwoerdburg adjacent to Pretoria. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hendrik_Verwoerd, accessed 6.1.2011)

The *major* regime change in South Africa took place in 1994, when the white minority government of the National Party was replaced with the black majority party the African National Congress (ANC), with Nelson Mandela president of the ‘new South Africa’. The Union of South Africa, which came into being on 31st May 1910, was a dominion of the British Empire. On the 31st May 1961, the Union of South Africa became The Republic of South Africa, so it could be argued that it was in 1961 that South Africa lost its ‘colonial’ status. However, as the country continued under white minority rule right through to 1994, to most South Africans the country remained a bastion of colonialism until the election which saw the ANC take over the government. The term ‘post-colonial’ in my title, then, refers to Durban and other cities in South Africa since 1994.

The toponymic changes that have taken place in South Africa post-1994 have been extensive, and are well detailed and exemplified in Jenkins et al. (1996) and Jenkins (2007). Verwoerd’s name was one of the first to go: the *Hendrik Verwoerd Dam* became the *Gariep Dam*, using the Khoisan name for the Orange River², the *H.F. Verwoerd Airport* became the *Mathew Goniwe Airport*³, and *Verwoerdburg* became *Centurion*. Later, *Voortrekkerstraat*, which as we saw above had replaced *St. George’s Street* as the name of the main thoroughfare in Bloemfontein, became *Nelson Mandela Drive*⁴. In fact Nelson Mandela’s name soon became as ubiquitous a toponym as MacQuarie is in New South Wales, Australia (see Miles 2010 and Bryson 2000, 92-93).

[2] DURBAN AND ITS ONOMASTIC BACKGROUND

Durban is a major coastal city on the eastern coast of South Africa. One of the busiest ports in the southern hemisphere, it is a popular tourist venue, because of its year-round warm climate and extensive beaches. The earliest known name for the bay on which Durban is situated is the 1450 name given by Portuguese seafarers – *Rio de Natal* – and names for the Bay of Natal in French, Dutch, English, Italian and Portuguese are found on many early maps predating the first settlement by white explorers, traders and missionaries. Survivors from early shipwrecks left short-lived names in Dutch, English and other languages for the bay and other topographical features, but it was only from 1820 onwards when Europeans started to settle that more permanent names were given. The early name *Port Natal*,

[2] Although the Orange River has simply remained the Orange River.

[3] Named “after a local hero of the resistance who had been murdered by police” (Jenkins 2007, 119).

[4] Nelson Mandela is the ‘ikon’ referred to in Johan Lubbe’s title.

which referred to the bay as well as the young growing township, was officially replaced by *D'Urban* after the name of the then Governor of the Cape, and within a few years this had become *Durban*, still today the official name of the city, and the name found in gazetteers and atlases world-wide. The Zulu name *eThekwini* was also early recognized, and many other Zulu names have been used for Durban or significant parts of Durban over the years. Some of these, like *kwaMalinde*, *isi-Bubulungu*, *iFenya* and *eGagasini* I have discussed in other articles⁵. Official names like *Port Natal* and *Durban*, used on document and title deeds, have always lived side by side with unofficial names like *Durbs* and *eMdubane*. The current municipal newsletter is named *eGagasini Metro*, a reference to Durban's status as one of South Africa's few large metropolitan municipalities, as well as the current Zulu nickname for Durban – *eGagasini* ('the place of the wave'⁶)

[3] CHANGING THE NAME OF THE CITY

Despite the considerable amount of renaming of places which has taken place in South Africa since 1994, very little renaming of towns and cities has taken place. There was a brief flurry of such renaming in the Northern Province in 2002, when the names of ten towns were changed⁷. Largest of these was Pietersburg, which became Polokwane. Others include Ellisras (now Lephalale), Naboomspruit (now Mookgophoong), Potgietersrus (now Mokopane) and Nylstroom (now Modimolle).

In the early 1990s rumours ran rife through South Africa that most of South Africa's major towns and cities would be getting new names, exchanging the current official name to the shadowy unofficial name in Zulu or Sotho or Venda or whatever. Headlines took the form of "Bloemfontein to become Mangaung". It took quite some time before threatened whites realized that Bloemfontein could hardly be getting a 'new' name in the form of Mangaung ('place of the cheetahs'), when local people had been calling Bloemfontein 'Mangaung' since the foundation of the town. EThekewini would not be a new name for Durban; it was in fact an older name than Durban for the same place, and had been used by considerably more people over the years than the name 'Durban'.

Nonetheless, for nearly a decade, there were fears that 'Colonial' names of cities would disappear. What in fact happened was a perfect compromise. In 1999 South Africa was divided into municipalities (the third tier of government below national government and provincial government). Towns, cities and rural areas

[5] See Koopman (2004, 2007, 2009)

[6] This nickname for Durban was popularised by K.E. Masinga, the first black announcer for what was then Radio Bantu in the 1960s. He used to refer to himself on the radio as *uKE Masinga ogibel' igagasi* ('KE Masinga who is riding a wave'), a pun on radio waves and the famous surfing waves of Durban (Koopman 2004, 86). Old Fort Road in Durban, where the local recording studios of the South African Broadcasting Corporation are situated, has been renamed K.E. Masinga Avenue.

[7] (Jenkins 2007, 154).

became Local Municipalities, and, these all combined to form District Municipalities. By Act of Parliament, all these municipalities had to be named. Almost invariably towns and cities with ‘colonial’ names used their African language vernacular names as the name of the municipality, while retaining the original name for the place. So in South Africa today, the City of Durban is run by the eThekwini Municipality, the City of Pretoria is run by the Tshwane Municipality, and Bloemfontein by the Mangaung Municipality. In Pietermaritzburg, the city council decided not to use the Zulu name *eMgungundlovu*⁸, but chose the name of the river running through the city, becoming the uMsunduzi Municipality.

The newsletter of the eThekwini Municipality – *eGagasi Metro* – provides numerous examples of the subtle distinction in function and use in the dual-name partnership between *Durban* and *eThekwini*. In any issue we find statements like: “eThekwini has recently purchased eight new street sweeping lorries, so the streets of Durban will be cleaner than ever” or “The citizens of Durban have welcomed the idea of paying rates in advance, so eThekwini’s finances have never looked better”. The municipal newsletter of the uMsunduzi Municipality makes similar distinctions between the names uMsunduzi and Pietermaritzburg. I do not have access to the municipal newsletters of any other cities in South Africa, but in Pietermaritzburg and Durban this onomastic partnership involving place and management works very well indeed.

The Pretoria/Tshwane partnership, however, has been under threat for a number of years. In 2005, the 150th anniversary of the founding of Pretoria, the ANC-governed City of Tshwane Metropolitan Council decided to change the name of the city from *Pretoria* to *Tshwane* ([Jenkins 2007](#), 158). This decision, however, has been difficult to effect. Jenkins (*op.cit* 158–163, and [Jenkins \(2010\)](#)) gives extensive details of administrative procedures not correctly followed, of court applications instituted against the changes, of ministerial decisions countermanded by later ministers, and so on. By January 2011, the proposed change had still not yet officially taken place. The South African Broadcasting Corporation, however, has been referring to Pretoria as Tshwane for a number of years now, despite court interdictions requiring it to stop this practice.

Of interest in the Pretoria/Tshwane debate has been the number of conflicting theories put forward to explain the meaning and origin of the name ‘Tshwane’. Of these various theories, the Tshwane Municipality has opted for the one that claims that the area, which is dominated by speakers of the language Pedi, was once ruled by a Pedi chief named Tshwane. Despite there being no records of

[8] There are problems of identity with this name. The founding fathers of Pietermaritzburg apparently decided the Zulu name for the city should be *uMgungundlovu*, the name of the chief settlement of Zulu king Dingane, whom they had just decisively defeated and whose *uMgungundlovu* palace they had just burnt to the ground. This transfer of names has never sat well with the local Zulu population, who tend to refer to Pietermaritzburg as *eThawini* ('Town'), and insist that *uMgungundlovu* refers to the historical site of King Dingane's main establishment, some 250 km distance to the north.

this chief in any written or oral archive, they have ‘discovered’ his genealogy, and have even apparently ‘discovered’ an old photograph of chief Tshwane. This photograph has been used to create a bronze statue, and this statue has now been erected in one of the public squares in Pretoria. The late Professor Louis Louwrens, who published an article about the various theories⁹, commented about the Tshwane Municipality’s decision¹⁰: “It is seldom that one is privileged to be present at the very birth of a legend.”

Clearly what we have here is a ‘constructed identity’, and at the same time, a ‘false identity’. Charles Pfukwa, in a recent doctoral thesis on Zimbabwe’s *Noms de Guerre*¹¹, which deals with the self-given nicknames, or war-names, of Zimbabwe’s guerilla fighters during the 1970s war for independence, talks of “intended identities” as against “perceived identities”. The “City of Tshwane” clearly intends its identity to be ‘the city of the original chief named Tshwane’. Whether this will become the perceived identity of its residents in the future remains to be seen. I suspect that this ‘constructed identity’ will very soon find its way into school texts and be permanently embedded as the true identity of the city. After all, one cannot argue with the existence of a bronze statue.

Another ‘colonial’ city which came under a renaming threat, in 2007, was the Eastern Cape city Grahamstown. A South African Press Association report dated 4th October 2007 reported Grahamstown mayor Phumelelo Kate as saying “Whether it costs the Makana municipality two cents or R100-million to change the name of Grahamstown and the names of other places and landmarks, the names will change”. He added that “Grahamstown must go. It’s a name we can’t be proud of, considering history and given the baggage that it carries,” and said that a process to “eliminate the name from the books of this country” was unfolding. He stressed that “only names that make us have nightmares will be changed”. Fellow city councillor Theo Fulani said it was ‘disturbing’ that people were using the issue of costs as a threat to transformation., and stated that “no amount of money could be put on the lives of the many freedom fighters that had been lost during the struggle against apartheid ... if it takes money to transform our country, let it be. We can’t stop, we won’t stop.”

Despite the nightmarish character of the name ‘Grahamstown’, the political baggage it carries, and the determination of the Makana Municipality councillors to “change the name at all costs”, at the beginning of 2011 Grahamstown remains ‘Grahamstown’.

The name ‘Durban’ came under fire in 2003. Jenkins (2007, 104) quotes then president of South Africa Thabo Mbeki as saying:

[9] Louwrens (2006).

[10] Personal communication September 2006

[11] Submitted, examined, and accepted in 2007.

I am embarrassed by the temerity with which the subject of name-changing is approached. There are probably only a handful of places in South Africa named after a white person who wasn't a land-grabbing murderer. The fact that *Grahamstown*, *Harrismith* and, say, *Durban*, are still named after John Graham, Harry Smith and Benjamin d'Urban is appalling.

Four years later 'Zulu history expert' Professor Jabulani Maphalala was quoted in the *Sunday Tribune* of 26th August 2007 as saying about the name 'Durban':

How can it stay when it is named after a colonial oppressor, Sir Benjamin D'Urban? It is not a secret that he was the governor of the Cape and Natal colonies during the frontier wars. He was complicit in the beheading of chief Hints'a of the Gcaleka tribe, whose head was taken to England.

Maphalala's opinion appears in an article by *Sunday Tribune* journalist Agiza Hlongwane, headed "eThekwini change a load of bull". The article was a reaction to comments made the previous week by the mayor of Durban Councillor Obed Mlaba, who had apparently said that he felt embarrassed when people asked him about the meaning of Durban's Zulu name 'eThekwini':

A lot of people overseas have asked, 'What does eThekwini mean? Then you start saying 'Well, you see, um, please pass me the milk for my tea', because you are not proud to unpack what it means.'

Mlaba's supposed embarrassment, and the phrase "load of bull" in Hlongwane's title, both refer to one of the potential meanings of 'eThekwini'. While the commonly believed explanation is that *eThekwini* is the locative form of the Zulu noun *ithaku* ('bay, lagoon') giving the city a Zulu name meaning 'place of the bay', it is just as possible that the name is derived from the other meaning of *ithaku* ('animal or man with single testicle'). In my 2009 article where I argue the merits of the two possibilities, I conclude that the original Zulu name for Durban was most likely based on the 'testicular geography' of Durban, namely that from the Berea hills above the city, the round shape of the bay, together with the phallic shape of the promontory¹² which separates the bay from the Indian Ocean, give the impression of a penis and a single testicle. These two conflicting interpretations have been hotly debated, on and off, in the press and elsewhere, for many years¹³

[12] Called *The Bluff* in English and *iSibubulungu* in Zulu.

[13] For details of the lengthy debate in the press from November 1978 to January 1979 see Koopman (2004, 76 -79).

While the sub-editors of newspapers may enjoy making suggestive headlines that refer to the single testicle identity of Durban¹⁴, the question remains “Does Durban need to be renamed?”

In 1998, through an Act of Parliament, the South African Geographical Names Council (SAGNC)¹⁵ was formed. Among other duties, the SAGNC has gazetted a number of guidelines to ensure some kind of order in changing place names at national, provincial and municipal levels. These include guidelines which state when a place name *should* be changed, for example when it is deemed offensive, or if it duplicates another existing place name.

The guidelines suggest that a change might be ‘appropriate’ if evidence is strong that a colonial name replaced an earlier name in an indigenous language, and a number of place-names in South Africa have been changed during the past dozen or so years for this reason. There is no guideline which says that a colonial name should be changed simply in order to expedite and support an overall programme of “Africanising” (i.e. “De-Colonialising”) South Africa, although to many critics (usually whites), this often seems to be that case. Nor is there any guideline that says that if a name carries “colonial baggage”, it should be changed.

In the case of Durban, which has marketed itself internationally for many years as a premium tourist venue under this name. the costs of changing to a name like *eThekwini*, which has no international resonance, would be high indeed. But supposing sufficient pressure is put on the relevant authorities to rename Durban, what would be the likely new name?

The original Zulu name *eThekwini* would obviously be a prime candidate. But the city tourist authorities would have to be extremely careful about how they market the city under this name. “Come to The Place of the Bay” has attractive possibilities; the same cannot be said of “Come to The Place of the Single Testicle”. On the other hand, Mpumelelo Mbatha, former chairman of the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Geographical Names Committee, was quoted in Hlongwane’s 2007 *Sunday Tribune* article as saying that “tourists would very excited to know about this” and in the same article former Cape Town Tourist CEO Sheryl Ozinsky said that the city should be capitalising on the ‘single-testicle’ story:

It’s actually hilarious. I can’t see what’s embarrassing about it. Tourists love stories and its always nice to have a story to tell ... What’s wrong with a bull with one testicle?

The Zulu name *eThekwini* is not, however, the sole candidate to replace the name *Durban*. Hlongwane tells us, at the end of his article, that

[14] In addition to the headline “eThekwini change a load of bull” in the *Sunday Tribune* of 26.4.2007, the Pietermaritzburg-based newspaper *The Witness* of 24.4.2007 offered the headline “Durban’s name is a bit of a balls-up, says red-faced mayor”.

[15] For specific details of this, see Jenkins2005:v

KwaKhangel' amankengane is the name King Shaka gave to what is now Durban. KwaKhangela, in short has been mooted as a replacement for Durban.

The statement “KwaKhangel’ amankengane is the name King Shaka gave to what is now Durban” needs a little elucidation. Bryant (1929, 644) tells us that when King Shaka sent the *umGumanqa* regiment to the vicinity of Port Natal in the 1820s to keep an eye on the newly arrived white settlers, they became known by the nickname *uKhangel-a-amankengane* ('keep an eye on the vagabonds'). Over the years it has been generally accepted by a variety of writers and authorities that this regiment established a barracks on the shore of the bay, named *KwaKhangela*, and it is this name that has morphed into the current name *Congella*, the name of an area of wharves, repair docks, and shipping-related establishments on the western side of the bay. Unfortunately, there is no evidence whatsoever, in either written or oral sources of the existence of this supposed barracks named ‘KwaKhangela’. What is very well documented is the existence of the small village erected by Boer commandant Andries Pretorius in the 1840s on the site of the modern Congella. Pretorius named this small settlement ‘Congella’, almost certainly adapting the name of the second-largest establishment of King Dingane¹⁶ – KwaKhangela – situated on the White Mfolozi River several hundred kilometres north of Durban. Such a transfer of name would have followed the pattern set by Pretorius’ fellow Boers who had transferred the name *uMgungundlovu* (Dingane’s principal establishment) to their new town Pietermaritzburg a few years previously¹⁷. It would be ironic indeed if the name ‘Durban’ should be discarded on the grounds that it is carrying offensive colonial baggage, to replace it with a name only associated geographically with Durban because a Boer commandant ‘borrowed’ a Zulu name from several hundred of kilometres away.

Durban still has to make a decision about changing the name of the city. As I see it they could

- retain the current name *Durban*, which ex-President Thabo Mbeki sees as commemorating a “land-grabbing murderer” and which many other, mainly black, citizens see as “carrying colonial baggage”; or
- change it to *eThekwini*, with its image of a mono-testicular bovine, which will at least allow wags to make jokes about Durban being ‘on the ball’ or a place where ‘tourists can really have a ball’; or
- change it to *KwaKhangela*, the name Shaka supposedly gave to Durban, which will have the benefit of linking the city onomastically to its new air-

[16] Shaka’s half-brother and successor to the Zulu throne.

[17] See footnote 8 above.

port¹⁸, but will require careful hushing up of the links to Boer Commandant Andries Pretorius and his bayside village Congella.

[4] STREET NAME CHANGES IN DURBAN

So far, we have looked at the name of the city as a whole, within the context of *already executed* changes, as well as *threatened* city and town name changes in other parts of South Africa. We now need to go ‘within’ the city and look at recent changes to Durban’s street names. Azaryahu has pointed out that

Politically motivated renaming of streets is a common feature of periods of revolutionary changes. As a ritual of revolution, the ‘renaming of the past’ is a demonstrative act of substantial symbolic value and political resonance, introducing the political ideological shift into ostensibly mundane and even intimate levels of human activities and settings. ([Azaryahu 1997](#), 479)

Yeoh makes the same point about the symbolic value when she says that

... naming a place, whether as a deliberate act or informally, is also a social activity; it embodies some of the struggle for control over the means of symbolic production in the urban landscape ... ([Yeoh 1992](#), 313)

Duncan Light is one of a number of scholars who make the point that street names may have dual functions. Their primary function is (as with almost any kind of name), a referential one. They designate entities. In a city, this designative function is, in Light’s word, to “serve the purpose of orientation within the built environment” ([Light 2004](#), 154). But as Light also points out (*ibid.*), street names may have other, more symbolic functions:

Those names which commemorate key events or personalities from a country’s history are a manifestation of political order, and can be significant expressions of national identity with a powerful symbolic importance. They represent a particular view of the national past which is directly mapped onto urban geography.

Azaryahu makes the dual function of street names equally clearly:

“Alphanumeric street names, as the case of New York so convincingly demonstrates, completely fulfill the primarily practical function of street names, that is to distinguish between different streets,

[18] The King Shaka International Airport, situated 40 km north of Durban, was opened in 2010 just in time for visitors to the FIFA Soccer World Cup in June of that year.

to provide the users of the city with spatial orientation, and to regulate administrative control over the city. The symbolic function of a street name as a vehicle for commemoration is subordinate to the practical function." (Azaryahu 1996, 312)

Note that both Light and Azaryahu talk of 'commemorative names', names which commemorate 'key events or personalities from a country's history'. While South Africa has (to the best of my knowledge) not gone for names such as *25 de Setembro, 24 de Julho, Organizaçao da Nações Unidas, Praça 21 de Outubro, Praçada Independencia, Resistencia and Guerra Popular*¹⁹, new names replacing older names of streets in South African towns have almost invariably commemorated an individual. When the City Council of Durban renamed 181 streets in 1980, all the new names commemorated individuals seen as important in South Africa's recent history. There is no space here to give more than three examples of the new names, and for each a short phrase indicating the historical importance of the person commemorated in the new name, the old street name, and the significance of the old name.

new name: Steve Bantu Biko Road

historical importance: Steve Biko was a major ANC martyr

old name: Mansfield Road

significance: named after the early Mansfield family resident in the area

new name: Gen. Joseph Nduli Street

historical importance: activist, ANC organiser, MK commander

old name: Russell Street

significance: named after Lord John Russell, Prime Minister of Great Britain in 1846

new name: Chris Hani Road

historical importance: assassinated former president of the SACP

old name: North Coast Road

significance: descriptive name

[19] All taken from an undated map of Maputo, Mozambique, published by Map Studio. Maputo (or the Mozambican government) are also apparently keen on naming streets after other countries, and we find street names such as *Angola, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe*. Another, which combines event and toponym is *Acordos de Lusaka*.

An analysis of the new street names for Durban shows that they most belong to a single group: heroes, stalwarts and martyrs of the 'liberation struggle', the ANC-led and dominated powers struggle against colonialism, white domination and apartheid²⁰:

- 'long-time President of the ANC Women's League',
- 'giant of the liberation struggle',
- 'veteran ANC politician and recruiter',
- 'long-time struggle hero',
- 'SACP struggle activist'.
- 'MK member killed in action',
- 'early struggle stalwart and ANC politician',
- 'former ANC Youth League President',
- 'ANC trade unionist and Robben Island²¹ veteran', and
- 'young lion of the SACP'

Both Azaryahu (1996, 317) and Light (2004, 156) point out that politically motivated renaming involves a two-fold process: decommemoration and commemoration. Light puts it like this:

"Renaming streets involves simultaneous processes of de-commemoration and a new commemoration. The new names may reflect a radically different narrative of national history, and may be a component of a broader process of redefining senses of national identity. Thus, replacing one set of street names with another set entails inscribing discourses and counter-discourses of power and identity onto topography."

To see whether or not the many new names of Durban's streets "reflect a radically different narrative of national history", we need to look at the names which have been replaced. Several of the older names were descriptive in nature: *North Coast Road*, *Broad Street*, *Commercial Road*, *Brickfield Rd* (where originally a brick factory existed) *Essenwood Road* (lined with 'essenwood' or 'ironwood' trees), *Old Fort*

[20] ANC: African National Congress; MK: uMkhonto Wesizwe ('Spear of the Nation' – the armed wing of the ANC); SACP: South African Communist Party.

[21] The infamous prison for political prisoners of the apartheid government, on Robben Island a few kilometres offshore from Cape Town. It is now a popular tourist venue.

Road. These names can be considered politically neutral, with no ‘colonial’ profiles, apart from the last-named, perhaps, which refers to the fort built by British forces in the 1840s to protect themselves against attacks from Boer Commandant Andries Pretorius’ forces. But most of the replaced names were themselves commemorative, and can be roughly divided into three groups: commemorating (1) long-time residents of the locality on which a road was newly laid out, (2) individuals who contributed in one way or another to the good of the city, and (3) colonial officials, for the most part not resident in the city (or even in the country). Examples of older, now replaced, street names from the three groups are:

Long-term residents: McDonald Road (an original resident of the area); Moore Road (long-time early inhabitant of the area); Marriott Road (long-standing family resident in the locality); Warwick Avenue (old resident family)

Contributing individuals: Field Street (William Swan Field, first Collector of Customs and Resident Magistrate in the 1850s), Francois Road (Dr Charles A Francois, Town Councillor and later Deputy Mayor, 1914 to 1924), Brickhill Rd (James Brickhill, leading trader and businessman in the 1850s)

Colonial officials: Grey Street (Earl Grey, British Secretary of State for the Colonies in the 1850s), Russell Street (Lord John Russell, Prime Minister of Britain in the 1850s), West Street (Martin West, first Lieutenant-Governor of Natal 1845 to 1849)

Although not commemorating persons, old street names like *Blair Atholl Road* (named for a small town in Perthshire, Scotland) and *Stamford Hill Road* (named for a suburb of London) are undoubtedly ‘colonial’ in nature.

Few though these examples above are, there can be little doubt that the historical identity of the urban landscape of Durban has undergone considerable change.

A cursory analysis of the streets taken as a whole shows that the Durban City Council was not targeting specific names for replacement. Although a more intensive mapping analysis needs to be done, it seems fairly clear that what they were targeting was major thoroughfares and socially-economically significant roads, and these often were named for individuals. Their approach contrasts strongly with the deliberations of the City Council in KwaZulu-Natal capital Pietermaritzburg, who decided much earlier in the 2000s to rename selected roads and streets in the city, with the publicly stated intention of “redefining senses of national identity” (to use Light’s words again). They specifically did NOT target streets already carrying a commemorative name, and only changed the names of streets carrying a neutral name like *Berg* (‘mountain’) Street, *Commercial Road*, and *Longmarket Street*. The Pietermaritzburg City Council were also careful not to choose only the names of people strongly linked with one political party, or even

with ‘the struggle’, but chose a wide range of people, all of whom had contributed specifically to the well-being of Pietermaritzburg in one way or another. The people whose names now grace the urban landscape of Pietermaritzburg were writers, theologians, community leaders, philanthropists and – yes – some of them were ANC-linked activists who had contributed to the struggle. They also only changed the names of 16 streets, a comparatively small number when looking at the situation in Durban.

This conciliatory approach did not, however, prevent a great public outcry, mainly conducted through the “Letters to the Editor” columns in the local newspaper *The Witness*²². Considerable as the public outcry against street renaming was in Pietermaritzburg, it was nothing compared to the level of protest which took place in Durban, to which we now turn.

[5] RESISTANCE AGAINST THE RENAMING OF STREETS IN DURBAN

[Light \(2004\)](#) has pointed out that

[S]treet names – like other public memorialisations of a nation – are subject to multiple readings and interpretations. As such, they may become the focus of struggle and resistance over the significance of the past which they commemorate (p. 156).

Azaryahu provides more detail on the issues of ‘legitimacy’, ‘political dissent and opposition’, and ‘resistance to renaming’:

The intentions of political elites and the extent of popular support for these notwithstanding, the challenge to the legitimacy of names as well as the historical traditions they represent is embedded into the politics of street names. The belonging of commemorative street names to the symbolic foundations of the established order makes them, together with other symbolic expressions of power, potential focal points of political dissent and opposition, whereas the rejection of names by a population, or segments of it is a profound act of resistance. In a case where street names are perceived as being associated with political repression, the resistance may take various forms. One possibility is to avoid altogether the use of the official name in an act that amounts to civil disobedience. ([Azaryahu 1996](#), 315)

An excellent example of the ‘challenge to the legitimacy of names’ and ‘acts that amount to civil disobedience’ is provided by [Alderman \(2000\)](#). When African

[22] This form of protest lasted for more than a year, and has been well documented in [Hilterman & Koopman \(2003\)](#).

Americans living in Chattanooga in Tennessee requested the city council to change the name *Ninth Street* to *M.L.King, Jr. Boulevard*, and the council refused

... 300 African Americans marched along the street. Armed with ladders and singing "We Shall Overcome", they defiantly yet temporally renamed the street by pasting street signs with bumper stickers that read "Dr. ML King, Jr. Blvd." ([Alderman 2000](#), 673).

The points made by both Light and Azaryahu above, if applied to the case of Durban, would seem to apply to two different instances of opposition and resistance. Street names commemorating the daughters of Queen Victoria, colonial officials, whites-only early residents, and English and Scottish towns would unquestionably appear to post-apartheid South Africans (especially of the ruling party) as being "symbolic foundations of the established order" and "symbolic expressions of power [that are] potential focal points of political dissent and opposition". Given such an interpretation it is not surprising that a new politically order (the ANC-led Durban City Council) would want to 'challenge the legitimacy of [earlier] names as well as the historical traditions they represent'.

The resistance which I now wish to detail, though, i.e. opposition to the *new* names, is more that of "the rejection of names by a population, or segments of it". The two segments of population who have protested about the new names are (1) white residents of the city who identify with the colonial heritage of the city and/or support the political opposition party the Democratic Alliance (DA), and (2) mainly black Zulu-speaking supporters of Mangosuthu Buthelezi's Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), another opposition party.

Resistance to the new names has taken many forms, including

- court challenges to the legitimacy of the street renaming, brought by DA members of the city council,
- mass protest meetings and marches, sometimes violent, mainly by IFP members,
- extensive and ongoing letters of protest to the local press, mainly (but not entirely) by white residents²³, and
- the spray-painting and other physical desecration of new name signboards, mainly by white residents of streets so affected.

Much of the protest has been directed personally against Dr Michael Sutcliffe, the Durban City manager, whom many people see as personally responsible for

[23] Identified by Professor Colin Gardner, ANC-supporting Council Speaker of Pietermaritzburg during the renaming protests there as "the great letter-writing public".

the “destruction of our heritage”, to quote a phrase which has appeared again and again in protest letters.

The resistance against the new names has been documented in an article by [Turner \(2009\)](#) who quotes viewpoints both for and against the renaming of Durban’s streets. Mayor Obed Mlaba (whom we met earlier in this article requesting more milk in his tea when asked what ‘eThekwini’ meant), as the leader of the ANC-dominated Durban City Council, was of course obliged to support the changes, and his message to Durban residents in the municipal newsletter *Ezasegagasini*, quoted by Turner reads:

The spoils of democracy include ensuring that the towns and cities, the roads and streets reflect the people and history, the collective culture of ALL South Africans. Universal franchise alone will not undo decades of oppression and racism ([Turner 2009](#), 129).

On the other hand, “political commentator Darryl Illbury had strong words to say” to say about a “power-hungry cabal led by Mayor Obed Mlaba and City Manager Mike Sutcliffe”. Turner quotes him:

Through collusive dealing and double-dealing, and their cunning influence over a insipidly malleable city council, these two have abused the trust of a largely ignorant and uninvolved electorate to entrench themselves in a position where they influence the lives of hundreds of thousand of people at a whim. They pull the strings and you have to dance. Like it or not they now have the power to change the names of roads and places at will; and this is what they are doing. A number of the name changes even salute those whose extremist vitriol demanded imposition of a Soviet-style one-party autocracy on this country rather than a multi-party democracy. ([Turner 2009](#), 128)

Strong words indeed, but Illbury was not alone in expressing his anger. Similar emotions could frequently be found in the letter columns of various Durban based newspapers . The following is just a brief selection. From *The Independent on Saturday* dated 14.03.2009 we read

The mayor of Durban tells us ... to respect our history and not obliterate it.

...

No, Mr Mayor, it is you who are obliterating history not us – whether or like it or not our early forefathers of Durban did some good and have created history.

A writer to *The Tribune* of 26.07.2009 offered the following opinion:

Gone, too, are the old familiar street names replaced by long, difficult unpronounceable²⁴ names of the heroes of the liberation movement.

Not a street name has been left untouched. All the names of people who built the city are gone, trampled by the jackboots of the ANC and its bully Mike Sutcliffe.

And in similar vein from *The Independent on Saturday* of 14.03.2009:

Then there are the great ego-boosting activities such as wholesale street naming, which apart from being divisive, serves only to cause frustration and confusion among visitors and locals. Honouring heroes of the past is very necessary but surely this should be done in a manner which does not lead to wholesale confusion.

These letters are fairly representative of a groundswell of anger and frustration among a certain segment of the population. Changes of whatever sort often produce anger, frustration and resistance, but nowhere else in South Africa have there been mass protest marches, spray-painted street signs and such vitriolic letters to the press. We need to ask why there has been such a negative reaction. Turner, whose phrase ‘odonymic warfare’ in the title of her 2009 article is a fair reflection of the reaction of (mainly white) residents of Durban, identifies three reasons:

- (i) They felt that there had been insufficient consultation and that the ANC majority in the City Council had simply ‘steamrollered’ the changes;
- (ii) They felt that the history and heritage of the city, reflecting the numerous individuals who had contributed to the development and growth of the city, had been obliterated; and
- (iii) They felt that the new names were completely one-sided, as they only reflected ANC ‘heroes’.

Let us look briefly at each of these in turn:

- (i) *insufficient consultation*: this has been the subject of legal approaches by DA-supporting city councillors, and in 2010 the court ruled that the council had acted legally and given the citizens of Durban sufficient time to react. My personal interpretation, based on extensive press reports, is that the City

[24] The names referred to are, of course, easily pronounceable to the majority of the citizens of KwaZulu-Natal, who are Zulu mother-tongue speakers.

Council gave the citizens of Durban comparatively little time (a month or two), certainly when compared to the Pietermaritzburg City Council, which gave its citizens three years to react to proposed changes.

(ii) *obliteration of history and heritage*: This is partially true. While statements like the one recorded above, namely that “not a street name has been left untouched. All the names of people who built the city are gone” are wild exaggerations, given that several hundred of Durban’s street names still reflect the names of earlier, white citizens. But, as indicated earlier, the name *Brickfield Road* reminds urban citizens of a brickfield established earlier in the vicinity, and the name *Old Fort Road* is a reminder of an important historical clash between British and Boer Forces in the formative days of the city. These reminders are no longer part of the visual fabric of the city.

What is of specific interest in the issue of ‘obliteration of history and heritage’ is that it was the ANC-majority government which in Act No.25 of 1999 set up a national heritage body, the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA). Its aim, reflected on its 2008 poster, is as follows:

The South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) has a mandate in terms of the National Heritage Resources Act No.25, 1999, to manage heritage resources for the present and future generations. According to the Act it is the policy of SAHRA to conserve and manage heritage resources (both sites and objects) associated with oral tradition or living heritage.

The poster goes on to detail various aspects of ‘Living Heritage’, including ‘Cultural Tradition, Oral History, Performance and Rituals’, and includes both ‘Popular Memory’ and ‘Street names’ in its list of what is required to be preserved in terms of Act 25 of 1999. The poster of the following year, 2009, shows prominently a number of street signs, suggesting that the preservation of street names is a priority. Two things intrigue me personally about the 1999 Act vis-a-vis Durban’s street name changes. One is that none of the legal challenges to the renaming appear to have thought of using this act as part of the legal action. The other is that I am yet to see any statement about street renaming from the director of SAHRA, who incidentally lives in and has his office in Durban. One might perhaps have thought that a government agency which claims street name preservation as one of its important goals could at least have said *something* when 181 street names are replaced.

- (iii) *only ANC ‘heroes’*: again, this is only partially true. The first name in an alphabetical list of the new names is that of famous author Alan Paton²⁵, a founder member of the Liberal Party. Other names are given with no indication of whether those commemorated in new street names were members of the ANC or not. But there is certainly no question that the list leans very heavily towards supporters of the ANC and related bodies such as the South African Communist Party, the military wing of the ANC uMkhonto Wesizwe, the South African Indian Congress, and the like.

It seems useful, perhaps, in looking at the reasons for such resistance to street renaming in Durban to look at a wider, global context, and here Azaryahu makes some very relevant and pertinent remarks about street names in general, and about the reaction of citizens when their familiar street names are changed. First we need to look at the point he makes about new regimes needing to assert themselves in overt acts of authority:

The renaming of streets is a conventional manifestation of a stage of liminal transition in political history, when the need of the new regime for legitimacy and self-presentation is especially high. In a revolutionary context the renaming of streets, in addition to the more spectacular pulling down of monuments, is an act of political propaganda with immense proclamative value and public resonance ([Azaryahu 1996](#), 318).

That the renaming of streets has “public resonance” is unquestionably true of the case of Durban. It is also clear from the tone of many letters to the press in Durban over the last two or three years that many citizens see street renaming as “political propaganda”. Azaryahu continues:

Through renamings, the new regime proclaims the beginning of a new era while demonstrating both its resoluteness and its self-confidence. The act of renaming asserts that a radical restructuring of power relations in society has indeed been accomplished, or is underway, and it indicates a profound reconstruction of social and political institutions. As is often the case in such circumstances, renaming streets is both a celebration of triumph and a mechanism for settling scores with the vanquished regime.

The last sentence here seems particularly relevant to the Durban scenario. Without once again quoting from contributions to “Letters to the Editor” pages

[25] Honoured in Pietermaritzburg by changing the name of the main highway from Durban leading into the city from *Durban Road* to *Alan Paton Avenue*. There was not one word of protest about this change.

in the press, I can confidently assert that many of the white minority in Durban today feel that the ‘new’ government is both ‘celebrating a triumph’ and ‘settling scores with the vanquished regime’.

Another issue raised by Azaryahu relates to the primary function of street names, namely to serve as spatial orientation guides in the urban environment. Street names are of course not the only orientation guides used by long-term residents of a city: all sorts of other aspects of the urban landscape serve as visual guides too, such as certain buildings, facades, street furniture, monuments and statues, open spaces, parks and gardens, and many more. These visual aids, together with street names, accumulate in the memory of long-term residents, and enable them to find their way about complex cities. Such visual aids are not available to short-term residents such as visitors and tourists, and tourists are frequently and reliably identified by their habit of consulting a map and then peering up at the nearest street sign. [Azaryahu \(1996\)](#) acknowledges this when he says “For a tourist, of course, renamings mean spatial confusion, especially before a stage of equilibrium is reached and the city maps are again trustworthy as ‘true’ representations of the city.” (p. 317)

Yet another aspect of street renaming is that street names accumulate individual layers of memories. To most members of an urban environment, Victoria Street, say, is known to be the most convenient street to use when you want to go from the railway station to the city market (the orientation function). But to one person the name *Victoria Street* may evoke the memory of “Why, that’s the street with the wonderful little café on the corner where I met my future wife”. To another person the same name may mean “That’s the street the tram followed when we used to take it to go to the seaside”. To me personally the Durban street name *Musgrave Road* evokes memories of wonderful swooping curves on the ups and downs of that road. Wonderful, that is, for a young boy riding his bicycle across the Durban Berea hills on the way to school. This accumulation of ‘place-specific memories’ is also acknowledged by Azaryahu as something that can easily be lost when names change:

Renaming a street has a substantial effect not only on the city but also on its human experience and cognition. A rude intervention in routinized practices and traditional relations between ordinary people and their habitat effects a cognitive dissonance and mental and communication disarray, at least temporarily. Renamings also disrupt the continuous accumulation of place-specific memories that are meaningful beyond generational differences and constitute a substantial element of the urban cultural texture. ([Azaryahu 1996](#), 317)

The anger expressed in so much of the protest that has taken place in Durban over the last few years about street renaming may well be a result of ‘cognitive dissonance’ and ‘temporary communication disarray’.

Another factor about street names is that they are “another way of institutionalising a particular narrative of national history into the everyday consciousness of the urban populace” (Light 2004, 154). Street names are always visible. They are always there when one travels around the urban environment, on each corner and intersection. They are needed when an envelope or parcel is addressed. Newspaper and television advertisements exhort us to buy at such-and-such an establishment on such-and-such a street. This ‘everyday consciousness’ is used, suggests Azaryahu (1996), by astute politicians to put their message across in a subtle manner:

[T]he utilization of street names for commemorative purposes enables an official version of history to be incorporated into spheres of social life which seem to be totally detached from political contexts or communal obligations, and to be integrated into intimate realms of human interactions and activities.

Commemorative street names provide a distinguished example of the intersection of hegemonic ideological structures with the spatial practices of everyday life. (Azaryahu 1996, 321)

[6] THE ‘INSENSITIVITY FACTOR

To return to the Durban case study, one last factor that could account for high anger and resistance levels, could be termed the ‘insensitivity factor’, and here we are referring to specific and individual cases involving specific names. I mention just four of them; Turner (2009) gives specific details of all of these and a number of others.

[6.1] *Edwin Swales VC Drive changed to Solomon Mahlangu Avenue:*

Edwin Swales, a Durban-born pilot of the South African Air Force in World War II, was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross in 1945 for ‘gallant conduct’ in flying his crippled aircraft back to friendly territory in such a way that he himself was killed but all members of the crew were able to parachute to safety²⁶. Solomon Mahlangu left South Africa aged 19 in 1976 to undergo specialist military training in Angola, returned a year later with two companions, and was involved in a shooting incident with police which left two dead. He was hanged two years later in Pretoria on a charge of the murder of two white civilians²⁷. To supporters of the armed struggle against apartheid, Mahlangu’s killing (or involvement in

[26] (McIntyre 1956, 46).

[27] <http://www.durban.gov.za/durban/government/renaming/bios/>.

the killing) of two white policemen is a heroic act, and he is considered a notable ANC martyr. To another segment of the population, particularly those identifying with the ‘gallant conduct’ of Edwin Swales, the name of their hero has been replaced with the name of a murderer, and many have expressed their feelings about this publicly.

[6.2] *Kingsway to Andrew Zondo Drive:*

Kingsway was the name of a major thoroughfare in the coastal resort town Amanzimtoti, which although it lies some 20km south of the city of Durban, falls within the ambit of the wider Durban municipality. In September 1986 19-year-old Andrew Zondo was sentenced to death for planting a bomb in a rubbish bin in an Amanzimtoti shopping centre on *Kingsway*, which resulted in numerous severe injuries and five deaths including that of three children (Turner 2009, 124). As a result of the recent street name changes, the erstwhile *Kingsway* is now *Andrew Zondo Road*. Again, one sector of the population may well regard Zondo as a ‘struggle hero’ and ‘liberation martyr’. To still-living relatives of those killed or maimed in the bomb blast, however, this renaming may appear not only insensitive but distinctly provocative.

[6.3] *Mangosuthu Highway to Griffiths Mxenge Highway*

This proposed change reflects a different kind of power dynamic in the province of KwaZulu-Natal to those mentioned above: here the issue is not one of different world-views of ‘colonial-minded whites’ versus ‘liberation-struggle blacks’, but rather that of different mainly black-supported political groups. Mangosuthu Buthelezi is the long-term president of the KwaZulu-Natal based opposition political party the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), the hereditary chief of the powerful Buthelezi clan, and the son of Princess Magogo Zulu, daughter of Zulu king Dinizulu (1868–1913). In other words he is a man of considerable status who enjoys considerable support in his home province. It was the threat to change the name *Mangosuthu Highway* to *Griffiths Mxenge Highway* (honouring, not surprisingly, an ‘ANC stalwart and struggle hero’) that brought thousands of angry IFP on a protest march to the city hall. To the best of my knowledge, this is the only proposed name change which was not carried out in the end, and *Mangosuthu Highway* remains *Mangosuthu Highway*.

[6.4] *Point Road to Mahatma Gandhi Road*

Point Road for many years was the name of a road circling the Durban harbour on its northern edge, and the name is associated in the minds of most Durban residents with sleazy dives and strip clubs, with drugs, alcohol abuse and prostitution. Many Durban residents were dismayed, therefore, when it was proposed to name this road in commemoration of Mahatma Gandhi. They felt that the philosophies

espoused by Gandhi were the very antithesis to the activities characteristic of Point Road. (Turner 2009, 124). On the other hand, there were those who believed that the name of Mahatma Gandhi might well have a benign influence on the nature of Point Road, and strangely enough, this does seem to be what has happened. A *Sunday Tribune* report of 13.09.2009, under the heading “Red light district fades away”, stated *inter alia* that

It ... seems prostitutes have taken their wares from Mahatma Gandhi (formerly Point Road) and opted for quieter residential suburbs, leaving the Point area.

When the Sunday Tribune visited the area last week the streets were empty and clean.

A drive along the infamous prostitute hang-out at night revealed the same situation.

I myself had occasion to visit the Point area of the harbour late in 2010, and drive along the newly-renamed *Mahatma Gandhi Road*, and certainly the road and the area generally bore no resemblance to the sleazy dock-side suburb of my youth.

The point of this last story, as with the three others above, is that it is usually only one sector of the population which sees certain street names changes as insensitive. Others might well see the same change in a much more positive light.

[7] CONCLUSIONS:

The proposed and actual changes to the identity of Durban have caused much heated debate. While the debate around the possible changes to the name *Durban* itself have been somewhat muted, the debate about street name changes has been considerable. This is almost certainly to do with the fact, mentioned above, that the street names have daily impact on the lives of urban residents.

Within the global context, the street name changing in Durban seems ‘normal’ and inevitable. Writer after writer sees such changes as predictable when there is a change of political regime. As for the heated nature of the debate, Meiring gets right to the point when she writes:

The inherent qualities of names make them instruments of heated debates. No name is completely neutral in the collective memory of a society and its various networks, because the very essence of names is their descriptive backing, the things people and society identify with when using the name. (Meiring 1994, 75)

Given then, that the street reaming in Durban can be seen as inevitable, the only curiosity, to my mind, is why the ANC-dominated Durban City Council waited

for some thirteen or so years after taking power in 1994 to make these changes. I have quoted Azaryahu above as saying that “Through renamings, the new regime proclaims the beginning of a new era while demonstrating both its resoluteness and its self-confidence”. One can hardly claim that 2007 is still part of a new era for a political regime voted into power in 1994.

The other lesson to be learnt from global examples of renaming places is that each cycle of renaming is no more than that – part of a continual cycle of change. Azaryahu’s examples of the changes of street names in Berlin, and Horsman’s examples of the changing of the names of mountains and peaks in the Pamir range over different and succeeding political hegemonies, should make it clear that the new names that have given Durban’s urban landscape a new identity are not necessarily permanent. As [Light \(2004\)](#) puts it:

[S]treet names are not eternal. A change in political order is frequently accompanied by the redefining of the national past through the renaming of streets [and] new narratives of national history and identity are inscribed onto the urban landscape (p. 154).

[Azaryahu \(1996\)](#) makes a similar point:

In their capacity both as historical references and as spatial designations they provide for the conflation of history and geography. Potentially contested and eventually challenged, commemorative street names concretize hegemonic structures of power and authority. (p. 312)

The ephemeral nature of urban identity is not always recognised by those currently in power. For example, ANC politicians have on a number of occasions boasted that “the ANC will be in power until the second coming of Christ”. Some might remember a similar boast made by Nazi leaders in the 1930s. Shirer reminds that Hitler boasted in 1933 that the Third Reich “would endure for a thousand years” (as cited in [Shirer 1964](#), 18). Later he makes the pithy remark that “After twelve years, four months and eight days... the Thousand-Year Reich had come to an end.” (p. 1353)

It may well be that in less than a generation from that the recent uproar about changing names of streets and other places in Durban will be no more than a footnote in historical textbooks (if mentioned at all), and even newer urban identities will have been forged.



FIGURE 1: King George V is replaced by Mazisi Kunene, 'struggle' poet who returned from exile to become "The Poet Laureate of Africa"

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NAMES AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

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ABSTRACT

The preceding two decades have displayed a remarkable awareness for a connection between the concepts “identity” and “cultural memory”. David Lowenthal speaks of a “current craze for heritage”! Cultural heritage has become extremely popular, especially in combination with tourism, and has accordingly been converted into a modern system of meaning — a type of “secular religion”. With reference to collective identity and cultural memory, it is important to ask the cultural analytical questions: “Why identity now? Why heritage now?” My reply is that we experience a critical identity crisis. Three central aspects signify individual and collective identity: Continuity, coherence and individuality. The three aspects, constituting the concept of identity, are exposed to serious threats in the post-modern era: The danger of changeability, fragmentation and standardisation. This tendency has, however, met various compensating counter reactions like for instance “re-traditionalisation”. In my presentation, I will examine the phenomenon cultural memory through examples from the German tradition — principally from the works of Aleida and Jan Assmann.

[1] INTRODUCTION

This article may be more about identity than about names and naming, but I hope and believe that collective and cultural identity theatics will be shown to have a clear relevance to naming theatics.

My own primary fields of interest are those perspectives of identity theatics which are linked to cultural analysis and diagnostics of the present. Over the past couple of decades we have witnessed a virtually explosive increase of interest in various aspects of collective and cultural identity theatics. A central aspect here is the interest in cultural heritage and cultural rememberance, or collective foundation in tradition. Why this intense interest right now, is my question for diagnosing the present.

I shall provide the answer immediately: the strong interest in cultural and collective identity is the product of an identity crisis — a result of, and an answer to, the confusion of identity and the disintegration of sources of identity in the late modern cultural situation. This is for instance the diagnosis of the cultural sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, and it is also my own. The strong involvement in cultural heritage and cultural foundation and rememberance I see as attempts

at compensatory and restorative emergency treatment of identity threatened by dissolution.

[2] IDENTITY — WHAT IS THAT?

Then what is identity? In *Pluralisme og identitet* (Henriksen & Krogseth 2001) I operate with three criteria or main aspects of late modern (or postmodern) identity. The contextual and cultural frames of reference surrounding identity are emphasised by allowing each of the three criteria to be challenged or threatened by a topical counterpart.

The first criterion of identity is constancy or *continuity* through time. Here the counterpart or counter-concept is changeability. In spite of the accelerating changeability of the present time, there are hardly grounds for perceiving our identity or personality as totally changeable, something must be constant. When I look at my own confirmation photo, it can hardly be a total stranger whom I am trying to recognise fifty years later? Or when we make promises, especially long term promises (for instance marriage vows). In a certain sense, the person making the promise is surely the same as the one feeling bound by the promise twenty, thirty or forty years later? Otherwise, it would hardly be possible to make such promises?

The second criterion is identity as *integrity* or inner coherence. Here the counter-concept is fragmentation or disintegration. In spite of all (modern) pluralisation, differentiation and segmentation, most of us feel that we somehow hang together, albeit not always in a well-integrated way. Somewhere we carry and anchor all the contradictory roles imposed on us by modern life. We are not “multiple selves”.

The third criterion is identity as *individuality* or personal character. Here the counter-concept is conformity or homogenisation, for instance as a result of globalisation or other forms of cultural uniformity. Who am I, as opposed to others? Individuality is here confirmed in spite of, often as a protest against, the threat of conformity, often in the form of pronounced demonstration of differences.

The counter positions of the three criteria of identity are so important because they show how radically the formation of identity has been made difficult in the specifically (post)modern cultural context. Perhaps we do not “have” constancy of identity, integrity and distinctive character — as something given and firmly existing? Identity is perhaps only a mental construction, on the basis of (compensatory) needs and wishes? Perhaps the identity sceptics are right when they claim that our identity is nothing but illusion and wishful thinking? We probably have exaggerated ideas of the continuity of the ego, says Peter Berger — perhaps the continuity is only held in place by the thin thread of memory? Perhaps integrity as well is nothing but an expression of a psychological urge to perceive oneself as a whole?

Modern identity, then, is fundamentally threatened. The consequence of this is that it has to receive compensatory emergency treatment, for instance through (re)sacralisation and (re)historicisation. Perhaps we may refer to a double deficiency of modern identity: It is both understimulated as a result of loss of meaning, and also fragmentated and confused as a result of increased pluralisation and differentiation. The flicker effect of consumer, media and market culture also contributes with its identity-disrupting cultural influence.

These different identity conditions in the postmodern cultural context make it impossible to talk about identity as a constant, essential core identity. Instead, it is rather described as an individualised, continually reflexively reconstructed and retold project identity. Nomadic, chameleonic, latticework or palimpsest identity are other frequently used expressions.

[3] CULTURAL AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

So far the primary focus has been identity on individual terms, although the current cultural context has also been mentioned. Then what is collective identity?

It should be specified right away: Individual and collective identity are not different things. Identity is never exclusively individual, not even with a hermite or a Robinson Crusoe. Besides, when we talk of collective — or social or cultural — identity, it is a “personal matter”, it is individually and existentially founded. It is true that one also refers to collective identity on “collective terms”, as the collective’s own identity independent of personal foundation or individual identification. It makes perfect sense to talk of the identity of a collective institution — the subject of onomastics may have its identity, just like the Labour Party or the Norwegian School of Theology may have theirs, etc. We may even refer to the “soul” of an institution to emphasise its distinctive character and inner essence.

However, what happens when we thus interpret collective identity on collectivistic terms, is that we make an analogical transfer from the individual sphere. Such an analogical transfer may under certain conditions be justified. It makes sense to transfer all the three criteria of identity to collective institutions and groupings, as long as one realises the dangers of transference, for instance in the direction of hypostasis or quasi-personalisation. Still, it is of course perfectly possible to attribute to a collective (greater or lesser) continuity through its history, (greater or lesser) integrity or inner coherence — for instance through the ideological basis or objects clause, or (greater or lesser) individuality and distinctive character. It is also perfectly possible and meaningful — and it is being done continually — to transfer individual qualities, such as disease and health, crisis and harmony, to the collective sphere.

In conclusion I will claim that even though we continually come across definitions of collective identity in the sense of the collective’s own identity, the individually collective sense is the primary and original one. Collective identity per-

ceived as the individual's (more or less conscious and reflective) identification of the collective also contains the element of existential and reflexive relationship inherent in the concept of identity. That this individually collective usage erases the distinction between individual and collective identity, is a problem we just have to live with.

Such a collective identity or identification of community may be illustrated by different models. The most well-known one is probably the concentric circle model, where increasingly wide circles are drawn around the individual: close family, extended family, local community, town/suburb, region, nation etc. Another model is the sector or area model, where the individual identifies with a sector of the community – this may be by virtue of gender or sexual identity, class or professional identity, ethnic or religious identity, leisure or lifestyle identity etc.

[4] NAME AND IDENTITY

Collective identity, then, is identity perceived as the individual's identification with the community. The phenomenon of names and naming may also be perceived as such an identity-building collective identification. "Naming", says Derek Alderman, "is a powerful vehicle for promoting identification with the past and locating oneself within networks of memory" ([Alderman 2008](#), 195). The surname or family name includes us – especially when it is based on a farm name or a placename – in a continuity-forming and hence identity-shaping context. So can the first name, for that matter, when children are named for parents and ancestors, but it is still primarily the family name that has this collective identity function. Furthermore, it can also be said that the combination of first name and surname has the individualising and distinctively characterising function which also is part of our identity. Our name is an identity badge or an identity marker which helps us – for ourselves and by others – to be identified as the same person, as identical. It also fills an important double function of being both individual and collective, unique (at least relatively so) and founded in community.

The topic of foundation in family could also inspire further reflection on names, and on identity based on locality or tradition. Genealogy – with its starting point in names – is after all an exciting "archeological" work of excavation where ever new palimpsest levels of our identity are uncovered, and where ever new identity-making stories are topicalised. Here, foundation in locality, in the ancestral farm, the parish, the place of origin, also plays its part as an important collectively identity-making factor. The locality, the limited space, gives integration in a community (the integratedness aspect of identity) and foundation in tradition (the continuity aspect), and the place name and the uniqueness of the place (or origin) also marks distinctive character – or the individuality aspect of identity.

Even though the identity-confirming, conservatory and collectively identifying force of naming must probably be emphasised as the most central function, it should still not be perceived as the only one. Naming, of both families and places, may also be part of other ideological contexts of interest. Names may also be changed and create discontinuity rather than continuity, disruption rather than stability. That may apply on the individual level in connection with the change of surname because of marriage, and it may apply on the collective level in connection with renaming of place names. Here marginalisation and oppression, conflicts and territorial discords of interest (e.g. in relation to the territories of indigenous peoples) may also come into play. This is also valid in connection with the identity function of cultural heritage. The way in which cultural memory links the past to the present is very much an “ideologically driven process”, according to Derek Alderman ([Alderman 2008](#), 199).

[5] CULTURAL HERITAGE AND CULTURAL MEMORY

The named ancestral home gives “space” for shared identity-making memory – on material as well as symbolic-mental terms. The place or space emerges as something more stable and safely accessible than the floating changeability of time. The places of memory evoke the remains of earlier experiences, making tradition and the past visible and present. They also tend to become the sites of ritual feasts, celebrations and anniversaries, or of mythifying stories of origin, filling them with mnemonic energy and sacralisation.

Mythified and sacralised places of memory are also a central topic in cultural heritage and cultural memory. As mentioned initially, I see the current “craze for heritage” ([Lowenthal 1985](#)) as a culture-analytically particularly interesting aspect of our era’s compensatory cultivation of identity. Accelerating changeability and fragmentation in contemporary culture has created a crisis of memory and identity characterised by a new problematic relationship to time and foundation in tradition ([Bauman 2000](#)). The lack of master narratives and perspectives of continuity to link the past and the present in an identity-making and meaningful way challenges cultural scholars to establish new and different perspectives of impartation and topicalisation regarding tradition and experiences of the past (different from the objectivist, disruptive and continuity-weakening historical research). Central theoreticians of cultural heritage point out that we are currently in a “post-historical paradoxical situation” of both ahistoricity and re-historicalisation, loss of tradition and re-traditionalisation, oblivion and “museummania”, amnesia and “memory-boom” ([Lowenthal 1985](#); [Huysse 1995](#), etc.).

Cultural heritage and cultural memory are about our relationship to the past, and the significance of the past to the present. It is a matter of imparting a heritage as vividly as possible, of establishing new links – creating continuity and making identity – to past experiences. The contemporary interest in cultural

heritage, retraditionalisation and “back to the roots” tendencies in general, are the response to acute needs for cultural compensation, to a development which uproots, divides and uniforms us. The cultivation of the past and of cultural heritage emerges as an acutely necessary basis for identity.

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CAN CHOOSING THE FORM OF A NAME BE AN ACT OF IDENTITY?

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses if place names can be used to construct and express identity, with a focus 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 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. Many people prefer the spelling of names of natural features to be as close as possible to the dialectal pronunciation, whereas they prefer older, often ornamental spellings or spellings which differ from the pronunciation when it comes to the names of farms and parishes. This paper looks at the reasons for these attitudes towards the spelling of place names, and is highlighted by some theory pertaining to language and identity.

[1] INTRODUCTION

During the last decades, there has been quite a bit of sociolinguistic research on the possible connection between language and identity. The notion of “acts of identity” has successfully been introduced by researchers Robert Le Page and Andrée Tabouret-Keller (1985), and is based on the linguistic studies of various pidgin and Creole speaking communities. Out of the studies of these multilingual societies, the authors claim that linguistic behaviour can be looked upon “as a series of acts of identity in which people reveal both their personal identity and their search of social roles” (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller 1985, 14). This theory assumes that speech expresses a lot about the speaker’s attitudes, values and search for their social roles (op.cit.). In this sense, language is looked upon as an expression of identity. Language users must have a common awareness of what values are connected to the different features of their language so that the language can function as an identity marker, and this awareness can be both conscious and unconscious (op.cit., 181).

Language functions not only as an expression of identity, but is also looked upon as an important and available resource for identity construction. According to sociolinguistic research, it seems as if certain parts of a language are used more

for identity construction, while other parts are more an expression of identity ([Pedersen 2001](#), 48). There is no dichotomy between these two characteristics of language and identity, and both should be taken into consideration when talking about language and identity.

Within onomastics, we have seen a growing interest over the past few years in discussing whether there could be a connection between place names and identity. Place names constitute part of a language, and as linguistic utterances, one should assume that place names in addition to other parts of a language can function as units in expressing or constructing identity. Since place names, in contrast to appellatives, denote an individual unit - a definite place on earth - this characteristic must also be taken into consideration when discussing the circumstances connected to place names and identity.

In Norway, there have been many experiences in which the official spelling of a place name is not accepted by the local inhabitants, especially as it applies to farm names. A disagreement between a farm owner and the authorities in regard to the spelling of a farm's name even led to a trial that ended up in the Norwegian Supreme Court in 1961 ([NOU 1983:6](#), 42). How could a farmer's opinion towards a certain spelling of a name be understood? Could a desire to use a certain written form of a place name be highlighted by theories connected to language and identity? In this paper, I will try to discuss the various circumstances connected to this topic, and illustrate the discussion with some examples of Norwegian place names where public authorities and farm owners/local inhabitants have had differences of opinion to how place names should be spelled.

[2] NAMES AND CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY

As previously mentioned, quite a bit of sociolinguistic research has indicated that language is an important means in relation to the expression and construction of identity. Names make up an important part of language, although up until recently, there has not been much focus on what type of function place names may have in the expression or construction of identity. [Helleland \(2009\)](#) focuses on the impact that knowledge of place names has for an individual, and the fact that it is natural for a human being to have roots in the past and feel attached to the place names of their childhood. Place names are not only geographical addresses, but also mental maps of surroundings. A name reveals the features of a landscape or events of the past; thus, names convey information pertaining to both the present and the past. Helleland (op.cit., 30) argues the knowledge of place names in one's surroundings may give a feeling of confidence, and if a person obtains a deeper knowledge of the history and meaning of the names in a certain area, this may further contribute to a person's well-being. Helleland (*ibid.*) refers to the scholar Huldén, who has pointed to the social effect of people of knowing the same place names: "To be familiar with the same name is to know a little about each other.

The names are social signals of solidarity." ([Huldén 1994](#), 33). The knowledge of a place's name is linked to social relationships because a single person does not in fact need place names. Place names make up part of a communication system shared by a social group, and the names "function as a social consensus or a sort of an agreement reached over many generations" ([Helleland 2009](#), 30).

These judgements focus on the impact that place names may have on the identity of a person, i.e. the construction of personal identity. It is well known that place names have been used as important tools in helping to create a national identity. In the former Soviet Union, up to half of all place names were replaced in order to establish a new identity for the vast territory of the USSR, and the place name changes "were directly related to the ideological, political and national policy of the authorities" ([Saparov 2003](#), 181). In Norway, in the spirit of the Norwegianisation of the Saami and Kven minorities during the 19th and 20th centuries ([Bull 2005](#)), the place names of minority languages were, if possible, translated into Norwegian or left off on official maps. This strategy could be labelled as toponymic silence: the removal of native place names from maps in order to create a new understanding in the population with regard to the cultural situation in an area ([Greenwald 2005](#), 26; [Helander 2006](#), [Helander 2008](#), 96 f.). In the following, we shall consider the possibilities of using place names as a means of expressing personal identity.

[2.1] *Linguistic variation and expression of identity*

A characteristic feature of speech is variation, and variation has to do with the fact that all human beings have several linguistic registers at their disposal. Variation in linguistic registers is related to communicative situations and the different features which may vary could be connected to external linguistic factors. A typical variation pattern is between features belonging to a formal or informal style. The recurring features in speech must be understood on the basis of rules applied to communication among the members of a certain linguistic society and the attitudes associated with various linguistic features. The so-called accommodation theory (e.g. [Giles & Powesland 1997 \[1975\]](#)) has proved to be useful in helping to understand the individual usage of linguistic patterns, while the same is true of the theory about linguistic behaviour being understood in light of personal and social identity.

An example of linguistic variation is, for instance, the pronunciation /'fesk/ versus /'fisk/ "fish" in the Tromsø dialect. The pronunciation of a short /e/ shows that you follow the traditional dialect, a lowered quality of the vowel as is commonly found in North Norwegian dialects. The /e/-pronunciation connotes local values and emphasises the state of being Northern Norwegian (cf. in that previously one could hear jokes like – told by Norwegians from Oslo and the surrounding area – "What is 25 metres long and smells of fesk"? A bus filled with Northern

Norwegians"). The pronunciation /'fesk/ in Tromsø shows that a person follows the traditional variety of the Tromsø dialect, and this pronunciation was commonly used until the 1970s and the establishment of the University of Tromsø. From that point forward, Tromsø received many new immigrants with various Norwegian dialects or languages other than Norwegian. The local dialect has undergone many changes since then and one of these changes is the pronunciation /'fisk/, found in the variation of Norwegian that many look upon as the standard variety. The pronunciation /'fisk/ connotes urbanity and the state of being up-to-date. Linguistic variation of this kind is thoroughly examined and documented in Norwegian as well as in many other languages, but the varying forms of Norwegian place names are not examined from a sociolinguistic perspective. Applied to place names, it would not be sufficient to only investigate the use of place names in speech, because the written form, if the place name has a written form, are important to language users.

In Sweden, Fridell (2006) has investigated the use of various forms of Swedish farm names in a region of Sweden from a sociolinguistic perspective, and he argues that the use of various forms, both written and dialectal, are stylistically motivated and that more or less all place names can possibly vary in terms of style. According to Fridell, the dialectal forms of place names are usually classified as low-style variants, whereas the written forms are usually thought of as high-style variants, although low-style forms can occur in writing and high-style forms in speech according to the context. It is well known that people in general have a far more positive attitude to spoken standard languages than to dialects and to written language versus speech (e.g. Pedersen 2001, 46; Trudgill & Giles 1978; Skjekkeland 2009). These circumstances are probably important for how the different forms of a place name are perceived. What could be further asked is whether a person's attitude to a certain form of a place name is an expression of his or her personal identity. Before I concentrate on this question, I will comment on the written and dialectal forms of place names and give some examples of reactions to the official spelling of place names.

[3] WRITTEN AND DIALECTAL FORMS OF PLACE NAMES — REACTIONS

Farm names have got both a dialectal and written form, and the pronunciation of a name in the Norwegian context is looked upon as the most original and truest form of a name, and the concept of *inherited local pronunciation* that is used for this form is also a legal concept in the Norwegian Place Name Act. Since farm names refer to property, and properties have financial value, the names have more often been written down than names of natural features. Many farm names have a long written tradition and the oldest forms go back to medieval times. The spelling of names has changed over the centuries according to the writing traditions dating back to the Old Norse time during the Danish period in our history (1450–1814)

up until the present time. When the Danish period ended, it became a public endeavour to Norwegianise place names in order to bring the spelling more in accordance with the local pronunciation and the new Norwegian spelling principles. This Norwegianisation policy was part of establishing a new national and Norwegian identity after the Danish period. The Cadastre commission of 1878 was important in the process of the Norwegianisation of place names. The farm names received new Norwegianised spellings to be used on public maps and cadastrales although the new spelling was not carried through in all contexts. The older Danish-influenced spellings of names were in many instances still used in land registers and for deeds of conveyance, and as a result of this, people became accustomed to these spellings and looked upon them as “correct” and “true”. At the same time, people in general everyday speech used the inherited local pronunciation of the names, and a diglossic relationship, so to say, developed between the written forms and the dialectal forms used in speech. This is true for farm names, but not for place names which are labelled as nature-based names. In general, people prefer a spelling close to the dialect of nature-based names but, as for farm names, randomly chosen spellings from earlier times are commonly preferred, particularly if the name also functions as a family name (Larsen 2008, 359). Many are of the opinion that the Norwegianised forms are unfamiliar and have therefore been imputed by public authorities. The fact that the randomly arisen spellings of names from earlier times did not come into existence as a result of influence from local people is not emphasised by those who criticise the spellings based on the Place Name Act.

When the Place Name Act came into existence in 1991, public authorities were handed a legal instrument in order to make decisions concerning the official spelling of place names, and the act also gives landowners the right to express their opinion on the spelling of a name and to complain if they disagree with the authorised spelling. By the use of these means, many individuals have become involved in the public procedure of deciding the spelling of a name. In these matters, numerous controversies have arisen between farm owners and public authorities. The farm owners often want to retain the randomly chosen spellings of place names from the past, and as time went on many people started using these name forms for their family names. A common opinion is that the spelling of the family name should form the basis for the spelling of the farm name, even if the farm name is original and the family name is a secondary form.

The many legal cases involving a disagreement between farm owners and the authorities illustrates the fact that people care very much about the specific spellings of names. One could ask: why do they do this and what type of spellings do they want, and can we learn something about these people based on the spellings they want for place names?

According to the Norwegian Place Name Act, the spelling of an inherited place name should be decided on the basis of the local pronunciation and should generally follow the spelling principle as used in the orthography of the Norwegian written standards (cf. §4, first section of the Place Name Act). As a basic rule, a name should have just one spelling, although an exception could be made if, e.g. two or more spellings are well established or there is a strong local interest in the use of two or more forms of a name (cf. §4, second section). As previously stated, many have a strong distaste for using the orthography of farm names based on the inherited local pronunciation and this distaste is nothing new. In the work with the cadastre at the end of the 19th century, Rygh found that many had a negative attitude towards inherited local pronunciations:

Det lader til, at Bygdeudtalens Former, som daglig bruges af Bygdens Befolkning I indbyrdes Samkvem, opfattes som Former af lavere Rang, der ere gode nok til dagligdags Brug, men som det ikke er sømmeligt at anvende i Skrift eller i Samtale med Folk, der ikke selv tale vedkommende Bygds Maal ([Rygh \(1990 \[1897\]\)](#)).

[It seems that the pronunciation forms that are used on a daily basis by the local population in communicating amongst themselves are seen as lower-status forms which are good enough for everyday use, but are not proper to use in writing or conversation with people who do not themselves speak the dialect of the locale in question.]

Today, more than 100 years later, the situation is to a large extent the same, but nevertheless the inherited local pronunciation, despite its low prestige, has remained more or less unchanged over time. One reason could be that the different forms of place names function within different linguistic domains. In informal contexts and in speech, the inherited local pronunciation can be used but if people give e.g. their address, a written form of the name is most likely to be given, and if a name is referred to in another context other than the very local context of name users, a form based on the written language is most likely to be used. A typical example is the distribution of definite and indefinite forms in place names. The definite form is used in informal contexts, whereas the indefinite is used for more formal situations. In writing, the indefinite form is generally used.

[3.1] Attitudes towards different forms of place names – some examples

Bervik/Bervika – Definiteness as stylistic marker

A typical statement which illustrates the relationship between the formal and informal style in the use of names is “De heite Bervik /”bærvik/, men vi sei no bære Bervika /”bærvika/” (“It is called Bervik, but we just say Bervika”). *Bervik(a)* is the name of a farm in Hadsel municipality of Nordland County. The first part

of the sentence refers to the use of an indefinite form when writing the name in a formal context and the expression “de heite” (“it is named, called”) is likely to reveal an attitude of a “correct” form of the name, whereas the inherited local pronunciation /’baervika/ belongs to a colloquial and informal context among people familiar with the name. The postposed definite article in the Nordic languages originally had a colloquial and informal style (Lundeby 1965, 21). In place names, the indefinite form is “gammal, ærverdig, smakar av skriftspråk og høgre stil” [old, honourable, tastes of written language and higher style], whereas the definite form “er ung, folkeleg og reint kvardagsleg i tonen” [is young, plain and quite colloquial in style] (Muri 1982 in (Haslum 2003, 78)).

Finnkroken/Finnkrokan – The local inherited pronunciation is “wrong”

In Karlsøy municipality in Troms County, we find the name /”finkrukjan/, which is the name of a farm and a parish. The written form based on the pronunciation gives the spelling as *Finnkrokan* (Finn-, from *finn* m. ‘Saami’; -*krokan*, def. pl. of *krok* m. ‘bended landscape’), but the people in the parish prefer the spelling *Finnkroken* (def. sg.) since over time, the name has been written mostly in the definite singular form. In the 1990s, the local inhabitants filed a lawsuit in order to get the spelling *Finnkrokan* taken out of use and off public maps. Some even were of the opinion that the correct spelling was *Finkroken* (Fin-, *fin* adj. ‘fine’), because in earlier times the spelling that was used was *Fiinkrogen* (Fiin-, older orthography of *fin* adj., *krog* older spelling, from Danish, of *krok* f.). The inherited local pronunciation was repudiated or referred to as being incorrect because it differed from the spelling of the name *Finnkroken*!

Mesøy/Messøya – The local inherited pronunciation is irrelevant

In Meløy municipality in Nordland County, the Norwegian Mapping and Cadastre Authority (NMCA) caused some resentment in 2009 when they decided to use the spelling *Messøya* for the pronunciation /”mæsøya/ (name of an island, farm and parish). Despite different spellings throughout the years, people had become used to the spelling as *Mesøy* and wanted to continue using this form. The *Mesøy grendelag* [‘the Mesøy neighbourhood committee’] has appealed against the decision of the spelling *Messøya* and had, as of 5.5.2009, collected 201 signatures in support of their view. A great deal of work has been put into documenting the spellings in the past, but the inherited local pronunciation is not particularly emphasised. The *Mesøy* grendelag comments that NMCA has decided the spelling of the name “med begrunnelse i hht. lokal, nedarvet uttale. Dette er vi uenige i” [with justification in accordance with local inherited pronunciation. We disagree with this] ([Mesøyinfo 2009](#)). From within local quarters the local inherited pronunciation is not stated exactly; it is only said that the local population disagree with basing

the spelling of the name on the pronunciation. This is yet another example that illustrates the normative force of written language.

Aune/Aun – repudiation of the inherited local pronunciation

In legal cases concerning the spelling of names, the result is often that the cases turn out to be unsolvable. The diglossic situation between the dialectal pronunciation and the written form can be changed, and the supporters of a certain written form may be able to deny the use or even the existence of the inherited local pronunciation. This is done for tactical reasons as the Norwegian Place Name Act claims that the spelling should be based on the inherited local pronunciation. When a spelling based on the pronunciation is not wanted, one strategy is to deny that the pronunciation exists. This was done in the case of *Aun* or *Aune*, a farm and parish name found in Harstad municipality in Troms County (<http://aune.no>). The *Aune* supporters denied as time went on that /'øun/ was the inherited local pronunciation, even though a video recording proved that this exact pronunciation was used by one of the “*Aune*-people” who had said /'øun/ at an earlier point before the case had been exaggerated and had reached a state of gridlock.

Local controversies canalised into place name forms

The case of *Aun/Aune* fully demonstrated that local controversies or differences that originally had nothing to do with a place name could be transformed into a dispute concerning the spelling of a name. The parish of *Aun* has a high proportion of Baptists and the local leader of the Baptists was an active force in this case. As time went on the case turned into a dichotomy between the Baptists and their supporters, who advocated the spelling as *Aune*, and non-Baptists and their supporters who, based on the inherited local pronunciation of /'øun/, wanted the spelling to be *Aun*. This gave the case an added dimension, and one could say that there was a division within the parish along religious lines. The *Aune* directive started a petition, and it is obvious that the leader of the local Baptists put pressure on those who were urged to sign the petition. In the petition it was even insisted on that the local inherited pronunciation was /'øune/, and by the use of these means, the religious leader got the signatories of the petition to vouch for something that was not consistent with reality.

Place names should have the orthography from the Danish period

In 2008, many farmers from the Østre Toten municipality in Oppland County opposed the spelling of farm names as determined by the NMCA. The opposition towards these spellings has led to the formation of an organisation with the aim of promoting the farmers’ view of how place names should be written. The reason for the founding of this organisation is that the Place Name Act determines that local organisations have the right to appeal decisions on the spelling of place

names, and the farmers needed such an organisation in order to be able to file a collective appeal. A farmer only has the right to appeal decisions in regard to the spelling of the name of his/her own farm. The new organisation uses the name Navnebeskyttelsen Norge [Name Protection Norway]. Spellings that have caused a reaction are, e.g. *Hol* /'hu:l/, *Hom* /'hom/ and *Kvem* /'kve:m/, whereas the farmers prefer the spellings *Hoel*, *Homb* and *Hveem*. These names illustrate that the normalisation principles applied to Norwegian are not wanted by the farm owners. In general, a long vowel in Norwegian is marked in orthography by a single consonant following the vowel, although older spelling conventions are preferred by the local farmers: <oe> for /u:/ and <ee> for /e:/. The consonantism <hv> is preferred instead of <kv> even if the pronunciation is /kv/, and the spelling <mb> is not supported by the pronunciation of a long /m/. Other such common deviations between current and older orthography are, e.g. <aa, ii, ld, nd> for <å, i, ll, nn>, <ck/ch> for <k(k)>, <x> for <ks> and <sch> for <sj, skj> – just to mention a few examples. An important reason for the preference of older spellings seems to be that older orthography adds a higher stylistic value to a name than current orthography does. Spellings such as *Wiig*, *Wiik* or *Wich* seem to be looked upon as more prominent than *Vik*, while the same is true for *Dahl* versus *Dal*, *Moe* versus *Mo* etc. Name statistics from Statistisk sentralbyrå (Statistics Norway), ([SSB 2009](#)) show that 10,047 people in Norway have a family name based on the lexeme *vik* (“cove” or “bay”), and out of that total, 5,217 of them do not use the spelling *Vik* but instead prefer eight other different written forms of the name. In the case of *dal* (“valley”), the distribution is 123 who use *Dal* and 11,644 who use *Dahl*. The name *Mo* has 1,603 people who use that spelling as opposed to 6,818 who spell it as *Moe* (from *mo* m. “heath” or “moor”).

[4] CAN CHOOSING THE FORM OF A NAME TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT THE USER OF THE NAME?

The conditions referred to here are characteristic of a number of cases in relation to the names of farms and parishes in Norway, and one could even say that for these types of names there is a kind of diglossic relationship between the dialectal forms used in speech and the written forms. According to Hallaråker, the dialectal speech forms and the written forms existed separately of each other until the end of the 19th century, and in spite of fewer differences between the written spoken forms of the names after the revision of the cadastre led by Rygh, this difference continued ([Hallaråker 1996](#), 36). Forms of names found in public documents:

[...] hadde ei særleg høgtid over seg. At dei var i strid med den lokale uttalen og rettskrivinga vi lærte på skulen, forsterka berre det høgtidlege draget ved dei. Dei nærma seg faktisk ei form for

religiøst språk av den typen vi fann hos Brorson og Kingo ([Hallaråker 1996](#), 37).

[...had a special solemnity. That they conflicted with the local pronunciation and the orthography we learned at school just strengthened their solemn character. In fact, they became close to a form of the type of religious language used by Brorson and Kingo.]

As long as the dialectal pronunciation is just found in speech, it seems to function as a normally acceptable situation for people in general but when the authorities, in accordance with the Place Name Act, suggest a spelling other than the accustomed spelling, many react in a negative manner. It is undesirable that the inherited local pronunciation should adopt a new domain – that is the written language and public domain. As a result, we can say that the so-called dialect “uprising” that took place in Norway in the early 1970s has not yet affected the use of the dialectal forms of farm names. The dialect forms used in speech still have low prestige, and people think that they are not suitable for use in the public domain.

Is this desire to write a place name in a certain way an act of identity, i.e. a means of expressing identity? According to [Le Page & Tabouret-Keller \(1985\)](#), an act of identity is to reveal the identity and search for a social role. What do these people reveal and what do they search for? Probably there is more than one explanation. Some people may perceive the spellings from the Danish period as older and more genuine than the official spellings, and their attitudes could be interpreted as misunderstood expressions of local patriotism, identity and historicism. Another interpretation could be that the desire for using orthography from the Danish period differently from present orthography in the spelling of farm names as a desire to be associated with the values that the older spellings represent – a kind of “snob factor”. Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (p. 181) say that “[t]he individual creates for himself the patterns of his linguistic behaviour as resembling those of the group or groups with which from time to time he wishes to be identified, or so as to be unlike those from whom he wishes to be distinguished”. The spellings from the Danish period give a colour of age and, socially and culturally, these spellings might give the appearance of belonging to a formerly higher official culture. The spelling Wiig has a different stylistic value than Vik and if you come from the farm named Wiig, the spelling might convey the impression of being higher on the social ladder than somebody who comes from Vik. According to [Bourdieu \(1991\)](#), linguistic forms represent a symbolic value. To understand a certain symbolic value one has to know and understand the society in which a language is used. In order to be able to consider the symbolic value that the various forms of Norwegian place names could possibly contain for language users,

we need knowledge of the past and present cultural and historical situation in Norway.

At the end of the 19th century, Garborg ([Garborg 1982 \[1877\]](#), 102 f.) argued that Norway was not one nation and that there was a marked division between common people and the elite, and each of them had their own language and culture. The language of the common people was the Norwegian dialects while Danish-Norwegian was the language of the elite. The Norwegian population of today cannot be divided like this, though one could argue that the attitudes towards the dialectal and written forms of farm names are rooted in the former division between the common people with low prestige and the elite people with high prestige. Many people look down on the values which are represented by the dialectally inherited forms of names and look to the older forms which arose out of a formerly elite culture, even if they are incorrectly written. The written language represented by this culture is in fact still widely respected. One indication of this is the way people spell their first names using obsolete orthography, for example, a “silent h” in names such as Grethe and Brith or the name Thea, which is used by 7,844 persons versus 337 for the spelling Tea ([SSB 2009](#)) – the spelling Thea could of course also be looked upon as influenced by international trends. The inclination to show off with names is commented on by, among others, the linguist Finn Erik Vinje (2009). He has criticised the selection and spellings of the names for the children of Princess Märtha and her husband Ari Behn.¹ Vinje uses words such as “latterlig navne-anstalmakeri” (“ridiculous needless naming activity”), and says that the names are “kuriøse, eksotiske navn, [med] stumme bokstaver og fremmede skrivemåter” (“singular, exotic names with silent letters and strange spellings”) ([VG 2009](#)). Another interpretation could be that spellings that diverge from the official orthography are preferred because a special or marked spelling of a name conveys a higher degree of proprialisation. Wetås argues that the onomasticon is organized in forms of prototypes, and that personal names are more prototypical of the group of proper names than place names ([Wetås 2008](#), 76). The spelling *Dahl* is an explicit marker of a linguistic utterance that is a family name, whereas *Dal* could be both a family name and a place name. The spelling *Dahl* underlines the character of a name with a higher degree of semantic demotivation (op.cit., 78). In this example, it means that the lexical unit *dal* ‘long hollow in the landscape’ is not present in the spelling *Dahl*.

Human beings present themselves by using their first name, family name and sometimes also with the name of the place where they come from. One must assume that depending of what type of “category” we prefer to identify ourselves with, we will try to present ourselves in a way that others can identify us as we

[1] Their two girls are named Maud Angelica Behn and Emma Tallulah Behn.

would like to be seen. For this purpose, we must use language as the means for our presentation.

Many have adopted older spellings of place names as family names, and approximately 70% of all Norwegian family names are based on the names of farms ([Veka 2000](#), 17). Many farmers want the spelling of their farm name to match the spelling of their family name even if the family name originates from the place name and not the opposite. By using this means, farmers try to transform their own identity to the place name even though the place name arose long before the family name, and has connections to a past with people and a time the people of today know nothing about. One could say that in this way the farmers confiscate a collectively inherited cultural heritage and try to connect place names to definite persons. In doing so, they introduce a personification to place names. This action reveals a weighing of the individual and personal dimension but ignores the fact that place names belong to a collective cultural context. The reason why people do this is probably because they feel emotionally attached to both the family and place name, thus forming the basis of the family name. The farmers create a link among the person, name and location. Place names refer to places in the world, and people feel an attachment to the places where they are from or have lived at for a long time. They feel that they are part of the place. Ponzetti says that:

Place attachment refers to the emotional connection formed by an individual to a physical location due to the meaning given to the site as a function of its role as a setting for experience. A range of thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and behavior, as well as feelings, are evoked through attachment to place. Thus, place attachment involves an elaborate interplay of emotion, cognition and behavior in reference to place. ([Ponzetti 2003](#), 1)

Because people can feel attached to both a place and a place name, they probably feel they have “a right” to the name. Strictly speaking, a land owner does possess “a right” to a property because legally he or she possesses earth and ground belonging to a certain property. Another question is “the right” to a place name that refers to the property. If people have started using a place name as a family name, they will probably feel a stronger “right” to the name than if they do not use the place name as a family name. Larsen indicates that a family name creates a “we” feeling and a sense of social solidarity. He further argues that a name is a part of our identity, and if the feeling of identity is transferred to a place name that the family name is based on, people could look upon a change in the spelling of the name as an encroachment ([Larsen 2008](#), 359). But the case of Aun/Aune shows that the attitude of feeling a “right” to decide the spelling of a place name is not necessarily only related to family names which are based on a place name.

In this case, none of the most important parties had a family name based on this place's name.

[5] CONCLUSION

We have seen that place names, as well as other parts of language, can be used to construct and express identity and we have focused on the names of farms and parishes in Norway. Many Norwegians have demonstrated a strong desire for using certain spellings of names, and their actions can be accounted for as a means of expressing personal and social identity. An important factor of this desire is probably the respect for the written language and the respect for the values represented in society by the former elite of the country. It must also be underlined that even if the described pattern is common, not everybody in a society wants to use obsolete spellings of farm and parish names which differ from the inherited dialectal pronunciation. One could ask if the construction and expression of identity is something that can be found in all societies. I argue that this is so, although the relationship between place names and identity is probably not identical in every society. Since every society is unique, one must expect some functional variation depending on the society in question. Historical background and cultural conditions vary from society to society and from one time to another, and it is important to take these circumstances into consideration in order to acquire an understanding of how place names function in connection to the concept of identity. The Norwegian and Swedish societies are in many ways much the same today, but the history of these societies is different. In Staffan Fridell's (2006, 2009) investigation of the stylistic function of Swedish place names, he comments on the differences between these two societies ([Fridell 2009](#), 68). In Sweden, the variation among different forms of place names can be analysed as a stylistic variation within a language, but in Norway this stylistic variation could be looked upon as a variation that originated from two languages – Norwegian and Danish. Since the late Middle Ages, speaking Danish in Norway functioned as a high status language versus the Norwegian dialects, which makes this an important fact to take into account for understanding the current situation in Norway today in terms of how people evaluate the different forms of place names. It is also important to be aware of the difference in function between the names of farms and parishes on the one hand, and names of natural features on the other. In the latter case, Norwegians generally prefer spellings to be close to the dialect forms whereas, as we have seen in this paper, the opposite is true in regard to the names of farms and parishes. The different strategies for spelling names could perhaps be understood in the light of the theory of proprialisation. The names of farms and family names are linked to each other, and the higher degree of propriality of family names is transmitted to farm names when people advocate the same spelling principles for these two groups of names. It could even be argued according to the theory

of proprialisation that names of natural features have a lower degree of proprialisation than farm names, and at the other end of the scale are the family names. One could therefore assume that the higher the degree of propriality, the more important names are as identity markers (about proprialisation of place names, see also Bakken 1995, 137 f.).²

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[2] I would like to thank Staffan Fridell for making me aware of the possible connection between the degree of proprialisation and spellings of names, and that there could be a relationship between degree of proprialisation and identity.

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“TONALISM”: NAME, SOUL, DESTINY AND IDENTITY DETERMINED BY THE 260-DAY CALENDER IN MESOAMERICA

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ABSTRACT

In various Mesoamerican cultures, i.e. civilisations of Middle America, a calendar name is part of the antroponym. Besides having conventional personal names, both human beings and deities carry day-names from the 260-day calendar. In addition, 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 human and divine beings but also space and time received designations from this calendar. Moreover, this onomastic practice of giving personal names from day signs of the 260-day calendar – called “tonalism” (from Nahuatl) – is related to the Mesoamerican concepts of destiny and to what is known in history of religions as the “freesoul”. Consequently, this anthroponymic tradition provides identity to human, divine beings and spatial-temporal phenomena.

[1] INTRODUCTION

In various Mesoamerican cultures, antroponyms¹ consists of calendar names. Mesoamerica has been defined as a cultural-geographical region including the north-western, central and southern Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, and the western part of Honduras and El Salvador. In this area peoples – like the Aztecs, Olmecs, Zapotecs, Toltecs, Tlapanecs, Teotihuacanos, Tarascas, Otomís, Mixtecs, Maya etc. – lived in urban civilisations c. 1000 B.C. – 1521 A.D. Contacts existed between the different communities through migrations, pilgrimage, trade, diplomacy, war and conquest. Despite their particular traditions and languages, the numerous groups of people of Mesoamerica have several cultural and religious traits in common. Notwithstanding the Spanish conquest at the beginning of the 16th century, the languages, religions and cultures of millions of indigenous Mesoamerican peoples persist today.

[1] For antroponymic practises among the Nahua see Lockhart (1992, 117–130); among the Mixtecs (cf. Terraciano 2001, 150–157); among the Maya (see Roys 1940; Colas 2004).

Besides having conventional personal names, both human beings and deities carry day names from the 260-day calendar – names, which have no relation to lineage or family or signify socio-political status. Manuscripts of the pre-Columbian period contain many examples of where an individual being is identified by his/her calendar name, represented by a logogram. Even world ages or world periods, the traditional 365-day calendar and the 52-year calendar as well as the quadripartite cardinal directions of the world had designations from one of the days of the 260-day calendar.

This naming practice is heavily linked to “identity”. How can the concept “identity” be defined? Otto Krogseth has suggested three general characteristics:

- (i) Continuity in time vs. change. A quality, condition or nature of absolute or essential sameness.
- (ii) A coherence where some fundamental aspects coordinate the person’s or object’s roles and functions.
- (iii) Individuality or personality. A person or an object comprises in itself, in substance or in selfhood, a specific character – and not something else. He, she or it holds a certain distinctiveness or uniqueness as compared to other beings and objects ([Krogseth 1992](#), 100–103).

The day signs of the 260-day calendar naming human beings, deities, world ages or world periods provide the named entity a predestined fate. In addition, human beings obtain a substance – what historians of religions call a “freesoul” (a freesoul is a substance, which can leave the body during the lifetime of a being) – connected to the day of their birth according to the 260-day calendar. The phenomenon of name giving by use of the 260-day calendar is called “tonalism” (Nahuatl, *tonalli*).

In general, the name stays with the individual or phenomenon throughout their existence. It is accordingly intimately connected to and operates as a determinative factor of how the carrier or the name is perceived. This is even more emphasised when the concept of the calendar name is closely associated with destiny and a soul. Predestination and the soul constitute continuity, coherence, individuality, personality and uniqueness. As a consequence, the calendar name, which in itself is marker of exceptionality, conveys essential identity features.

[2] CALENDAR NAMES FROM THE 260-DAY DIVINATORY CALENDAR

Mesoamerican cultures shared a 260-day and a 365-day calendar, which together form a 52-year cycle called a Calendar Round. The traditional 260-day calendar and the 365-day calendar² are still used in various parts of Mesoamerica today.

[2] The temporal structure of the Mesoamerican 365-day calendar was, however, modified to the Catholic European liturgical 365-day calendar after the Spanish invasion.

They are employed by indigenous peoples in the highlands of Guatemala and in the states of Veracruz, Chiapas and Oaxaca, Mexico.³ The custom of naming people after day signs of this calendar has, however, gone out of practice in many cultures. But the Mixe of Oaxaca, Mexico applies the names, but probably not the numbers (Søren Wichmann, personal communication, 2007). Today people get names from Patron Saints, which is also based upon the calendar (albeit the 365-day calendar) since every day of the Catholic calendar is associated with a saint.

The 260-day calendar consists of twenty day-names (sp. “veintena”) together with thirteen days with a coefficient (sp. “trecena”). Twenty twenty day-units multiplied with thirteen amounts to 260 days.⁴ The calendar had local names in the different languages in Mesoamerica but their meanings could be the same (Taube 1988, 180).

The sources of information about the Mesoamerican calendars and to the naming practices vary. Such sources include indigenous iconography, narrative visual sequential systems and logosyllabic (i.e. writing) inscriptions⁵, indigenous colonial accounts, descriptions by Spanish ethnographer missionaries of the colonial period and modern ethnography.

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- [3] In particular among the Mixe, but fundamental components persists among the Zapotecs, Chatinos, Mazatecs, Chinantecs and Mixtecs of Southern Mexico whereas in the highlands of Guatemala the calendar is used by the K'iche' but is also known by the Ixil, Akateko, Q'anjob'al, Mam, Popti and Chuj. Cf. the research project (and webpage) “Time and Identity” under the direction of Professor Dr. Maarten E.R.G.N. Jansen at Leiden University (<http://www.archaeology.leiden.edu/research/ancient-america/mexico/time-identity/>).
 - [4] Using names from a Maya language as an example, Sir Eric Thompson has summed up the mathematical foundation of this system as follows: ‘Since 13 and 20 have no common factor, it is obvious that the same combination of name and number will not recur until 260 days have elapsed. At each repetition of any name the attached number will be seven greater provided the sum is not in excess of 13; if the sum is greater than 13; that number has to be subtracted from it. The first day of the cycle was 1 Imix; accordingly, 20 days later Imix will repeat, but this time with the number 8 attached. At its next appearance the attached number will be 2 (8 +7=15; 15-13=2), so that the sequence of numbers attached to a given day name will run 1,8,2,9,3,10,4,11,5,12,6,13,7’ (Thompson 1978, 67).
 - [5] Interestingly there are not many examples of personal names from the 260-day calendar represented in the Maya and epi-Olmec inscriptions, whereas they abound in inscriptions of the Nahuas, Zapotecs and Mixtecs.

[3] THE NAMING CEREMONY AND SACRED VOCABULARY: DESTINY AND IDENTITY IN THE SELECTED DAY-NAME OF THE CALENDAR

The 260-day calendar had many functions but is first and foremost recognised in its application as a divinatory calendar.⁶

The Spanish ethnographer missionaries of the 16th century assert that the Aztecs⁷ employed the 260-day calendar (*tonalamatl*) as a divinatory in order to interpret the horoscope of a newborn child. This was executed with the purpose of giving the child its name and its "suerte" ("fate"; "destiny").

In his encyclopedic work about the Aztecs, *The Florentine Codex*, The Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagún (1499? –1590) outline in detail, in Nahuatl, a ceremony conducted at the time of a birth of a child where it was given its *tonalli* or calendar name. This is the day sign that was to predetermine the individual's destiny. The religious specialist, who held the necessary knowledge and training to practice this calendar, was designated as *tonalpouhqui* ("the one who is dedicated to the *tonalli*"). It was the *tonalpouhque* (Sahagún 1950–1982, 1957: Appendix to IV: 142) who found the sign the child was born under in order to identify its destiny in

- [6] Why did people of Mesoamerica choose a cycle of 260 days for organising and systematising time within a calendar? Barbara Tedlock recapitulates some of the hypotheses that have been put forward by various scholars as follows:

- (i) The cycle was construed by a permutation of 13 and 20 since both are cardinal coefficients in Mesoamerica.
 - (ii) The 260-calendar was applied to record observations of and to correlate various planetary cycles. The 260-day period is the interval between zenith transits of the sun near the latitude 15 north.
 - (iii) A double of 260-days (520 days) is equal to three eclipses half-years.
 - (iv) 260 days correspond to nine lunations; each consisting of slightly less than 29 days or the same number of months a woman is pregnant (Tedlock 1992, 93). Calendar specialists employed tables of the 260-day calendar in the Post-Classic Yucatec codices as almanacs. The 260-day period is close to the agricultural calendar in Mesoamerica (Milbrath 1999, 2; 12–15). Cf. Helga Larsen about ancient Copan (Larsen 1936). Milbrath deduce from this that the 260-day agricultural cycle and the cycle of human gestation were originally combined together (Milbrath 1999, 2). The 260-day cycle comprise agricultural rituals in Pre-Columbian Mesoamerica (Broda 1969, 52–54; Bricker & Miram 2002, 40–41). The 260-calendar is utilised as an agricultural calendar by the contemporary Ch'orti' (Girard 1960, 304–305; Girard 1962, 328–342) and by the Mopan of San Antonio in Belize (Thompson 1930, 41). The growth cycle of one of the corn plants in Guatemala is, according to Dennis Tedlock, 260 days. Thus, the K'iche' calendar specialist, Aj Q'in, call the 260-day calendar for 'the calendar of the earth' to distinguish it from the astronomic intervals like the year of the sun (Tedlock 1992, 206). Cf. also Barbara Tedlock (Tedlock 1992, 204–205).
- [7] The Aztecs or Mexica as they called themselves was originally, in their own self-portrayals, a Nahuatl-speaking nomadic tribe. They founded the city of Tenochtitlan, today Mexico City, which became the capital of their short-lived empire in the northern and central part of Mexico from 1345 A.D. to 1521 A.D. The term "Aztec" derives from *aztecatl*, "person from Aztlán". Aztlán, which can be paraphrased as "the white place" or "the place of the herons" in Nahuatl, was the designation for their mythological place of origin. The name "Mexica" was given to the Aztecs by their patron deity, Huitzilopochtli, during their migration from Aztlán.

the *tonalamatl* ([Sahagún 1950–1982](#), 1957: IV, 111–115; [Sahagún 1950–1982](#), 1969: VI: 197–198). The manuscript that contained the *tonalpohualli*, i.e. the 260-day count, was named *tonalamatl* (“the book of *tonalli*”) in Nahuatl. The Dominican friar Diego Duran (1533 – 1588) writes:

“Thus, when a boy or a girl was born, the father or relatives of the baby immediately went to visit the astrologers, sorcerers, or soothsayers, who were plentiful, begging them to state the destiny of the newborn boy or girl. The inquirer always carried with him offerings of food and drink. The astrologer and sorcerer-fortuneteller brought out the Book of the Horoscope, together with the calendar. Once the character of the day had been seen, prophecies were uttered, lots were cast, and a propitious or evil fate for the baby was determined by the consultation of a paper painted with all the gods they adored, each idol drawn in the square reserved for him” ([Durán 1971](#), 398).

As noted, each individual received a *tonalli* from the calendar (*tonalpohualli*) that was decided by the calendar experts, *tonalpouhque*, according to the calendar sign he or she was born under. Hence, beside his/her ordinary name human beings and deities could be called for instance Ome Ehecatl (2 Ehecatl), Naui Ehecatl (4 Ehecatl), or Ce Atl (1 Atl), etc. of 260 possible day-names from the following list⁸:

[3.1] *The 260-calendar day names (tonalpohualli) in Nahuatl*

- (i) Ce Cipactli (1 Alligator)
- (ii) Ome Ehecatl (2 Wind).
- (iii) Yei Calli (3 House)
- (iv) Naui Cuetzpallin (4 Lizard).
- (v) Macuilli Coatl (5 Serpent).
- (vi) Chicuace Miquitztli (6 Death).
- (vii) Chicome Mazatl (7 Deer).
- (viii) Chicuei Tochtli (8 Rabbit).
- (ix) Chicunaui Atl (9 Water).
- (x) Matlactli Itzcuintli (10 Dog).
- (xi) Matlactli once Ozomatli (11 Monkey).

[8] Note that only the, for the calendar names, relevant 13 numbers are translated into an indigenous language.

- (xii) Matlactli omome Malinalli (12 Grass).
- (xiii) Matlactli omei Acatl (13 Reed).
- (xiv) Ocelotl (Jaguar).
- (xv) Cuautli (Eagle).
- (xvi) Cozcaquautli (Vulture).
- (xvii) Ollin (Movement).
- (xviii) Tecpatl (Flint).
- (xix) Quiauitl (Rain).
- (xx) Xochitl (Flower).

The *Tonalli* was originally given to man by the dual deity (the masculine) *Ometecuhtli* and (the feminine) *Omecehuatl* according to the informants of Sahagún in *Códice Matritense from Real Academia de Historia* (López 1988, 208).⁹ The day-name and soul was accordingly a sacred gift from the deities. The twenty day-names were associated with natural phenomena but had each a supernatural patron.

In Mixtec manuscripts the signs and numeral coefficients correspond to Nahuatl. It is intriguing that the Mixtecs of Oaxaca¹⁰, Mexico employed a sacred language – various versions are known from the different dialects – for the day signs and day numbers in their codices. Also the Mixe had an extraordinary vocabulary for the elements of their calendar (Smith 1973, 23–27; Lipp 1983, 203; Boone 2000, 4). In Nahuatl the day (or year) One Reed is rendered as *Ce Acatl* in the common vocabulary. The Mixtec did not employ the colloquial *Een Doo* but *Ca Huiyo* (Dahlgren 1954, 282–287; Smith 1973, 23–27; Boone 2000, 4).

[3.2] *The Mixtec 260-day calendar*

Here is an example of signs of calendar names from the 260-day calendar in an illustration from the Mixtec¹¹ (*Nuu Savi*)-manuscript *Codex Zouche-Nuttall* (aka by the Mixtec name *Códice Tonindeye* according to the suggestion by Gabina Aurora

[9] “Because there on the twelfth level he lives, there lives the true god. And (in his form of) partner (masculine) Ilhuicateotl has the name Ometecuhtli; and his mate (feminine) is called Omecehuatl, Ilhuicacihuatl. This means they govern the twelve (levels), they rule over the heavens. They say that we men are created there, that our tonalli comes from there when it comes to rest (the infant in the mother’s womb), when there the infant falls in a drop. From there comes his tonalli, it penetrates inside him; Ometecuhtli sends it” (López 1988, 208).

[10] The Mixtecs call themselves *Nuu Savi*, “people of the rain” or “the people belonging to the rain god”, ‘Mixtec’, which derives from Nahuatl *Mixtecatl*, means “Cloud People” (Whitecotton 1977, 23).

[11] Mixtec is a tonal language with high, mid and low tones, which probably explains the apparent identical words for different numerical coefficients (Smith 1973, 26).



FIGURE 1: Códice Zouche-Nuttall (page 27) (British Museum ADD.MSS 39671)

	Normal Vocabulary (Alvarado Dictionary)	Special Day-Sign Vocabulary
1	Ee coo yechi	ca, co quevui (1 Alligator).
2	Vvui tachi	ca, co, cu chi (2 Wind).
3	Uni huahi	co cuau; mau (3 House).
4	Qmi, cumi (ti) yechi	qui q(ue) (4 Lizard).
5	Hoho coo	q yo (5 Serpent).
6	Iñó ndeye, sihi	ñu na mahu(a) (6 Death).
7	Usa idzu, sacuaa	sa cuaa (7 Deer).
8	Una idzo	na sayu (8 Rabbit).
9	Ee nduta	q tutu (9 Water).
10	Usi ina	si hua (10 Dog).
11	Usi ee codzo	si i ñuu (11 Monkey).
12	Usi vvui yucu	ca cuañe (12 Grass).
13	Usi uni ndoo	si huiyo (13 Reed).
14	Cuiñe	huidzu (Jaguar).
15	Yaha	sa (Eagle).
16	(ti)sii	cuii (Vulture).
17	tña, nehe	qhi (Movement).
18	Yuchi	cusi (Flint).
19	Dzavui	co (Rain).
20	Ita	huaco (Flower).

FIGURE 2: ([Dahlgren 1954](#), 282–287; [Smith 1973](#), 23–27)

Pérez Jiménez and Maarten Jansen). Cf. the illustration to the far left in the middle for described scene. From the left we see Lord Eight Deer (Mixtec calendar name: *Naa Cuaa*) Jaguar Claw and Lady Thirteen Snake (Mixtec calendar name: *Si Yo*) Flowering Snake, portrayed in a wedding scene. The bowl of chocolate, which Lady Thirteen Snake offer Lord Eight Deer represent the wedding. The signs of the calendar name and personal name to Lord Eight Deer is illustrated under his seat. The signs of the calendar name to Lady Thirteen Snake are located in front of her. The headdress represents her personal name. The ceremony was celebrated in the year Thirteen Reed (1031 AD) on the day Twelve Snake, which is indicated by the signs placed down in the middle from left to right.

Consequently, Lord Eight Deer would be named *Naa Cuaa* after the day of the 260-day calendar he was born and not by the conventional number *una* (“eight”) and word for the animal *idzu* (“deer”).

The Mixe or Mije¹² of the southern part of Mexico had an extraordinary vocabulary for the calendar numbers but not for the calendar days (Lipp 1983, 203–205; Lipp 1991, 62–63; Duinmeijer 1997, 180–181).¹³

[3.3] *The Mixe 260-day calendar*

The names of the days in the calendar names are considered to be sacred and are thus reckoned by the K’iche’ Maya in Momostenago of highland Guatemala as untranslatable.¹⁴ It is the sound of the day-name and the poetic sound play, paraonomasia, which are important, and not what they signify (Tedlock 1992, 107–108). For the Mixe it is rather an interpretation than a direct translation (Duinmeijer 1997, 182).

Ethnographic data from contemporary Maya cultures indicate that they conceive the numbers and the calendars to be deified.¹⁵ The association of the 13 numbers with deities of the 260-day calendar still survive among the Ixil (Maya). Not only the 13 numbers and 20 day-names are both seen as “sacred beings or deities who are worshiped and petitioned in prayer”. The 13 numbers, associated with the day, are called “The Thirteen Kings”. A calendar specialist in Nebaj told the ethnographer J. S. Lincoln: “The 20 day names are the Kings” (Lincoln 1942, 106–107). Contemporaneous Maya cultures, Ch’orti’ and K’iche’, regard the days as deities (Schultze Jena 1933; Goubaud Carrera 1935, 42; Girard 1966, 281; Tedlock 1992, 107). We know also from ethnographical investigations of Maya of the Highlands of Guatemala that the days were considered to be divine. La Farge and Byers and Lincoln report that the days were considered to be sacred living beings amongs the Jacaltecs and Ixil (Lincoln 1942, 108; La Farge & Byers 1931, 172–173). There was a deification of the 13 numbers, the 20-day deities and mountains in prayer. They were “....worshipped and petitioned in prayer, together with the Holy Cross, God, Jesus Christ, the saints, the sun, the corn, and certain mountains and animals” (Lincoln 1942, 123–124). These calendar designations were accordingly not ordinary names but considered to have a particular religious value.

In many cases, the sources do not provide information about in what manner the individual was given his/her ordinary name, i.e. not calendar name. For the Mixtecs of Oaxaca, Mexico the conventional name was given to the child at the

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- [12] The word Mixe or Mije originates from Nahuatl. The Mixe apply the term *Ayu:k*, “word” or “language”, which is etymologically connected to *ha”y yu:k*, “people of the mountains” to identify themselves as a particular culture (Lipp 1983, 7; Lipp 1991, 1).
 - [13] The application of the thirteen calendar numbers is today restricted to villages of the lowland. Calendar numbers are close to ordinary numerals of the Zoque (Lipp 1983, 204; Duinmeijer 1997, 181–182). The Mixe calendar numbers might have become tabooed in everyday life and therefore only restricted to the 260-day calendar according to Søren Wichmann (Duinmeijer 1997, 181–182).
 - [14] For a discussion of the translations of the day names in Yucatec, Nahuatl and lowland Mixe cf. Wichmann (2000, 45–47).
 - [15] But also among other Mesoamerican peoples. For the Mixe cf. Lipp (1983).

Calendar numbers	Mixe numbers	Day names
1. Tu.m	tu'k	hukpi (root)
2. mac	meck	sa'a (wind)
3. tu:k	tukok or to.hk	how (palm)
4. makc	maktask	hu:'n (hard, solid resistant i.e. of tree or hb).
5. moks	mugo.sk	ca'an (serpent)
6. tuHt	tudu:k or tuhtti.k	?uh (earth, world)
7. kuy	westu:k	koy (rabbit)
8. tu.gut	tuktu:k	na:n (deer)
9. ta:s	tastu:k	ni'in (water, river)
10. maHK	mahk	ho'o (?)
11. ki'in	mahktu'k	hai.m (fine white ashes)
12. ki'is	mahkmeck	ti'ic (tooth)
13. pagac	mahktikok or maktu.hk	kep (reed)
14.		ka: (jaguar)
15.		hu.ik (tobacco)
16.		pa'
17.		?uhs (earthquake)
18.		tahp (covered up, darkening)
19.		miy (grass)
20.		hugi'ñ (point [weaving])

FIGURE 3: The Mixe 260-day calendar (*si: tu'u* “road of days” or *si: may: y'g*, “to divine” or “to count the days”) (Lipp 1983, 203–205; Lipp 1991, 62–63).

age of seven by a religious specialist. But, how this name was determined has been not acknowledged (Smith 1973, 27–29).

The birth date of the 260-day calendar would decide the fate and the name of the newborn child. Consequently, the calendar sign determined the character, temperament and behaviour of the human being, e.g. the individual’s identity. This phenomenon has been given the designation “tonalism”, after *tona*, *tonal* or *tonalli* (“day”; “sun”) in Nahuatl (López 1988). *Tonalli* constitute the *I-macehual*, “that which is granted to one, that which one deserves”, to the individual according to the Aztecs (López 1988, 213–214). Fray Toribio de Motolinía, a member of the first delegations of Franciscans who arrived in Mexico in 1524, describes this indigenous use of their 260-day calendar. It provided the child with a name on the seventh day after birth, which constituted either an animal or a plant. Various omens were also given (Motolinía 1971, 37). But Sahagún has observed that the calendar signs of the *tonalamatl* were either good or bad. Thus, there was not a

fixed practice of naming the child on the seventh day after birth. If the sign was good the child was given a ritual bath and thereafter a name. If the sign was from a bad day the *tonalpouhque* discarded it and the ceremonial bath was postponed until a more suitable date. In this way the *tonalpouhque* manipulated the name and destiny, and thereby the character and identity, by improving the *tonalli* of the child: *ipampa ic quipatia in jtonal*, ("For in that way they remedied his fate;") ([Sahagún 1950–1982](#), 1957, IV: 30). The postponement was, however, restricted since the naming ritual had to take place within the 13-day period (trecena) the child was born ([López 1988](#), 212). Moreover, since the predestination of the fatum after the day of birth was avoidable the significance of the calendar must accordingly not be overrated. The Aztecs also had a conception of human free will. Hence, men could either fulfill his destiny or destroy it ([Sahagún 1950–1982](#), 1957, IV: 25).

In an intriguing passage in a book from the 16th century, Fray Juan de Córdoval gives various reasons why marriages were dissolved among the Zapotecs of Oaxaca, Mexico. One of these was a combination of the names of the couple that would cause misfortune to them or their offspring ([Whitecotton 1977](#), 146). We can surmise that these names were from the 260-day calendar. Clearly, the names or identities – the name deciding the individual's character – played a significant role throughout the life of a human being. The *tonalli* is, however, probably more a faculty or an orientation that the human being can cultivate. In her experience with the modern K'iche' of Highland Guatemala, Barbara Tedlock argue that there is no dualism of good versus bad days but more complex prophecies ([Tedlock 1992](#), 97–99).

The hombres-dios (“man-god”) Toltec ruler Ce Acatl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl (“One Reed Our Honourable Lord the Feathered Serpent”) of the city Tula or Tollan (“Place of Reeds”) in Hidalgo – located c. 80 kilometers north of Mexico City – represents a famous example of how a calendar name display a prophecy. The Toltec civilisation (c. 900 – c. 1200 AD) exercised a great influence on many later Mesoamerican cultures. The numerous mythological versions of his disappearance relate that Ce Acatl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl some day would return according to his calendar name Ce Acatl (1 Reed). Many scholars has therefore hypothesised that the Aztec tlatoani (ruler) Motecuhzuma (II) believed that the later Spanish conquerer of the Aztec empire, Hernán Cortéz, was identical with the home coming Ce Acatl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl because he arrived with his Spanish army in Mexico in 1519. This year correspond to the year Ce Acatl (1 Reed) of the Aztec 365-day and 52-year calendar, which got its name from the 260-day calendar. Ce Acatl represents the date the native prophets claimed that Ce Acatl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl would return to Tenochtitlan (today Mexico City), the capital of the Aztec empire.

This lead us to the phenomena, that day names of the 260-calendar name the individual year of the Mesoamerican 365-day calendar – which had an entirely different structure than the European 365-day calendar – and of the 52-year calendar. These day names are called Year Bearers.

[4] THE NAMES AND IDENTITY OF THE YEAR BEARERS OF THE 365-DAY CALENDAR AND THE 52-YEAR CALENDAR CYCLE

The names of the 260-day calendar gave identity to other calendar or organised time systems.

I have already outlined the principle of the 260-day calendar. Let us briefly consider the temporal organisation and structure of the Mesoamerican 365-day calendar. This calendar, called *xiuhitl* in Nahuatl, is quite similar to the solar year but reflects instead a vague year. The actual length of the solar year is 365.2422 days. The vague year or the traditional Mesoamerican 365-day calendar, without leap days, was a quarter of a day or about six hours short of the solar year. The Mesoamerican 365-day calendar has eighteen time units (Sp. veintena) of 20 days each. The last and nineteenth veintena of the year contain only five days. Eighteen multiplied with twenty plus five amounts to 365 days.

Many of the Mesoamerican calendars consist of series of interlinking cycles. Scholars call the largest cyclical calendar in Mesoamerica the Calendar Round of 52 vague years. The Calendar Round combines the two distinct but interlocking calendars of respectively 260 and 365 days. A permutation of the 260-day and the 365-day cycle form a period of 52 vague years since it will take 18,980 days for a juxtaposed date of the 260-day and the 365-day calendar to be repeated in the Calendar Round. A Calendar Round consists therefore of a 52×365 day or a 73×260 -days cycle (94,900 days or 52 vague years) which can be compared to a European century for many indigenous people in Mesoamerica.¹⁶

In order to distinguish a 365-day calendar cycle from another in the 52-year calendar the people in Mesoamerica called every year after one of four particular days in the 260-day calendar for a “Year Bearer”.¹⁷ The Year Bearer is a designation for the transition from one 365-day year to another 365-day year in the 52-year cycle or Calendar Round. Not more than four days from the 260-day calendar can mathematically be a Year Bearer. Since 260 and 365 have 5 as a common mathematical factor, only every fifth date of the 260-day calendar can coincide with a date of the 365-day calendar and vice versa. Each Year Bearer increases every year until it reaches the number thirteen. It will then re-begin at number one. After 52 years will the same Year Bearer with an identical coefficient, again occur (Thompson 1978, 128; Taube 1988, 181–182). In this manner the Year Bear-

[16] The longest time count of the Aztec was one hundred and four years (*Huehuetiliztli*), which the Nahua called a “century” (Sp. “siglo”) according to Sahagún (Sahagún 1950–1982, 1957, V: 143).

[17] Landa call this for a “Dominical Day” (Tozzer 1941, 135–137).

er of the 260-day calendar named and accordingly gave identity to every 365-day year in the 52-year calendar cycle.

[5] THE NAMES AND IDENTITY OF THE FOUR CARDINAL DIRECTIONS

Days of the 260-day calendar named and gave identity to quadripartite space or the four cardinal directions of the world.

We have seen that a Calendar Round was completed when the four Year Bearers of the 365-day calendar each had ruled 13 vague years. The Aztecs perceived the 52-year cycle as comprising four 13-year cycles in one great 52-year cycle. The Spanish ethnographer missionaries Fray Toribio de Benavente Motolinía, Fray Diego Duran and Fray Bernardino de Sahagún writes that the 13 number cycle was repeated four times, generating 52 uniquely named years in a 52-year calendar cycle ($4 \times 13 = 52$), which can be divided into four 13-year quarters. A round circle or calendar wheel of 52 years was divided into four parts. Every part, which represented a cardinal direction, contained thirteen years (Durán 1971, 389–391). The 52-year cycle subdivided into four periods of thirteen years contained the four Year Bearers:

- (i) Tochtli (Rabbit)
- (ii) Acatl (Reed)
- (iii) Tecpatl (Flint)
- (iv) Calli (House)

The year of the 52-year computation received its identity from the name (YB) of the 260-day calendar. The 52-year cycle began with Ce Tochtli (1 Rabbit) where the number one proceeded through thirteen four times (of the four Year Bearers) until the return of same date. The 52-year cycle was divided into the four quarters, *tlapilli*, began respectively with the date of the four Year Bearers, Ce Tochtli (1 Rabbit), Ce Acatl (1 Reed), Ce Tecpatl (1 Flint) and Ce Calli (1 House). Tochtli (Rabbit) was oriented toward the south, Acatl (Reed) to the east, Tecpatl (Flint) was associated with the north, and Calli (House) with the west. Each cardinal direction was ruled for thirteen years.¹⁸ Hence we get this spatial-temporal order of the 52-year calendar:

- (i) Tochtli (Rabbit) of the south

[18] See Illustration of Plate 20 of a Calendar Wheel in book VII of *The Florentine Codex* of the four cardinal directions and the 52-year cycle (Sahagún 1950–1982, 1953, VII). A depiction of 52-year cycle with the four year-bearer signs associated with the four cardinal points is also illustrated in *Codex Aubin* (Read 1998, 93).

- (ii) Acatl (Reed) of the east
- (iii) Tecpatl (Flint) of the north
- (iv) Calli (House) of the west¹⁹

Space, the cardinal directions, and time accordingly received designations and thus identity from the 260-day calendar. These day-names of the 260-day calendar defined the quadripartite world in a spatial-temporal naming system.

[6] NAMES, DESTINITY AND IDENTITY OF THE AZTEC FIVE WORLD AGES

We have seen that the calendar sign determined the destiny of an individual. A prophecy of the end of the world was also decided by the 260-day calendar.

A general agreement exists among scholars that the Aztecs had a notion of five world ages. The sequence of the five world ages (“Suns”) in Aztec religion each has a distinctive set of characteristics and hence identities represented by names of the 260-day calendar. These were respectively terminated by a particular cataclysmic destruction and its inhabitants were either destroyed or transformed into another form ([Elzey 1976](#), 117–118). The majority of the sources give each world age the names Nahui Ocelotl (“4 Jaguar”), Nahui Ehecatl (“4 Wind”), Nahui Quiahuitl (“4 Rain”), Nahui Atl (“4 Water”) and Nahui Ollin (“4 Movement”). The following five world ages or world eras in a chronological or linear order can be identified as:

- (i) Nahui Ocelotl (“4 Jaguar”).
- (ii) Nahui Ehecatl (“4 Wind”).
- (iii) Nahui Quiahuitl (“4 Rain”).
- (iv) Nahui Atl (“4 Water”).
- (v) Nahui Ollin (“4 Movement”).

Each world age was named after a date in the 260-day cycle and associated with and presided over by a particular deity and a particular group of beings that were either exterminated or transformed into different kinds of beings in the first four creations. These were the dates on which the Suns or worlds were terminated. The world that we are now living in will end on the date Nahui Ollin

(“4 Movement”). *Ollin* in this context refers to a world-devastating earthquake. Earthquakes are quite common in Central Mexico. Thus the names from the 260-day calendar of the Five Suns refer to the quality of the world age and the way its inhabitants will be demolished.

[19] Matlactli omome calli (“13 House”), the sign of the west, was the last sign of the four thirteen periods ([Sahagún 1950–1982](#), 1953, VII: 21).

[7] NAME, FREESOUL (TONALLI) AND IDENTITY

The term *tonalli* refers to a freesoul or a shadow without shape (Sp. "sombre") (López 1988, 204–205).²⁰ George Foster writes that:

"The tonalli originally seems to have been a sort of soul, or at least a spiritual essence, because should the individual lose his tonalli he sickened, and if it were not returned, he died" (Foster 1944, 94–95).

This phenomenon associated with the traditional 260-day calendar has been recognised among the contemporary K'iche' of Highland Guatemala. Every day has its face, identity or character of the 260-day calendar, *rajilábal k'ij*, which influence events. A person's good fortune or destiny is named *uwäch uk'ij* ("the face of one's day" or "one's character", i.e. the personality or character of a human being). Any day imparts the *uwäch uk'ij* to a child born on that day (Tedlock 1992, 110). It is decided by the birthday in the 260-day calendar. *Uwäch uk'ij* can leave the body when the individual dreams and meets other people's *uwäch uk'ij* (Tedlock 1992, 315). It represents therefore a *tonalli* or a free soul.

Hernando Ruiz de Alarcón is the first known ethnographer missionary – if we do not count the dictionary by Molina – who outlines this phenomenon in *Treatise on the Heathen Superstitions that today live among the Indians native to this New Spain* (1629) (Andrews and Hassig in Alarcón 1984, 45; 313, note 6). Ruiz de Alarcón, describes the *tonalli* as a substance, a freesoul that lived in the body but could leave it. But where in the body of the human being was the *tonalli* located? Sahagún relates that the *nahualli*²¹ could be passified in his/her human form by being skinned. His reputation and day sign (*tonalli*) became thus destroyed (Sahagún 1950–1982, 1957, IV: 102). This represented a weakness for the supernatural *nahualli* since his/her extranormal power was in the hair (*tonalli*). The *nahualli* could only save him or herself by taking an object from the person who had captured him or her (Sahagún 1950–1982, 1957, IV: 43).

The freesoul and name ideology had medical implications. The patient was diagnosed by the Nahua *ticatl* ("doctor") as one who lacks a *tonalli* or destiny (Sp. "fortuna") and accordingly a name (Alarcón 1984, 161). He or she will not recover until his or her *tonalli* has reappeared (*oquicauh itonal*, "his/her tonal has abandoned him/her") (Hassig and Andrews in Alarcón 1984, 361, note 9). There were (also female) *tetonaltique* (*tetonaltih*, "one who provides a person a tonal") or *tet-*

[20] López Austin defines the lexem *tonal* or *tonalli* as:

'a. Solar irradiation; b. solar warmth; c. summer; d. day; e. day sign, f. divine influence; g. a person's destiny due to the day of his birth; h. animistic entity that can either spontaneously or accidentally leave a person and that relates him to the rest of the universe; i. something that is destined or belongs to a certain person. It was also called TOTONAL, using the possessive of the first person plural' (López 1988, 297).

[21] A *nahualli* refer in this context to a religious specialist who can transform him or herself to an animal or a natural phenomenon.

onalmacanih ("tonal-givers"), i.e. specialised doctors who located the lost *tonal* of the patient (Hassig and Andrews in [Alarcón 1984](#), 247; 380). They could in various healing-ceremonies bring the *tonalli*, and accordingly the name, back to the patient ([Alarcón 1984](#), 161).

[8] NAMING PRACTICES AND IDENTITY OF HUMANS, DIVINE BEINGS AND SPATIO-TEMPORAL SYSTEMS

Naming practices of the 260-day calendar gave identity to humans, deities, world ages, the 365-calendar, the 52-year calendar and quadripartite space of the world, i.e. the cardinal directions of the Mesoamerican spatial-temporal system. The phenomenon of naming human beings and deities has been categorised as "tonalism". Moreover, the *tonalli*-concept constitutes a predestined fate and a freesoul (a definite shape that can be lost, which also implies could happen to the name) connected to a day-sign of the 260-day calendar. The day-name is in this manner associated with the character, personality, destiny and accordingly identity of a being or phenomenon.

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TOPOONYMS AND THE POLITICAL AND ETHNIC IDENTITY IN SERBIA

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ABSTRACT

In the course of the last 150 years about 25 place-name changes have taken place in Belgrade. Some were more significant than others, and some of the renamed places have suffered as many as six name changes. These changes are part of a blanket process that includes renaming of state administration institutions, research institutes, schools, universities, factories, museums, sport clubs, etc., as well as personal names. This process reflects political, economic, demographic, and cultural changes serving the purpose of constructing and reconstructing political, ethnic, religious, and cultural identity, as well as political relations, and history. In this paper the author discusses this renaming process, its causes and consequences, as well as its potential for constructing and reconstructing reality.

[1] AN ADDITIONAL FUNCTION OF TOPOONYMS

Toponyms may be classified according to their various functions. Peter Hallaråker ([Hallaråker 1997](#), 163–174) has suggested following five functions: 1) the address function; 2) the linguistic function; 3) the topographic function; 4) the cultural function; 5) the social and psychological function; 6) the fantasy function. I believe that between the cultural and the socio-psychological functions an additional function should be inserted, namely the function of creating political and ethnic identity. This function is also in conformity with Thorsten Andersson's ([Andersson 1994](#), 8) classification which includes place names as a mean of ideological communication and builder of social belonging. Following up this view, I will here focus on how political, ethnic and cultural changes have impacted the change of toponyms, especially hodonyms, in Serbia. For space reasons I leave out the names of private villas, buildings and other real estates although they would be of great interest in this context.

Microtoponymy has not been researched much in Serbia, and (h)odonymy (cf. *(h)odonym* ‘proper noun of a traffic route feature’) is subject for – as far as I know – only three articles ([Josić 1996](#); [Dulović 2004](#); [Stojanović 2008](#)). But no one of

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them is to be fully trusted: [Josić \(1996\)](#) is already somewhat out-dated, [Dulović \(2004\)](#) is an informative, but very short overview, and [Stojanović \(2008\)](#) has a lot of information, but also some wrong, and is not enough systematic. There is no central register of toponyms while the available printed and electronic maps do not cover the entire country (see f. ex. electronic maps [Geografska \(2007\)](#) and [Contrast-PlanPlus10 \(2008\)](#)). Further, the changes of toponyms are often recorded with a delay of several years, and then they are not to be found in any public form except for those living in the area in question.

When streets and squares are renamed due to some changes in the society the new names usually replace the old ones, which often results in wiping them out. It is very rare that a new name plate is added beneath the old one, and when this occurs it is regarded as an exception to the general practice. For this reason it is difficult to reconstruct a more or less comprehensive list of toponyms and their changes over time. But they get a part of a modern history, contrary to what [Topley \(1996\)](#) claims. So, we have to go back to more popular surveys of the street names in f.ex. Belgrade (see [Stojanović 2004, 2005; Golubović 2006; Leko 2006](#)) or look for historical monographs (cf. [Tasić 1995; Stojanović 2008](#)).

Preservation or changing of toponyms depends on an array of factors. The interplay of linguistic and historical, as well as cultural and historical factors in the development of toponyms has been covered fairly well by the general toponomastic literature. Notwithstanding, in the field of sociotponymy appropriate literature is limited, while the research of the function of toponyms as an instrument of identity building is even harder to come by. In Serbia this kind of research has hardly been done at all, which may be due to the fact that these fields of research are relatively new. For this reason my primary sources of relevant information came, for the most part, from the news concerning place-name changes that appeared in the media, and from my students who informed me about the renaming processes that have taken place in their home towns. My secondary source material comes from a student's research paper and several books that address place-name changes in Belgrade. A more general toponomastic research problem across the Balkans is, for the most part, that the local scholars who engage in this research either lean towards nationalistic interpretation of the material, or do not belong to the top echelons of onomastics, or both. In certain situations this may challenge the reliability of the data acquired from their research.

Renaming often takes place during critical times in history, and in such times it usually occurs wholesale. A few series of place-name changes took place in the former Yugoslavia during war 1992–1999 and in post-war construction of new reality, see also [Rihtman-Auguštin \(2000 \[1995\]\)](#) for Croatia generally, [Stolac \(1996\)](#) for Croatian coastal town Rijeka, [Memić \(2008\)](#) for Bosnia-Herzegovina, [Piškorec \(2008\)](#) for a small town in Croatia, and above mentioned literature which in whole or partially deals with the hodonymy of Belgrade), and sometimes it is easy to

see this kind of close connection even in the titles of some analyses (for example Memić and Piškorec, op. cit.). As a rule it is easy to see an obvious correlation between external political, economic, demographic and cultural changes and their reflection in the renaming of toponyms. This applies not only to the former Yugoslavia, but also to other parts of Europe (see [Azaryahu 1991](#), Eller, Hackl, Pupták 2008, [Lietz 2009](#); [David 2011](#)) and worldwide ([Tarpley 1996](#)).

Obviously we here have a global phenomenon, but the majority of examples I will provide in this paper belong to the pool of street and square names as well as the names of boroughs and neighborhoods of Belgrade, but I will also give other examples of naming and renaming to support the point I want to make.

[2] THE CITY AS A SYMBOLIC SPACE

Belgrade was a fortified frontier city which has had an extremely turbulent history. In 1848 when the Turkish occupation authorities allowed for the first time that the city streets were given permanent names Belgrade had only 30 streets, of which 19 were given generic descriptive names while the remaining 11 were named after the heroes of the First and Second Serbian Uprising of 1804 and 1813 respectively. However, it was not before 1872 – when the Turkish forces withdrew from Belgrade pursuant to the Treaty of 1868 – and 1878 when the Turkish forces withdrew from the Belgrade fortress – that the street name plates were mounted. Following Turkish withdrawal the number of city streets grew to 176, and, since that time, the streets and squares of Belgrade have been renamed about 25 times. Each time the new names symbolized the changed political, ethnic and cultural circumstances.

Place names introduced in the late 19th century reflect not only the evolving conflict of the two Serbian dynasties but also the city administration's effort to "modernize" street names. Generic street names such as *Pivarska ulica* (Brewery Street) and *Ribarska ulica* (Fishermen's Street) seemed to be outdated and therefore changed. Today, only 30 streets in Belgrade still bear the names that survived this renaming tide. Between 1909 and 1913 the ideas of pan-Slavic unity spread and developed across the entire Southern region of Europe populated by South Slavs. Consequently, a number of old streets suffered a name change to reflect the new flavor of the day, mostly given as topographic names from the South Slavonic area *Dalmatinska*, *Mostarska*, *Kumanovska*, *Vardarska*, *Bitoljska*, *Vojvodanska*, *Nevesinjska*, *Travnička* (Dalmatia, Mostar, Kumanovo, Vardar, Bitola, Vojvodina, Nevesinje, Travnik Street), and after 1930 as panslavic anthroponymic names (Mickiewicz, Aleksandar Stambolijski etc.). Similarly, during WW I, the Austro-Hungarian military authorities carried out a renaming process to "Germanize" place names in the period from July 1916 to November 1918 (for example *Moskovska* became *von Laudon Straße*).

After 1920 Belgrade became the capital of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians, the state whose government soon decided to rename the state itself. It became the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (*Yugoslavia* being the name coined to symbolize the unity of South Slavs). This change brought about another wave of renaming of the streets of Belgrade so that the new street names would reflect the spirit of the new state. The enthusiasm for the “spirit of Yugoslavia” was rekindled around 1930, which resulted in renaming of many streets of Belgrade which, this time, were named after Croatian and Slovenian politicians and intellectuals (for example Supilo, Štrosmajer, and others), and politicians and high-ranking officers of both Serbian and allied armed forces who took part in WW I. Partially in 1942, to a wide range from 1943 the German occupying authorities renamed all of the streets whose names could be taken as anti-German such as *Engleska ulica* (English Street), *Jevrejska* (Jewish Street), *Cara Dušana* (Tsar Dusan Street) etc. The new names were *Hindenburg*, *Prinz Eugen*, *Herman Göring*, *Gneisenau Straße* etc., and in Zemun, which was a part of the Independent State Croatia, *Dr. Ante Pavelića* (the name of Croatian President and Führer). At the same time the local collaborationist government wiped out all place names that ‘smacked’ of Yugoslavia.

In 1946, although the renaming of 1943 was officially revoked, some pre-war street names were not returned. This time over 110 streets underwent a name change. Many streets were renamed after fallen members of the Partisan Movement, pre-war activists of the workers’ unions, and selected personalities belonging to the Western Allies. Also, a considerable number of the new names reflected a pro-Soviet spirit. However, upon the Cominform Resolution of 1948 these names were changed.

The state itself suffered several name changes which entailed renaming of other places as well. For example, all German village names were replaced by Serbo-Croatian names, and the Yugoslav president’s nom de guerre ”*Tito*” became the first element of a new compound name of at least one city in each of the five republics and two autonomous provinces of Yugoslavia. So, the capital of the republic of Montenegro changed its name from *Podgorica* to *Titograd*. Further, all cities and towns had to have a street (or place) called *Maršala Tita* (Marshall Tito’s Street), and the first highway spanning Belgrade and Zagreb was named the *Autoput bratstva i jedinstva* (Highway of Brotherhood and Unity).

Since mid-1950s a new need concerning place names has come into play, and, therefore, the old streets and squares of Belgrade underwent less frequent name changes. As the city grew in size new streets needed to be named. In October 1944 the population of Belgrade was about 240.000 whereas today it is about 1.650.000. New streets have been predominantly named after local and international politicians and other personalities. As the city was growing very fast, many new streets were dubbed *Nova ulica* (New Street) for purely practical reasons. So, by 2003 there were 658 streets called *New Street*. To avoid confusion within a neighbor-



FIGURE 1: Jevremova Street – nine different non-official and official names since 1848.

hood, the names of new streets were often added chronological sequence markers, and the streets became *First New Street*, *Second New Street*, *Third New Street*, etc. Further, as the city grew it “swallowed” a number of neighboring towns and villages which brought with them their own street names. This is why up to 14 streets in broader Belgrade often bear the same name. During the 90s, upon the disintegration of Yugoslavia, a new renaming tide occurred to reflect the new political system in each new country and its new politics. This process had three main objectives: first, to reinstate the street names from before WW II; second, to rename the streets and squares built after WW II; and, third, to name the streets and squares which had no name because they had been recently constructed. This process is still in progress. In 2004 and 2005, for example, the names of about 400 streets and squares were changed in an effort to attain the above objectives, particularly the first two. As for the third objective, the problem was that there were not enough new streets to fulfill the wishes of all political players in power. For this reason numerous streets were split into segments each of which was given a different new name. The political history of toponyms is in fact a reflection of the

political history of a country. Consequently, place names are to a great extent, a means for constructing and deconstructing as well as re-interpreting political history. This accounts for the constant reduction of the number of generic and descriptive toponyms as well as the steady increase of street and square names that refer to people. The latter make about 90% of all place names in Belgrade today. It would be fair to say that, at times, new generic place names still occur particularly when there is a “shortage” of personalities acceptable to all wielders of power. Along these lines, for example, some places have been named after the local flora.

A street not far from my home in Belgrade has undergone eight name changes since 1848 ([Figure 1](#)). Another two very close to my home have suffered six name changes since 1872 ([Figure 2](#) and [3](#)), and there is no guarantee as to whether the current name will stay for any length of time. In Belgrade the municipal authorities have the power of deciding whether the plate with a street’s old name shall be kept above the new name plate or removed. For example, one of the main streets in central Belgrade was called *Maršala Tita* (Marshall Tito’s Street) from 1946 to 1991. Then it became *Srpskih vladara* (Serbian Rulers’ Street), and, in 1997 it suffered yet another name change and became *Kralja Milana* (King Milan’s Street), thus recovering its pre-WW I name. The name plate with “Marshall Tito” written on it was removed ([Figure 4](#)), which can be reasonably explained as an attempt to erase from public memory the name this street bore for 45 years just because it is no longer politically opportune. However, apart from mere negligence, there is no logical explanation for the removal of the former street names in such cases as *Drum kragujevački* (Kragujevac Road) from 1841–1872, *Kragujevačka* (Kragujevac Street) from 1872–1888, and *Kralja Milana* (King Milan’s Street) from 1903–1946. Nor is it indicated anywhere that this street incorporated today’s *Terazije* (Terazije Street) from 1888 to 1903.

As a matter of law, every street and square name change proposed by the municipal authorities of Belgrade has to be approved by the ministry in charge of local public administration. In practice, however, the ministry has hardly ever withheld its approval. Therefore, the selection of places to be renamed and the manner in which the change is executed depend on the decisions of the local wielders of political power in any given municipality of Belgrade. During the early 90s this power was in the hands of extreme nationalists who endeavored, first, to identify anti-fascism with communism, and, second, to remove anything that has to do, or could be even remotely associated with communism. To achieve this they used renaming of streets and squares as a tool for erasing all traces of the anti-fascist movement during WW II as well as the pre-war communist and trade union movements. The fastest and most fundamental changes were made in those municipalities where the extreme right-wing parties were in power. For example, in Aranđelovac, a small town in central Serbia, where the extreme right-wing



FIGURE 2: Two white pigeons (1872-1896), The Holy mountain Street (1896-1922), Bitola Street (1922-1930), George Clemenceau (1930-1943), The Holy mountain Street (1943-1946), Lole Ribara (1946-1997), The Holy mountain Street (1997-).



FIGURE 3: Two deers (1872-1896), Decani Street (1896-1949), Kardelj's Street (1949-1953), Decani Street (1953-1957), Mosa Pijade Street (1957-1997), Decani Street (1997-).



FIGURE 4: King Milan's Street , former The Serbian rulers Street , but no Street sign with Marshal Tito's Street.

parties seized power one of the streets became *Đeneralana Milana Nedića* (General Milan Nedic Street), named after the president of the collaborationist government during WW II.

[3] TOPONYMS AS A SYMBOL OF THE SO CALLED ETHNIC DEMOCRACY

A similar process has been evolving across Eastern Europe. In the former member states of the Warsaw Pact, however, this process has consistently featured extreme anti-Soviet and anti-Russian feelings. With few exceptions, today's picture of who was who during WW II seems to be turned upside down. Both naming and renaming of streets, squares, institutions, business organizations, etc. have been modified to fit into this new frame. There are relatively few exceptions to this trend. The most noteworthy examples are provided in Slovenia where the majority of existing place names have been preserved, and in Russia where the old street and square names from before the Soviet Revolution have been restored, while the majority of the names of the streets and neighborhoods that developed after the Revolution have been preserved.

This revision of history has developed within the framework of the so called ethno-democracy, the process by which the ruling ethnic group is granted all democratic rights while other ethnic groups are given restricted democratic rights or are deprived of them. Thus, the role of the new place-names is not only to support the re-interpretation of history but also to impose on it a clear-cut ethnic profile. In support of this process arguments reflecting the ideas of the society set-up referred to as *Herrenvolk democracy* are often used. (For more details about ethnocracy see for example [Butenschøn 1993](#)).

This process is taken a step further when the existing names of settlements are changed to underscore the altered, actual or assumed, ethnic composition of its inhabitants or their political affiliation (see [Rihtman-Auguštin 2000 \[1995\]](#); [Stolac 1996](#); [Memić 2008](#); [Piškorec 2008](#); [Stojanović 2008](#)). This happened when *Hrtkovci*, a village in North-West of Serbia predominantly populated by Catholic Croats was renamed upon ethnic cleansing of Croats and forced re-settling of ethnic Serbs who had fled or had been expelled from Croatia. The village was coined a new name: *Srbislavci* which means ‘honoring Serbs’. Further, a small town in Bosnia called *Foča* was renamed and became *Srbinje*, meaning ‘belonging to the Serbs’, right after its Moslem population was either expelled or killed. This process of ethnic profiling of place names is actually quite simple. For example, *Kukujevci*, a village on the Serbian border with Croatia, was populated predominantly by Catholic Croats. The majority of this group was forced to move to Croatia during the ‘90s. Meanwhile the village was steadily populated by the Christian Orthodox Serbs, refugees from Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. This resulted in the current composition of the village population whose vast Serbian majority is extremely right-winged and chauvinistic, and shares the most backward ideas of the Serbian Orthodox clergy. By the beginning of November 2007 the village authorities decreed renaming of all the streets which bore the names of famous people from Croatian history. Not surprisingly, these streets were given new names of famous people from Serbian history. The authorities knew hardly anything about either group of personalities, but they knew their ethnic origin. In November 2007 the village authorities requested that the village itself be renamed either *Lazarevo*, after the Serbian prince who had been killed during the Battle of Kosovo in 1389, or *Obilićevo* after *Miloš Obilić*, an assumed hero who, according to the oral folk tradition, had killed a Turkish sultan in the same battle, a claim for which there is not a shred of historical evidence. The change request of the filed name was accompanied by a very simple statement of purpose in which the local authorities said: “We are the majority in the village, which gives us the right to change any place name we choose”. A similar situation occurred in another part of Vojvodina, in an ethnically mixed community where the members of the official Hungarian minority constituted the majority in the municipal assembly. In *Kanjiža* which is a town predominantly populated by ethnic Hungarians it took the local admin-

istration a single meeting to have no fewer than 134 street names changed. All of the new street names are in Hungarian and reflect the Hungarian view of the history of the town as well as its inter-ethnic relations. Almost all inhabitants – albeit for different reasons of which some were political while others were practical (as this would entail replacement of all documents and personal papers) – petitioned to challenge this name change. Unfortunately, their effort failed despite the fact that the name change had been voted into effect by mere abuse of the majority vote in the local assembly. Further, in the South of Serbia there are three municipalities bordering on Kosovo where place names are predominantly in Albanian although ethnic Albanians constitute the majority in just two of these municipalities.

Similar processes are under way in all republics of the former Yugoslavia and the province of Kosovo. In Kosovo everything has two very different interpretations: Albanian and Serbian. This is mirrored in place names. The region itself is now referred to as Kosovo although it consists of two parts one of which is called *Kosovo* in Serbian and *Kosova* in Albanian. This name is Slavic in origin. The other part of the region is called *Metohija* which is derived from the Greek word *metochion* ($\mu\epsilon\tauο\xiον$) denoting monastery estate. The entire region used to be called *Kosovo and Metohija*. However, in one of the revised and amended versions of the Constitution of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia it was stipulated that the region was to be referred to only as Kosovo, as had been requested by the political elite of Kosovo Albanians who argued that this name would reflect more accurately the Albanian demographic spread in the region. When NATO forces came to Kosovo in June 1999 a thorough “Albanization” of the names of the streets, squares, settlements, businesses and other organizations was carried out in order to define Kosovo as an Albanian region, and the name *Metohija* ceased to be used as it was officially renamed *Dukagjin* which is an Albanian word. In Croatia, several streets have been named after Mile Budak, a mediocre Croatian author from the time between the two world wars who was appointed Minister of Education in the Independent State of Croatia – a state created at the beginning of WW II by the German Nazi Occupation Administration – despite the fact that he himself signed a number of racist laws which were put into effect at that time. Different places in Croatia have been renamed after other prominent individuals of that time, the majority of whom belonged to the Croatian nationalist movement and its extreme Nazi division called *Ustashi*.

A combination of the absence of democratic tradition, disrespect for the cultural and historic significance of toponyms, political interests and complete disregard for the UN recommendations concerning place names has facilitated a seamless three-way merger of “ethno-democracy”, a romantic national concept of history, and the outlook on society promoted by the clergy. That type of change can be named as albanization, croatization, islamization, and serbization of the social

and political space. Not surprisingly, this merger has been causing friction and conflict in multiethnic societies. Meanwhile, the renaming process has taken its toll on both the state and its citizens. City street plans, street name plates, official business licenses, seals and stationary are costly, and so are all personal documents and everything else that needs to be replaced when the address changes. In addition, frequent renaming of streets causes serious confusion when it comes to city services such as medical emergency service, fire brigade, postal, taxi and car services, to say nothing about how it confuses out-of-town visitors and citizens proper who belong to different generations and, therefore, use different street names referring to the same street. Unlike political interests which have been courted and accommodated by every place-name change I know of, the inconvenience street renaming imposes on the citizens, to the best of my knowledge, has not even been considered by any of the authorities. It is true, however, that the mounting of new name plates may be delayed, but that happens, as it did in Kanjiža, only because local authorities may not have enough money to cover the production costs of the new name plates.

[4] TOPOONYMS AS POLITICAL AND CULTURAL SYMBOLS, AND EVIDENCE OF HISTORIC RIGHTS

It is not always easy to think of place names which would meet both ethnic and political requirements, particularly when the education and general intellectual level of many politicians who decide on place name changes are taken into consideration. For this reason there are quite a few surprising place names in Belgrade. The official publication *Place Naming Guidelines for Belgrade* of March 28, 2003 ([Kriterijumi 2003](#)) contains, for the most part, reasonable guidelines. However, some of them are rather imprecise and may be interpreted in different ways. For example, one of the “fuzzy” guidelines reads as follows: “One of the international requirements concerning the capital of SRY is to have some of its streets named after international statesmen, scientists and artists. The streets bearing such names should be located in the attractive city neighborhoods.” In practice, the interpretation of this guideline resulted in some sociologically and politically interesting choices. Consequently, the group of international artists after whom Belgrade streets were named includes the writers Mikhail Bulgakov, Rabindranath Tagore, Miguel de Cervantes and Ernest Hemingway as well as their much less significant fellow artists such as the jazz musician Django Rinehardt and movie star Yul Brynner. On the other hand, street names, as per another political decision, should indicate that Belgrade is a Serbian city, and that its streets bear the names of international personalities who have played a role in the history of the Serbian people. This, however, is not the case with any of the above people after whom several streets of Belgrade have been named.

Interestingly enough, some old streets of Belgrade have preserved their old names although their names are identical to the toponyms in other countries. Such examples include, but are not limited to, *Zagrebačka* (Zagreb Street) and *Dubrovačka* (Dubrovnik Street). In addition, some of the preserved street names have suffered a curious transformation, as is the case with *Kondina* (Kondina Street) in the very center of Belgrade. *Ostoja Tom Konda* after whom the street was named was a Christian Orthodox Albanian who, like many other Christians, Serbs included, served in the Turkish military forces during the long rule of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans. During the First Serbian Uprising, namely in 1806, he and his men changed sides and joined the Serbian rebels. During the siege of the Belgrade fort of Kalemegdan Konda and his crew were the first to win entrance to the fort through its main gate. In all likelihood the Serbian rebels would have seized the fort even without Konda's assistance, but this might have cost them greater losses. A plate explaining who Konda was was mounted two years ago at the beginning of the street bearing his name. The text on the plate provides a brief account of his heroic deed and says that he was Christian, but the fact that he was Albanian has been curiously omitted.

In the transition societies toponyms have gained a clear-cut profile of political and cultural symbols. For this reason, in Croatia streets have been named after Hans Genscher, former German Minister of Foreign Affairs who was instrumental in exercising pressure on the international community to grant and recognize Croatia's independence. The same holds true for the reason Bill Clinton has a boulevard in Priština (Kosovo) named after him. In Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina) many streets now bear oriental names while the street that was named after Ivo Andrić was renamed, and his name wiped out despite the fact that he was Croat from Bosnia and the only Nobel Laureate for Literature from the entire former Yugoslavia. Andrić, who was of Croatian ethnic descent, declared himself as a Serb, which seems to be a reason good enough for the Bosnian nationalists to condemn his entire literary work as being pro-Serbian. The Albanian writer Besnik Skupi authored an article in the May/June 2007 issue of the *Kuvendi*, a geo-political monthly published in Tirana (Albania), in which he discusses the names of the cities and towns with a sizeable Albanian community, and those whose population is almost entirely Albanian. To make his point he uses the names of *Skopje*, *Skuardi* and *Shkodër* and argues that the phoneme sequence in *sku-ska-sko* provides direct evidence of the Albanian Illyrian descent as well as pre-Roman demographic presence of Albanians across the Balkans. This, in turn, according to the same author, testifies to the territorial spread of Albanians, which substantiates their right to claim this entire territory. Skupi's article abounds in similar quasi-scientific historical and demographic data, but a single example is enough to show how old toponyms can be (ab)used to support current territorial pretensions. Besnik Skupi is just one of many proponents of what

many Balkan scholars jokingly refer to as “zombie linguistics”, the quasi-science which endeavors to revive the long outdated national-romantic ideas of the past. Still, the spread and impact of this scientific disgrace across the former Eastern Block should not be underestimated because it often surfaces in the amateurs’ and politicians’ response to the development of socio-onomastics. Worse still, it has been incorporated in general education programs side by side with similar approaches to the content of the courses of national and cultural history. However tempting it may be, addressing this issue any further would take us away from the topic of this paper.

Political interests, dealing and wheeling, prestige and revenge as well as historical revisionism and the lack of knowledge often lie beneath renaming. However, a considerable number of place-names always survive changes. Belgrade was under Turkish occupation for almost 400 years, but its today’s street names do not provide any evidence of that. The only remnants of the long-drawn Turkish rule are one mosque, two distinctively Turkish tombs, and several structure blocks of the old Kalemegdan fort and city walls. However, a number of macrotoponyms dating back from the Turkish occupation have survived all the place-name changes. For example, during the Turkish rule it was prohibited to smoke a pipe within the city walls for fear that lighting a pipe may start a fire. Smoking a pipe was allowed outside the city walls. In Serbian “*pali lula*” means ‘light a pipe’. This is the story behind the name of one of today’s municipalities of Belgrade which is called *Palilula*. Further, one of Belgrade’s old parks is called *Topčider*, while several city neighborhoods still bear their old names such as *Karaburma*, *Dorćol*, *Jatagan mala* and *Bulbulder*. The old fort and city walls of Belgrade are called *Kalemegdan*, and the name of very center of Belgrade, *Terazije*, is also Turkish. All these names originate from Turkish words, and, indeed, when you say them they sound Turkish.

Similarly, there are place names that are not official but dominate common usage. They, too, tend to resist change. For example, the very central square in Belgrade is called *Trg republike* (Republic Square). In one of its three corners a monument to the Serbian prince Mihailo who lived and ruled the country in the 19th century, was erected. Prince Mihailo, like all other rulers of the day, was mounted on a horse, as the architectural style and practice required. For this reason, at some point, young people of Belgrade started referring to the entire square as the “Horse Square”. Given that this square is one of the favorite meeting spots in the city, many people of Belgrade would normally say they are meeting someone “*kod konja*” (“at the Horse”) rather than “on Republic Square”. Such spontaneously coined place names usually resist political will or intention to have them changed. They tend to be passed on from one generation to another, thus becoming not only part of the jargon of the young but also colloquial speech in general.

[5] OTHER NAMES AS TOPOONYM ADD-ONS

Toponyms are the most important elements of the ethnic and political identity of an area because they define it as a territorial unit, but they are not the only agents of this kind of identity building. Other names may partake in it as well, either independently or as add-ons to the existing toponyms. For example, after WW II many new place names were deliberately evocative of the war and Partisan victory. Thus, many new business organizations were named after the heroes of WW II, or were given more general, but just as evocative, names such as *Partizanski put* (Partisans' Way).

Upon the fall of the communist regime at the beginning of the 90s, some of these businesses were renamed. For example, in November 2007 there was an initiative in the multiethnic city of Novi Sad to reinstitute the original name of the city's oldest high school. That name had been *Srpska pravoslavna velika gimnazija u Novom Sadu* (The Serbian Orthodox High School of Novi Sad) before it was revoked in 1918 when the school was named *Jovan Jovanović Zmaj* after a famous Serbian poet and medical doctor from the 19th century. In addition, the initiative proposed that a regular fountain in the school yard were replaced by a memorial drinking fountain which would feature two mosaics depicting "Christ as a shepherd" and "St. Sava blessing Serbian children". (St. Sava is a Serbian Orthodox saint from the middle ages who is taken to be the patron saint of schools and students at all levels of education.) In Novi Sad, at the time of this initiative the city administration was more or less in the hands of the nationalist Serbian Radical Party. Therefore, the main intention of the members of the city administration who submitted the initiative was to underscore the Serbian ethnic and religious Orthodox spirit of the high school. To prevent the enactment of this initiative the citizens of Novi Sad had to organize public protests and mobilize several political parties into action so that a name which implies that the school is for Serbian students only would not be imposed on a high school that has a multiethnic student body. (For more information refer to www.petitiononline.com/novisad/petition.html).

A similar renaming process of schools, barracks, museums and other public places has been going on in all republics of the former Yugoslavia as well as across the former Eastern Block. Local Nazi collaborators from WW II and historic personalities notorious for promoting extreme nationalist and anti-Semitic ideas have been rehabilitated by means of being granted a place name. In other instances, a part of a place name may be changed, or an ethnonym may be added to it as a significant marker. A good example of such renaming interventions is provided by the name changes of the *Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti* (Yugoslav Academy of Science and Art) founded in Zagreb, capital of Croatia, in 1876. During the rule of the collaborationist government of the Croatian Nazi state (1941–1945) the Academy became the *Hrvatska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti* (Croatian Academy of Science and Art). After WW II its original name was restored

for several decades, but the word *Yugoslav* was again replaced by *Croatian* in 1991 to underscore the newly acquired Croatian independence.

Renaming of the former state-owned businesses has been impacted by the process of privatization in that it has considerably diminished the appearance of ethnonyms and local personal names in the new names of these businesses particularly if the new owners are international companies. The names of public institutions, however, have resisted this trend.

Still, some names could not be changed by political will and power. The Serbian soccer teams *Partizan* (Partisan) and *Crvena Zvezda* (Red Star) have preserved their post-WW II names because it was rightly assumed that their fans would never accept their favorite team's name change. However, in Croatia, the most popular Zagreb soccer team *Dinamo* suffered two almost consecutive name changes. First, its pre-WW II name *Gradanski* (Citizens) was restored in 1992 in order to wipe out any association with the team's Yugoslav past, and then, in 1993 it was renamed again and became *Croatia Zagreb*. Finally, the team's fans, who were otherwise the most fervent supporters of the Tuđman's nationalist regime of the 90s, took matters into their own hands and staged a series of protests which forced the authorities to reinstitute *Dinamo* as the team's name.

Anthroponomy has been affected by the political changes as well. For example, during WW II and especially upon its end, the names that evoked affirmation of peace were particularly popular. Hence, there was a tide of compound names such as *Ratomir* (male), and *Ratomirka* and *Mirjana* (female). "Rat" means 'war' in Serbian, while "mir" means 'peace'. After the war many children were named after the names of places where the most notable Partisan victories took place. So, for example, a number of girls were called *Sutjeska* which is the name of the river where a battle against the Germans was fought and won. Along similar lines of thought parents picked names for their kids such as *Slobodan* and *Slobodanka* (male and female versions of the English personal name *Liberty*, as "sloboda" in Serbian means 'freedom'). As could be expected, in the post-war period girls were often named *Nada* (*Hope*), while there were very many boys who were named *Vladimir* after V. I. Lenin. There were also quite a few unfortunate choices of girls' names including, but not limited to *Staljinka* (after Josif V. Stalin), *Mašinka* (after the automatic machine gun), *Molotovka* (after a notorious Soviet minister of foreign affairs), *Kolhoska* (after the Soviet model of a farming commune called "kolhos"), etc. Names that appeared in the post-war movies, particularly war epics were also a source of personal names of the day. For example, only two girls had been named *Slavica* in the course of 12 years before the film *Slavica* (named after a character in the movie) was released as the first Yugoslav war epic made after WW II. After the movie premiered, 34 girls were named *Slavica* in a little over a year (see, Aleksandar Kostić's interview of August 31, 2007).

The political changes of the 90s were reflected in the anthroponyms as well. The number of children who were given compound personal names whose first element is an ethnonym was on the rise. For example, names like *Srbobran* ('defending Serbs') and *Srbislav* ('celebrating Serbs') became popular. Also, old names, particularly those associated with historic figures, such as *Nemanja* and *Dušan* (the names borne by two medieval Serbian kings) became quite frequent. However, urban families have been very careful not to give their offspring any names which might smack of "peasants' choice" or very old names regarded as antiquated. Similarly, Albanian families often opt for the names that date back from their assumed Illyrian past. Such names are *Ilir* and *Teuta*, for example. They also seem to favor abbreviated ethnonyms such as *Albin*. All of the above names belong to the pool of anthroponyms which come and go. This tide is always initiated by political changes as political authorities, the church and other religious communities use all available means to influence parents' choice of names for their offspring. Today, however, these anthroponyms are in fierce competition with international names. Therefore, it is fair to say that, in general, archaic and ethnonym-based anthroponyms are an addition to toponyms which demonstrates the ethnic, religious and political identity or affiliation of parents.

[6] END NOTE

In April 2011 the municipality of Belgrade decided to split the Bajo Pivljanin street in three parts; the first one with the same name, the second getting name of Slavko Ćuruvija, a journalist killed by Security Service in April 1999, and the third one of Diana Budisavljević, a woman organising the rescue of children from Ustaša extermination camp Jasenovac during WW II. The discussion is still going on if the new bridge over river Sava should be called after general Dragoslav Mihajlović, the commander of pro-German tchetnik forces during WW II. In the Serbian town Novi Pazar, with primarily Muslim population, there is now a conflict between Muslims and Serbs on naming one square after Isa-beg Isaković, the Turkish officer who founded the town in 1461. At the same time the municipality of Split in Croatia wanted to name one street after general Ante Gotovina, just judged to 24 years prison by the International Criminal Tribunal in Hague for organised war crimes against Serbs in 1995.

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IMMIGRANTS IN NORWAY AND THEIR CHOICE OF NAMES: CONTINUATION OR ADAPTION?

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ABSTRACT

The article focuses on names chosen for children born into families in which one or both parents are immigrants to Norway, and it discusses whether the infants get names that show a continuation of traditions from the country of the immigrant parent(s), or names that point to an adaption to Norwegian standards. The data referred to in the article is mainly based on research conducted with bilingual families and individuals in Tromsø in Northern Norway, and it reveals that many of the children are given names that convey their bilingual background and emphasize naming traditions from the immigrant country. There are however also a frequency of names indicating that the parents have had in mind the children's growing up in Norway and their integration into Norwegian society. All along there are numerous cases showing the parents' perception of the close link between name and identity, and their wish to express identity through naming. In addition this article focuses on the names of adult immigrants. It reveals that when individuals change one or more of their names once they have settled in Norway, there are specific reasons for altering something that is so closely related to their identity. Frequently the name change affects their sense of self and has an impact both practically and mentally.

[1] INTRODUCTION

"A person will be like his name" a Moroccan immigrant once said in a conversation we had about names. He was referring to a proverb from his homeland, in this way alluding to how closely linked the relationship between name and identity can be regarded but also to the belief that the name and the expectations and hopes associated with it may influence an individual in various ways.

When asking people: "Who are you?" the response you are most likely to receive is a recital of their names, Richard D. Alford says in his book *Naming and Identity* (Alford 1988, 51), and he continues:

With this response, people do not mean that they *are* their names, but rather that their names symbolize their identities. The fact that personal names symbolize individuals' identities is especially evident

when we compare naming systems across cultures. (...) In nearly every society, personal names do two things. First, they provide messages to the members of the society at large about who an individual is. Second, they provide messages to the named individual about who he or she is expected to be (loc.cit.).

Alford's study deals with names in a cross-cultural perspective including naming systems from all continents, and is therefore relevant to my research.

A personal name can be regarded as part of one's identity. It both identifies a person and distinguishes the individuals in a society. At the same time the naming of a child makes it part of the social world with relationships to the family and the wider community. In Western, technologically complex societies the concern with issues of individual identity has been a rather recent phenomenon, according to the psychologist Jane Kroger ([Kroger 2000](#), 14–15). She refers to the psychoanalyst Erik H. Erikson who points out that the interest in identity of the individual coincides in time with the period in American history when a new generation of immigrants were struggling towards a self-definition in a land far removed from that of their ancestors (loc.cit.). The preoccupation with individual identity when settling in a new country, is a relevant subject when studying present immigration to Norway. Tromsø, the largest town in Northern Norway, will be used as an example in exploring naming practices because individuals and families from a wide variety of countries have settled in this increasingly cosmopolitan city. They have had to adjust to a new culture and a new language, and their names in which their personal identity is embedded becomes a part of this process. Depending on how linguistically and culturally familiar or unfamiliar the name of the immigrant is to the community at large, it can act as an identity message to the wider society surrounding the immigrant, and Norwegians will react accordingly. The immigrant may choose to alter his or her name, or be forced to do so, with emotional consequences upon the individual's self esteem. The immigrant parents will put much effort and consideration into giving names to the children that are born in Norway, not least because the name might play an important role in the ethnic identity they want their child to have. This also applies to families in which only one parent is an immigrant. Many parents in *bilingual families* – here defined as families in which one or both parents are born outside Norway – give their children names intended to reflect the multicultural identity they want their child to grow up with, as we shall see.

The article is based mainly on empirical material gathered in multicultural Tromsø which has a population of about 68 000. Roughly 9 % are immigrants comprising more than a hundred nationalities ([SSB 2011](#)). Tromsø is the starting point, but much of the data probably is applicable to most towns and cities in Norway. Today even the most remote Norwegian municipality has a number of im-

migrants. Cities naturally have more immigrants with Oslo having the largest immigration community in Norway with an immigrant population of 28 % (op.cit.).

The terms *immigrant* and *refugee* are being employed slightly differently by the bureaucrats and in the mass media. Quite often there is no point in differentiating between the two groups of newcomers from abroad and certainly not when we are discussing their encounters with Norwegian naming legislation. I will therefore use the term *immigrant* about all persons who are born abroad and who have moved to Norway. Because my presentation deals with *name complexes* (the full name of a person) from different countries and name cultures I will occasionally use the term *individual name* instead of the more common terms *given name* or *first name*. When it comes to an inheritable name shared by all or most of the family and placed at the end of the name complex, the term *surname* is used. An *international name* refers to a name from the Western part of the world. It frequently comes from the Bible and is often rendered in an adjusted English form, cf. *Mary* and *John*. A *Muslim name* refers to mostly Arabic names used by the Muslims. They are also actually international names across the Muslim world, but not from the ethnocentric European/Norwegian point of view I apply here. Some international and Muslim names overlap, as we shall see.

[2] NAMING THE CHILDREN

If one parent is a Norwegian and the other parent also comes from one of the Nordic countries, the parents will have a considerable base of names in common to choose from, unlike the families in which one or both parents come from a non-Nordic country. Depending on their religious and cultural background and because of the growing use of international names in Norway, parents from non-Nordic countries to a certain extent will recognize names in use in Norway but still have a name base rather different from the names common in Norway. Consequently it is more interesting and rewarding to look at names used by immigrants and bilingual families where unusual naming traditions are involved when discussing continuation or adaption of names. For this reason names in families will be used as examples where both parents are immigrants from Ghana or from Somalia and in families with one immigrant parent from Morocco or from Thailand.

[2.1] Continuation of names and naming traditions from the country of origin

My first focus will be on families in which both parents come from Ghana. The University of Tromsø for several years had a special study program for international students from so-called development countries, and most of the students were Ghanians of which the majority belonged to the Akan group, one of the largest linguistic and ethnic groups in Ghana. Many students brought their family with them to Norway, and a number of children were born while the families

	GIRL	BOY
MONDAY 'Dwoda'	<i>Adwowa, Adjoa</i>	<i>Kwadwo, Kojo</i>
TUESDAY 'Benada'	<i>Abena, Abla</i>	<i>Kwabena, Kobina</i>
WEDNESDAY 'Wukuda'	<i>Akua, Ekua</i>	<i>Kwaku, Kweku</i>
THURSDAY 'Yawda'	<i>Yaa, Yawa</i>	<i>Yaw, Yao</i>
FRIDAY 'Fida'	<i>Efua, Afia</i>	<i>Kofi</i>
SATURDAY 'Memeneda'	<i>Amma, Ama</i>	<i>Kwame, Kwamena</i>
SUNDAY 'Kwasida'	<i>Akosua, Akwasiba</i>	<i>Kwasi, Kwesi</i>

FIGURE 1: Day names in Ghana

(The names are androgynous names if not marked with f. = a girl's name, m. = a boy's name)

	GIRL/BOY
FIRST	<i>Baako</i>
SECOND	<i>Manu</i>
THIRD	<i>Mensa, Mansa</i>
FOURTH	<i>Anan, Anani</i>
FIFTH	<i>Enu</i>
SIXTH	<i>Nsia</i>
SEVENTH	<i>Asong, Nsonowa</i>
EIGHTH	<i>Awotwi</i>
NINTH	<i>Nkruma</i>
TENTH	<i>Baduwa and Baidoo f., Badu m.</i>

FIGURE 2: Positional names in Ghana

stayed abroad. The parents were eager to continue the naming traditions from home, including the custom of giving the children a *day name* indicating the day of the week the child was born and a *positional name* which corresponds to the birth position among the siblings in the family. In addition, the children were given one or more names which we will discuss later. In figure 1 and 2 are the names as recounted by my interviewees (cf. also [Madubuike 1994](#), 63 ff.).

Among the children born in Tromsø of Ghanesian parents we therefore find names like *Akosua* (girl born on a Sunday), and *Kwabena* (boy born on a Tuesday), and the parents have told me in interviews that it was important for them to carry on this particular naming tradition as an important part of the child's ethnic identity. One mother told me that after the many years of colonization and dominant, overwhelming use of Christian names in an English form, she was very concerned that her children should have traditional Ghanesian Akan names. The name is part of the national-ethnic identity she wanted her children to have. The

1st generation:		Ali	Warsame	Jama
2nd generation:		Mohamed	Ali	Warsame
3rd generation:	Hassan	Mohamed	Ali	

FIGURE 3: Traditional Somalian and Muslim naming

tradition to honour a good friend or a relative by naming a child after this person is however strong, my Ghanesian informants recount. The above mentioned girl Akosua e.g. has a Ghanesian name after her grandmother in addition to her *day name*, while the boy Kwabena also has got a name after a good friend of the family. It is tradition to give the child the name of a person with good qualities, hoping and expecting that the child will inherit the same good attributes and in this way a part of the original name bearer's identity. If it turns out that the friend or relative after whom the child was named, does something reprehensible, the parents might however omit the name to avoid any damage done to the child. The children of the Ghanesian students born in Norway do have a whole set of individual names, just as their siblings born in Ghana have. Consequently children born within a linguistically and culturally Ghanesian domestic environment are pragmatically given names. When a child enters the predominantly Norwegian environment in kindergarten or school, it is simple to switch between the various names. My informants tell me that outside the family circle the children use the name that is most easy to pronounce and use for their Norwegian teachers and friends.

In families where both parents come from Somalia there is a strong determination to carry on the names and the patrilinear naming tradition from home. The Somalians are Muslims, and they adhere to the traditional Muslim patrilinear system. The children are given an individual gender-specific name in the first position, then the father's individual name and finally the individual name of the paternal grandfather. For each generation the last name is omitted, and the newcomer's individual name is placed in front, as we see in Figure 3.

The Somalians are a nomadic people divided into 12 clans, and the awareness and pride of belonging to the specific clan is strong. Many Somalians recount that they easily can reel off the names of their paternal ancestors for more than fifteen generations (Reisæter 2005, 127). Among the Somalians living in Tromsø we find traditional Muslim names such as Nasra f. and Nadra f. and Ahmed m. and Mustafa m., or specific Somalian names like Aragsan f. and Warsame m. The name complex with the three names in a prescribed pattern identifies the individuals linking them to the greater family history and lore and securely placing them in the clan. Among the Somalians and similar to other Muslims the respect for and devotion to the Prophet Muhammad is profound, and his name has a special position among the Muslims. This is a time honoured practice. "It would not hurt

any of you if in his house were one or two Muhammad", said the Prophet himself who also reportedly stated "If someone has four sons and does not call any of them by my name, he has wronged me" ([Schimmel 1997](#), 29).

The Ghanesians may give their children the name of another person hoping that the child will share some of the attributes and characteristics of its namesake, as the Muslims do by naming their children after the Prophet Muhammad ([Alford 1988](#), 74). In many of the Somalian families in Tromsø there is a father or a son named *Muhammad*, and informants noted that preferably the firstborn boy should be called *Muhammad*.

Among families from other countries it is also evident that they are preoccupied with carrying on their national or ethnic naming traditions when naming the children born in Norway, e.g. *Divya f.* and *Prithvi m.* (India) and *Navalan* and *Aathuran* (Sri Lanka).

[2.2] *Adaption to Norwegian naming conventions*

Even among parents who come from countries with naming traditions contrary to Norwegian customs, or among immigrant parents who may hope to move home one fine day, it is common to find examples indicating that certain adaptions to Norwegian standards had already taken place. Parents attempted not to choose names that would be very difficult to use in Norway because of spelling, pronunciation, or an opaque name that could lead to negative or comical connotations. In the name study from Tromsø covering the period 1976–1996 ([Reisæter 2001](#)) and later research among bilingual families, it has become evident that the parents spent considerable effort reflecting on the fact that the names should not create problems when used both in Norway and in the parents' native country. This is also obvious in the interviews I have carried out over several years since 2001.

The Somalian parents have, as mentioned earlier, chosen Muslim or specifically Somalian names. The majority of the names are however relatively short and not difficult to pronounce for the common Norwegian, e.g. *Leyla*, *Nadra*, *Nasra* and *Omar*. The Somalians are also preoccupied with retaining their traditional naming practices consisting of three individual names (cf. Figure 3). This system didn't accord with Norwegian name legislation prior to the new Personal Names Act that came into effect in 2003. The old law required that a child had her/his mother or father's last name (surname) as its surname. When following this rule, the Somalians had to leave out the paternal grandfather's (or father's name) in their children's name. The Somalians I have interviewed were rather unhappy about this, but adapted to Norwegian law officially. Among themselves, however, they would use the names in the traditional Somalian order; individual name, father and paternal grandfather's individual names.

When focusing on name choices in families in which one parent is a Norwegian and the other born outside the Nordic countries, there are clear examples of

what I have in earlier presentations called compromise names, with division into various sub-groups ([Reisæter 2007](#), 283 ff). Such names may not only be compromises between the naming traditions of two countries, but can also be regarded as a compromise between continuation of native tradition and an adaption to Norwegian tradition. Let us look at some examples with individual double names of children with a parent from Norway and the other parent from the country in parenthesis:

Arin Erlend m. (Iran), *Erik Carlos* m. (Peru), *Isabel Montira* f. (Thailand), *Kanayo Sindre* m. (Nigeria), *Malkit Svein* m. (India), *Per Diogo* m. (Brazil), *Rami Henrik* m. (Libanon), *Stine Un* f. (South-Korea) and *Tshepiso Ane* f. (South Africa).

Among the names representing the Norwegian parent we find both Nordic names like *Erik*, *Erlend*, *Sindre* and *Svein* and names well-known and often used like *Henrik* and *Isabel*. Worth noticing is that the names that are infrequent in Norway still are short and easy to pronounce. Some of them are graphically and phonetically similar to names in Norwegian use, e.g. *Un*. This is a Korean name, and it clearly resembles the Norwegian name *Unn*. *Rami* is an Arabic name, but it resembles *Remi*, an individual name familiar to Norwegians. One of the names above is also a variant of a name that is well-known in Norway; *Carlos* = *Karl*.

Another type of adaption and compromise is taking place when names are taken into consideration that are in use in both parental countries by choosing names that are well-known in both countries. There will however be a phonetic variation and different spelling, and the parents have to decide upon the one or the other variant. An example of this practice would be *Frants Lorents* with Norwegian-Peruvian roots. The two names are officially registered in an adjusted Norwegian form, but at the same time they are well-known in Peru as *Francisco* and *Lorenzo*.

When the family for example is either Norwegian-Moroccan or Norwegian-Somalian, and both Muslim and Christian name traditions are relevant, there are initially few mutual names from which to select. But in Christian-Muslim families there are many examples of children given names from the Old Testament, names like *Adam*, *David*, *Isak*, *Jonas*, *Josef*, *Miriam* and *Sakarias* (here in adjusted Norwegian forms). In this way the Muslim side of the family is bestowing upon the child in Norway one of the names that is also a continuation of the naming tradition from the Quran. A hadith after the Prophet Muhammad urges the faithful: "Call your children by the names of the prophets", and the names of the 28 prophets have been frequently used among the Muslims ([Schimmel 1997](#), 28–29). Among these names are many familiar names from the Bible, e.g. *Da'ud* (*David*), *Ibrahim* (*Abraham*), *Isa* (*Jesus*), *Ishaq* (*Isak*), *Isma'il* (*Ismael*), *Mika'il* (*Mikael*), *Musa* (*Moses*), *Nuh* (*Noa*), *Sulayman* (*Salomon*), *Yahya* (*Johannes*), *Ya'qub* (*Jakob*), *Yunus* (*Jonas*), *Yusuf* (*Josef*) and *Zakariya* (*Sakarias*). For the Norwegian-Christian side of the family these are also well-known traditional names. In addition these names are popular in Nor-

way at the present, being part of the fashion of naming children after the great-grandparents, who were of a generation where such names were commonly used.

[3] NAMES OF ADULT IMMIGRANTS — AND ADAPTION

Most adult immigrants keep the names they carry when arriving in Norway, and they are in this way retaining the tradition from home. Various factors, however, can lead to adapting names to accommodate to the society the immigrant is joining. This might happen upon arrival to Norway, because of bureaucratic measures or errors, or because the name is often misspelled or wrongly and badly pronounced. It may also be a complete change of one or more of the names in the name complex, because of a change in civil status, political or religious conditions, or the negative or comical connotations the society at large may harbour towards the immigrant's name. Most people identify so strongly with their names that a name change almost inevitably affects their sense of self, according to Richard D. Alford ([Alford 1988](#), 86). Now let us focus on such changes.

[3.1] Upon arrival to Norway

A number of individuals interviewed speak about their names being misspelled and altered after their arrival in Norway. The change may also have taken place in their native country. According to Norwegian immigration policy the name has to be registered at the police and later at the Municipal Population Register ([Reisæter 2005](#), 255 ff.). Some of the immigrants simply give up and let the misspelling pass by, while others immediately protest. Some react a little later when they have settled in Norway and gradually understand that a citizen in this country has a legal and common right to protest against bureaucratic mistakes. Roon from Somalia can serve as an example. She had lived in Norway for several years before she dared to contact the Municipal Population Register Office. She then told the authorities that her last name would have to be spelled differently to fully represent the name of her paternal grandfather that she wanted to identify with.

The story of Hamadou from Cameroon is an example of adaption to Norwegian name legislation. He comes from a region in Northern Cameroon where the children born in the 1960ies would be officially registered with only one single name. He was also registered in his passport in this way, but upon arrival in Norway as an exchange student problems quickly arose. Neither the university nor the bank would accept identification documents with only one name, and the solution turned out to be that he doubled his name and was registered as *Hamadou Hamadou*.

[3.2] *Phonetic and unofficial written adaption or change*

The immigrants also have to adapt to hearing their names being pronounced in various ways that reflect adjustment to Norwegian phonetic rules. Most Norwegians have problems with pronouncing foreign names "correctly" because of unfamiliar sounds. For instance the initial sound /d/ will become /ʃ/ in the name *Jalal* (m.) and /x/ become /k/ in the name *Khalid* (m.) (cf. the IPA system). Some immigrants choose to alter their names unofficially, e.g. among fellow workers or fellow students, like the Chinese student named *Shuai*. He experienced that his name was always mispronounced and difficult to remember, and consequently decided to call himself *Rice*, knowing that this was something Norwegians readily associated with China. Work mates of Abdulrahman from Tanzania found out that it was much easier to call him *Ali*, and the husband of Jansri from Thailand decided to call his wife *Jensine*. The mentioned immigrants would have preferred to be addressed by their real names, as part of their identity, but they discovered that in the Norwegian mainstream society it was simply easier and more practical to adapt. In this way exterior circumstances forces the individual to renounce a valuable part of her/his identity.

This is an interesting parallel to what happened with Norwegian immigrants in the United States in the 19th century, when American fellow workers were quick to find American substitutes for names that they were unwilling or unable to imitate ([Haugen 1969](#), 206 ff.), e.g. *Guri* or *Guro* > *Julia*, *Hans* > *Henry*, *Sigurd* > *Sam*. The Norwegian immigrants tended to accept the names given them by their associates, Haugen says, but the double standard might prevail: an American name at work, a Norwegian name at home (loc.cit.)

[3.3] *Name changes because of a new civil or religious status, or for political or practical reasons*

In many societies across the world there might be one or more name changes of individuals throughout a life time, changes which can reflect or reinforce identity changes. Many societies institutionalize name changes to coincide with, and reinforce, expected identity changes. At entry into adulthood, or marriage, or parenthood individuals may receive new names to underscore the transformation that they are undergoing ([Alford 1988](#), 81). The change of women's surnames when marrying is customary and well-known in many countries and for the purpose of this study Thai immigrant women in Tromsø can serve as an example. The majority of Thai women marrying a Norwegian take their husband's surname. My Thai interviewees tell me that they do this because it is a tradition they know from home, because it is the wish of their Norwegian husband, and because they want to adapt to the Norwegian society. There is an additional practical reason; when they give birth to children in Norway it is important that the mother and child share the same surname and are represented with this name in the pass-

port, otherwise there will be problems with the Thai authorities when entering and leaving Thailand. Quite frequently the Thai-Norwegian marriage ends in divorce, and several Thai interviewees tell that they would rather change back to their Thai maiden surname than keep the name of their former Norwegian husband. They do not do this, however, because of the practical questions related to their passport and Thai authorities, and often choose to wait until the children are older and there will be fewer problems with a name change. Their reasoning is understandable: "I really want to retain my maiden name one fine day, because it is my Thai name that really is me", a Thai informant told me.

A person might also change her or his name in an attempt to rid themselves of an unwanted identity. In Norway Iranian refugees who escaped from the Ayatollah regime have changed their Muslim name into a pre-Islamic Persian name, in this way disapproving of the political/religious rule and stating their identification with the ancient Persia. Iranians in Tromsø who have converted to Christianity have exchanged their Muslim name with a Christian name, just as Norwegian converts to Islam have adopted a Muslim name to state their new religious identity. Besides religious and political reasons for name change there are other more psychological motives as well. Most Thai names are unknown and opaque for the Norwegians, and they might be homophonic with Norwegian appellatives which give negative or comical connotations. There are examples in Tromsø of Thai women who have changed their names because of this, fearing that their children would be mobbed and teased because of the "queer" Thai name. This can easily also be the case with opaque names from other countries and cultures, and e.g. a young Somalian changed his name because his Norwegian friends told him that his name alluded to excrement.

The Ghanesian immigrants often have a Christian baptismal name in an adjusted English form (e.g. *Daniel, George, Jane*). They adapt to the Norwegian society by using the name in the official sphere. At home or among Ghanesian friends they prefer their *day name* (cf. Figure 1). Other immigrants adapt to the society at large by altering one or more names officially or unofficially. Still they will use the name in its original form in a more private sphere. This reflects the private, ethnical side of their identity in contrast to the more official "Norwegian" side. On an even more familiar and personal level pet names are frequently an issue. Again the Thai women in Tromsø can serve as examples. In their social Thai network in town all the women have a pet name. This name is so frequently used that my Thai informants often have a problem with remembering the official name of the person in question. A continuation of the pet name tradition from home is an intimate and consoling bond to their home country.

A particular reason for changing names has recently dominated the mass media. Immigrants who often speak fluent Norwegian apply for jobs that they are qualified for, but which they don't get because of their "strange" foreign name.

When calling the job again, and using a Norwegian name, the response is far more positive. An article in the Oslo newspaper *Aftenposten* March 11th, 2009 referring to research on immigrants, names and employment showed a picture of the immigrant *Hamsa Mohamed* from Somalia who have changed his name to *Kevin Sander*, believing the name change will make it easier for him to get a job. Hopefully this name change will make life in Norway less troublesome for the young Somalian. It is nevertheless an illustration of what should be an unnecessary adaption to Norwegian standards and a needless identity change that most probably will have an impact on his sense of self and lead to various reactions among other Somalians.

[4] CONCLUSION

We may have short or long name complexes, easily recognizable and well known, or opaque and unusual for the common Norwegian. But for the immigrants as well as for the ethnic Norwegian the personal name is an important part of the individual. For the immigrant the name additionally often is a pronounced part of his or her ethnic identity and an individual and collective sense of solidarity with the country of origin. The importance placed on a name was restated frequently throughout my interviews with immigrants to Norway, regardless of country of origin. The Somalian immigrant Raquia thus was discouraged and resigned when the Municipal Population Register Office asked her to omit one of the names in her name complex because the bureaucrats found it too long and complicated. She had just recently arrived in Norway and didn't dare to protest. The Dutch immigrant Ineke had lived in Norway for many years and then one day entered the Police Office with her two individual names and two surnames to apply for a new passport. "Why don't you go to the Municipal Population Register Office and have one of your names omitted?" she was asked. Ineke was so perplexed over this suggestion that she was dumbfounded, but soon indignation got the upper hand. Her conclusion was that the police only cared about the practical aspect of the name complex and were unwilling to comprehend the personal importance of the name as a symbol of identity, family relation and tradition.

Immigrants and name choice in Tromsø — continuation or adaption? Summing up we see that most immigrants try to do both, either officially or unofficially. And in the bilingual families few immigrants are only preoccupied with a continuation of naming traditions from their native country when considering a name for their children. Most families also have an adaption to Norwegian conditions in mind.

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OFFICIAL NAMING IN HÅ, KLEPP AND TIME

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ABSTRACT

Toponyms localize, reflect and give information about historical traditions and various phenomena in an area. They form part of the local heritage and culture. The relationship between place names, heritage and identity is often underlined in guidelines regarding official naming of streets and roads. In what way is heritage and local identity reflected in the road names of the three municipalities Hå, Klepp and Time (Southwest-Norway), and how is the special character of this area expressed in the names?

More than half of the official road names in the three municipalities are either identical with a local toponym, or they consist of a word for ‘road’ and a local toponym (or an appellative describing the location). This shows that there is a strong commitment to base the official naming on local tradition and thus contribute to identity. Quite a few elements from the dialect, e.g. special pronunciation, grammatical forms or local words, appear in the names, especially in the road names from Hå, reflecting that the names are part of the local culture, and due to the fact that the dialect is unique. Consistency is a challenge, however; the same word is sometimes spelled in different ways in different names. It appears that, with some exceptions, cultural heritage and local tradition have been preferred principles and guidelines with regard to naming of roads in the three municipalities, due to a consciousness that heritage and tradition create identity.

[1] LOCAL TRADITION AND IDENTITY

The main function of place names is to identify places or locations. The names serve as addresses or address markers in oral and written communication. The use of toponyms makes it possible to localize activities and various phenomena in the daily conversation and in a written text. Place names are links to the past. They form part of our local heritage and culture. Toponyms localize, reflect and give information about historical traditions, activities, events and various phenomena in an area. They also contain important information about the local language, the dialect. Place names are therefore valuable sources for researchers and students, especially for linguists, historians and archaeologists (Særheim 2004).

The link between cultural heritage and memory on the one hand and identity on the other has in recent time been emphasized by researchers as well as town planners. Some researchers take the view that collective identity and cultural

memory have become important due to an identity crisis in the post-modern era ([Bauman 2000](#); [Krogseth 2007](#)). Dissemination of our cultural heritage is a necessary base for identity.

The relationship between place names, cultural heritage and local identity is often underlined in guidelines and regulations regarding official naming of streets and roads in towns and cities. Official naming is different from common naming of places. Toponyms are normally made by common people living in an area in connection with working processes and daily life, reflecting local traditions, whereas official street and road names are decided by politicians, reflecting their values and preferences ([Særheim 2008](#), 66 pp.).

[2] OFFICIAL NAMING IN HÅ, KLEPP AND TIME

In what way is cultural heritage and local identity reflected in the official road names of the three municipalities Hå, Klepp and Time in Jæren (Southwest-Norway), and how is the special character of the area expressed in the names, with regard to historical development, culture, mentality and language? In this context it is relevant to study the linguistic content and form of the names, as well as the values that the politicians intend to promote through the official naming.

The Jæren district is productive farm land. There has been continuous farming in this area for more than 4000 years. Nowadays the area is also heavily industrialized, ranging from traditional farming industry to modern oil industry. There are approx. 16 000 inhabitants in each of the three municipalities. The major towns are Bryne (9 000 inhabitants, Time), Nærø (Hå) and Klepp (Klepp), the two first-mentioned being so-called “stasjonsbyar” (towns with a railway station); they expanded rapidly after the opening of the local railway, Jærbanen, in 1878. The official road name registers contain approx. 270 names from Time, 245 from Klepp and 310 from Hå.

In the guidelines regarding official naming of roads and streets in Time there is a strong recommendation to use old place names from the area, toponyms that are known and used by people who live there: “Ta vare på lokale stadnamn som er i bruk/har vore i bruk på folkemunne [...] Ein bør helst velja gamle namn”. The importance of using names that create identity is emphasized: “Identitetsberande namn vil vera ein ressurs for staden”. Similar naming principles are followed in Hå and Klepp.

[3] USING A LOCAL PLACE NAME

More than half of the official road names in the three municipalities are either identical with a local place name, or they consist of a word for ‘road’ and a local toponym (or an appellative describing the location). Examples of road names that are identical with a local toponym are *Kjøpmannsbrotet* (‘the tradesman’s hill’;

Klepp), *Nubben* ('the small hill'; Time), *Auren* (an area with 'gravel'; Hå), *Påskevarden* (a top where people used to meet on Easter Eve to watch "the moon dance"; Hå), *Elisberget* ('the hill of Elias'; Hå), *Helmikhølen* (a deep pool in a river, probably where Helmik used to fish; Hå) and *Ævestvollmarka* (uncultivated field belonging to the farm Ævestvoll; Hå).

Road names like *Longholsvegen* (*Longholen* 'the long hill'; Klepp), *Mærbakkvegen* (*Mærbakken* 'the hill by the fish traps'; Klepp), *Lonarmyrvegen* (*Lonarmyra* 'the bog by the deep pool'; Time) and *Grønholsvegen* (*Grønholen* 'the green hill'; Hå) contain a word for 'road' (veg) and a compound local toponym, whereas *Livegen* ('the road alongside the slope', *li*; Klepp), *Dalvegen* ('the road in the valley', *dal*; Hå) and *Tjødnavegen* ('the road by the pond', *tjørn*; Time) contain a word for 'road' (veg) and an appellative (or an uncompounded name with that appellative) describing a nearby location.

These road names are made in the same way as normal place names from the district. The names contain information about topography, fauna, flora, farming, hunting, fishing, travel, administration, defence, religion, special traditions, phenomena and events. This way of naming is in accordance with the recommendation to use toponyms that already exist in the area. It shows that there is a strong commitment to base the official naming on local tradition and culture and thus contribute to local identity.

In the naming principles of the neighbouring municipalities Stavanger and Sandnes, the first mentioned a mediaeval city, there is also a strong recommendation to use place names that already exist in the area when naming new streets (Særheim 2008). Still there are fewer existing toponyms per cent among the official street and road names in Stavanger and Sandnes than in Hå, Klepp and Time.

[4] GROUP NAMING

Approx. 20 % of the road names in the three municipalities represent so-called group naming. The road names in an area contain similar semantic elements, words for plants, birds, wild animals, stones etc., e.g., *Einervegen* ('juniper'; Time), *Neslevegen* ('nettle'; Hå), *Kråkevegen* ('crow'; Hå), *Ekornvegen* ('squirrel'; Klepp), *Elgvegen* ('elk'; Time), *Rubinvegen* ('ruby'; Time). Normally these names have no special link to traditions or characteristic features in the area, even though the mentioned plants and animals often appear in the district. In this case new names have been constructed, sometimes instead of using the toponyms that already existed in the area.

It has been argued that it is easier for the ambulance, fire squad and police to find the right locations when the road names have similar semantic content. However, a new problem is created, because quite a few of the names are found in more than one town. The major towns in Jæren are quite close and the municipalities are fairly small (Klepp 115 km², Time 182 km², Hå 255 km²). Also other

municipalities in this district are close and most of them are small: Sola (69 km²), Stavanger (70 km²), Randaberg (25 km²). However Sandnes (303 km²) and Gjesdal (609 km²) are larger.

Several names, e.g., *Fiolstien* ('violet'), *Furuvegen* ('pine'), *Kløvervegen* ('clover'), *Lyngvegen* ('heather'), *Erlevegen* ('wagtail'), *Lerkevegen* ('lark') and *Vipevegen* ('lapwing') appear in all three municipalities (i.e. Hå, Klepp and Time). Most of them are also found in one or more of the mentioned neighbouring municipalities. A number of identical road names appear in two different towns in the three municipalities: *Asalvegen* ('beam'; Hå, Time), *Bjørkevegen* ('birch'; Hå, Time), *Granvegen* ('spruce'; Hå, Time), *Konvallvegen* ('lily of the valley'; Hå, Time), *Liljevegen* ('lily'; Klepp, Time), *Poppelvegen* ('poplar'; Hå, Time), *Porsvegen* ('bog myrtle'; Hå, Time), *Rosevegen* ('rose'; Klepp, Time), *Røsslyngvegen* ('heather'; Klepp, Time). Many more examples could be added to this list.

A special type of group names are found in Hå where some roads are named after tools and equipment used in traditional farming: *Greipvegen*, *Hakkevegen*, *Rivevegen*, *Sigdvegen*, *Spadevegen*, *Plogvegen*, *Grimevegen*, *Kjerrevegen* and *Vognvegen*, referring to 'manure fork' (*greip*), 'pickaxe' (*hakke*), 'rake' (*rive*), 'sickle' (*sigd*), 'spade' (*spade*), 'plough' (*plog*), 'halter' (*grime*), 'cart' (*kjerre*) and 'wagon' (*vogn*).

In Klepp some roads are named after working methods and traditions within farming, especially haying and cutting peat: *Høyvegen*, *Slåttevegen*, *Hesjevegen*, *Torvvegen* and *Stakken*, referring to 'hay' (*høy*), 'haymaking' (*slåtte*), 'hay-drying rack' (*hesje*), 'peat' (*torv*) and 'rick of hay' (*stakk*). Names reflecting traditional labour and working methods within farming may contribute to consciousness of the past and creation of local identity, even though the names are constructed and do not contain a local toponym. .

[5] LOCAL ACTIVITIES AND TRADITION

In an old city, like Stavanger, a number of street names refer to local activities and traditions --- communication, travel and transport, old handicraft and trade, shipping industry, old town life and culture, e.g., *Tjodveien* (an old road for common 'people'), *Laberget* (a rock by the sea where one used to load and unload the goods), *Rosenkildegata* (contains the name of an old trade firm, The House of Rosenkilde), *Høkkergata* ('hucksters, hawkers'), *Verven* ('shipyard'), *Banevigs-gata* ('ropery'), *Skansen-gata* (refers to the old battery of the harbour), *Misjonsveien* (site of the oldest Norwegian missionary organization), *Kannikgata* (linked to the property of the canons of the city's cathedral, St. Swithun's church, built in the 1120s). These street names reflect different stages of the development of the city (Særheim 2008, 68 pp.; Berntsen 1939).

In the fairly young towns of Hå, Klepp and Time considerably fewer names refer to local industry, handicraft etc., and fewer areas are covered; most of the names are linked to farming industry. Examples are *Industrivegen* ('industry'; Hå,

Klepp) and *Industrigata* (Hå), *Bedriftsvegen* ('factory'; Klepp, Time), *Næringsvegen* ('nourishment, food'; Hå), *Meierigata* ('dairy plant'; Hå, Time), *Smiegata* (Time) and *Smievegen* ('forge, smithy'; Hå, Klepp), *Trelastvegen* ('timber'; Hå), *Isvegen* (ice cream factory; Klepp), *Plogvegen* (a factory where ploughs were manufactured; Klepp), *Møllevegen* ('mill'; Hå), *Kvednavegen* (Hå), *Kvernbakken* (Time) and *Kvednadalen* ('corn-mill'; Klepp).

It must be added though that a number of the local place-names that are used as official road names reflect labour, activities and tradition in the area, most often in connection with traditional farming, e.g., *Aurbanen* ('gravel pit'; Hå, Klepp), *Smedabråtet* ('blacksmith'; Hå), *Geilane* ('cattle track'; Time), *Torget* ('market place'; Time), *Kjeldevegen* ('spring'; Time), *Mærbakkvegen* ('fish trap'; Klepp), *Kjengaren* (a place with a special type of haystack; Klepp).

[6] MEMORIAL NAMES

12 % of the road names in Time, 6 % in Klepp and 0,7 % in Hå are so-called memorial names; the roads are named after people who have had an important position in one way or another. Most of the persons mentioned are men, 93 % in Klepp, 74 % in Time, 50 % in Hå. The persons chosen illustrate the values among people in important political positions. Nearly all of the persons represented come from the municipality. A few exceptions are found in Time, e.g., *Roald Amundsens veg* (Norwegian polar explorer) and *Erling Skjalgssons veg* (a Viking chief from a neighbouring municipality, Sola).

Some streets in Bryne are named after royalty, Norwegian kings and queens, e.g., *Kong Haakons veg* and *Dronning Mauds gate*. Also mediaeval kings and queens are represented: *Kong Sverres gate*, *Kong Sigurds gate*, *Kong Magnus' gate*, *Kong Haralds gate*, *Olav Kyrres gate*, *Dronning Astrids gate*, *Dronning Ingrids gate*. Even *Snorres gate* (Snorri Sturluson, mediaeval historian from Iceland) appears in Bryne, maybe reflecting that Bryne has been a centre of education and culture for some generations; a so-called "landsgymnas" (district high-school) was established here in 1922.

Personal names in fiction are represented in *Veslemøyvegen* and *Haugtussavegen*, containing the name of a literary figure in Arne Garborg's well known cycle of poems *Haugtussa*. Both road names are found in Time, where Garborg was born and grew up, as well as in Hå. In Bryne one also finds *Arne Garborgs veg* and *Hulda Garborgs veg*, the last-mentioned named after his wife, who was also a well-known author. *Theodor Dahls veg*, named after an author from Klepp, appears in both Klepp and Time.

In Stavanger approx. 23 % of the street names, altogether 390 names, are memorial names ([Særheim 2008](#), 75 pp.). 13 % of them (i.e. 50 street names) contain the name of a woman. Approx. 35 % of the men and 26 % of the women mentioned in these names have had a strong link to the Stavanger region. Quite a few

of the persons belong in other words to the national scene, e.g., *Oscar Mathisens gate* (speedskater), *Lalla Carlsens gate* (actress), *Amalie Skrums gate* (author), and a few of them to the international scene, *Robert Scotts gate* (English polar explorer), *Ellsworths gate* (American polar explorer). The persons chosen represent arts and culture, science, education, politics, business, sports, social life, the royal family and mediaeval history.

[7] THE LOCAL DIALECT

Quite a few elements from the local dialect appear in the official road names in the three municipalities. This is a result of the dialect movement in Norway, which started in the early 1970s, and the growing understanding of the relationship between place names and local identity. Elements from the dialect reflect that the names are part of the local culture. They represent continuity as well as individuality, due to the fact that the dialect is unique. Some typical local words are used, e.g., *Gjegnet* ('the shortcut'; Hå), *Aurbanen* ('the gravel pit'; Hå, Klepp), *Kjelvene* ('the meadows'; Klepp), *Kjengaren* (a place with a special type of haystack; Klepp), *Foren* ('wet piece of land'; Time), *Floen* ('the puddle'; Time).

In several road names from Hå some special grammatical forms in the dialect are used, e.g., definite feminine nouns ending in -å (instead of -a, which is the national standard): *Klemmå* (*klemme* 'squeeze, trap') *Alvaliå* (*li* 'hillside'), *Bredengjå* (*eng* 'meadow'), *Leirmyrå* (*myr* 'bog'), *Nygårdsidå* (*side* 'side'). Other feminine nouns are written in accordance with the national norm, e.g., *Blåbærtua* (*tue* 'tuft, mound'), *Langgata* (*gate* 'street'), *Ævestvollmarka* (*mark* 'uncultivated field'), which may be regarded as inconsistent.

In some cases the same word has even got different endings (spellings) in different names: *Roskliå-Bølia* (*li*), *Bjorhaugslettå-Rosksletta* (*slett(e)* 'plain'), all of them from Hå. In the names from Klepp and Time -a is normally used in feminine nouns. Exceptions are *Rudlå* (*rulle* 'hill, mound') and *Stølslægå* (*lege* 'plain where the cows used to lie'), both from Time. Names containing definite form of the neuter noun *hall* 'slope' is written in three different ways in *Nordhallet*, *Roskhadle* and *Brattlandsdalen*, all of them from Hå.

In some road names, especially from Hå, pronunciation typical for the dialect but different from the national norm is reflected in the spelling of the names: *Nordra Subagata* (*suppe* 'soup'), *Smedabråtet* (*brot* 'hillside'), *Storægrå* (*ekre* 'meadow'), *Djuphol* (*hol* 'hill, mound'), *Roskhadle* (*hall* 'slope'), *Kvednavegen* (*kvern* 'mill'), *Sannarvågen* (*sand* 'sand'). Examples are also found in Klepp and Time: *Tjødnavegen* (*tjørn* 'small lake'; Time), *Sandhodlsvegen* (*hol* 'hill, mound'; Klepp), *Kvednadalen* (*kvern*; Klepp), *Kvednalandsbakken* (*kvern*; Time). Names from Klepp and Time are, however, most often written in accordance with the national norm: *Brotet* (*brot* 'hill'; Klepp), *Kolleholen* (*hol* 'hill, mound'; Klepp), *Røyrvika* (*vik* 'bay'; Time). Consistency is a problem; the same word is sometimes spelled in different ways in

different names: *Storægrå-Ekrevegen* (*ekre* ‘meadow’; Hå), *Djuphodl-Kviholen* (*hol* ‘hill, mound’; Hå), *Sannarvågen-Sandhelleren* (*sand*; Hå), *Vodlavegen-Vollvegen* (*voll* ‘meadow’; Klepp), *Kvednalandsbakken-Kvernelandsvegen* (*kvern* ‘mill’; Time).

Elements from the local dialect are also found in official spellings of street and road names from Stavanger and Sandnes (Særheim 2008, 78 pp.). Some of the spellings are not in accordance with the national norm, e.g., *Valbergjet* (*berg(et)* ‘mountain, rock’), *Ulvaryggjen* (*rygg(en)* ‘back, ridge’), *Vodlaveien* (*voll* ‘meadow’), *Bjødnabeeen* (*bjørn* ‘bear’, *bede* ‘small piece of land’), *Sandalsloen* (*Sanddalslunden*; *sand, dal* ‘valley’, *lund* ‘grove’), *Madlatuå* (*tue* ‘hillock’). Consistency is a challenge, however; sometimes the same word is written in different ways in different names: *Kvednabergjet* – *Kvernevik* (*kvern* ‘mill’), *Vibemyr* – *Vipeveien* (*vipe* ‘lapwing’), *Hatleveien* – *Hasselveien* (*hassel* ‘hazel’). A similar ending has also been written in different ways: *Langgata* – *Sandgådå*, containing definite form of the related words *gate* ‘street’ and *gote* ‘road, path’.

Quite a few farm names (especially from Klepp and Time) are neither composed in accordance with the dialect nor spelled according to the national norm, but identical with the same name used as a surname: *Rosselandsvegen* (Time), *Reeholen* (Time), *Grudevegen* (Klepp), *Øgårdsvegen* (Klepp), *Øksnevadvegen* (Klepp), *Hattelandsvegen* (Klepp), *Grødelandsvegen* (Klepp), *Stangelandsvegen* (Klepp), *Uelandsgata* (Hå), referring to the farms *Rossalnd*, *Re*, *Gruda*, *Øydgard*, *Øksnavad*, *Hattaland*, *Grødalnd*, *Stangaland* and *Ualand* (Særheim 2007, 81 p., 90, 181, 188, 215 p., 244 f., 265, 269).

The same farm name is sometimes spelled in two different ways: *Skjerpevegen* – *Skjærpebakken* (*Skjerpe*; Hå), *Ualand* – *Uelandsgata* (*Ualand*; Hå), *Kvernelandsvegen* – *Kvednalandsbakken* (*Kverneland*; Time), (Særheim 2007, 136, 204, 244 p.). An old spelling principle is reflected in *Skandsabakken* (Hå), containing the word *skanse* masc. ‘entrenchment’, evidently because of the spelling of the surname *Skansen*.

[8] CONCLUSION

It appears that, with some exceptions, cultural heritage and local tradition have been preferred principles and guidelines with regard to official naming of roads and streets in the three municipalities, due to a consciousness that cultural heritage and tradition create identity. The link to the past and the local culture is strengthened by the fact that approx. half of the official road names include a traditional toponym from the area. The cultural aspect also applies to the linguistic form of the names. Characteristic elements from the local dialect are included to show that the names are unique and part of the inherited local culture, even though this in many cases has created problems with regard to consistency in the road name material and accordance with the national norm and law on place names in official use.

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WHO IS HVALBIFF? NAME AND IDENTITY IN W. F. HERMANS'S "BEYOND SLEEP"

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ABSTRACT

One of the functions of names in literary texts is *Akzentuierung – Anonymisierung* (accentuating – anonymizing) (Debus 2002, 84). By giving a character a certain name, 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 person anonymous. Both approaches are deviations from ‘normality’. This paper proposes that the accentuating and anonymizing function of literary names can be closely linked to the idea of ‘foregrounding’ as developed in stylistic research. To illustrate this, this paper presents an analysis of the accentuating and anonymizing use of personal names in the novel *Beyond Sleep* (1966) by Willem Frederik Hermans (1921–1995), one of the most important 20th-century Dutch literary authors. This paper shows that the stylistic application of names that have an accentuating or anonymizing function is key to sustaining the plot of *Beyond Sleep*.

[1] INTRODUCTION

Friedhelm Debus (Debus 2002, 74–89) describes several functions of literary names: *Identifizierung* (identifying), *Fiktionalisierung – Illusionierung* (helping to create a believable fictional world), *Charakterisierung* (characterizing), *Mythisierung* (pointing out the unity of name and bearer) and *Akzentuierung – Anonymisierung* (accentuating – anonymizing). The focus in this article is on accentuating – anonymizing, because it is perhaps the most important function when one wants to discover more about names and identities – the theme of this volume. The accentuating function, Debus explains, can be implemented through various formal characteristics of a name: unusual sounds, characters (alliteration or certain metrical characteristics), an archaic form of a name, playful contractions or extensions of a name, and so forth. The counterpart of this aspect of names is the ‘not knowing’ of a name: someone or something does not have a name in a text or is not referred to by name by the characters who appear in the text (Debus 2002, 84–85).

So ergeben sich einerseits Akzentuierung gleichsam positiv-profilierend und andererseits Anonymisierung entsprechend negativ-profilierend

in funktionaler Sicht als Abweichungen von der Normalität des Namens, von der Grundfunktion der Identifizierung ([Debus 2002](#), 85).

In paraphrase: ‘So the two elements combined in this name function can both be seen as deviations from the normality of the name, of the basic identifying function.’ Dieter Lamping’s earlier description ([Lamping 1983](#), 57–62) of the same name function is more extensive. He points out that the normal situation that is deviated from is not necessarily the normal situation in real life, but that which is suggested to be the intratextual norm ([Lamping 1983](#), 58). So the deviations (the accentuating of a name or the anonymity of a character) are deviations from the suggested normality within the text itself.

Debus’s and Lamping’s descriptions show a remarkable overlap with the stylistic term ‘foregrounding’. Paul Simpson, the author of a well-known stylistics textbook, describes foregrounding as:

... a form of textual patterning which is motivated specifically for literary-aesthetic purposes. Capable of working at any level of language, foregrounding typically involves a stylistic distortion of some sort, either through an aspect of the text which deviates from a linguistic norm or, alternatively, where an aspect of the text is brought to the fore through repetition or parallelism. ([Simpson 2004](#), 50).

Geoffrey N. Leech & Michael H. Short — the authors of *Style in Fiction: A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose* — describe foregrounding as a linguistic surprise that makes the reader conscious of the power of language ([Leech & Short 1981](#), 28) and as ‘an artistically motivated deviation’ that can be either qualitative (a deviation from the linguistic norm) or quantitative (a deviation in frequency) ([Leech & Short 1981](#), 48).

This article aims to show that the name function *Akzentuierung – Anonymisierung* (accentuating – anonymizing) plays an important foregrounding role in the Dutch novel *Beyond Sleep*, which was originally published in 1966 by Willem Frederik Hermans (1921–1995)¹. An English translation by Ina Rilke appeared in 2006 ([Hermans 2006](#)), and a.o. a Norwegian translation by Eva Paasche (*Aldri sove mer*) in 1992 ([Hermans 1992](#)). In the following, the title and the text of the English translation are used. This novel was extremely popular in the decade following its publication and is still a favourite among Dutch readers: in 2002, members of

[1] For my research I made use of the last edition published during Hermans’s lifetime ([Hermans 1966/1993](#)). In 2010, the novel was published in a scholarly edition prepared by Jan Gielkens and Peter Kegel and published under the auspices of Huygens ING and the Willem Frederik Hermans Instituut in Willem Frederik Hermans, *Volledige werken* [Complete Works] 3 (Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij / Van Oorschot, 2010).

the Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letteren (Society of Dutch Literature) ranked *Beyond Sleep* as the ninth most ‘classic’ Dutch literary work.²

The plot of *Beyond Sleep* can be summarized as follows. Alfred Issendorf is a young, ambitious geologist starting on his thesis. His father Alfred, a botanist, died young during a scientific expedition in the Swiss mountains. Alfred joins an expedition to Finnmark with three geologists from Norway in search of evidence of meteorites. He is left very confused after meeting several high-placed academics on his way north. One of Alfred’s three Norwegian companions (Arne) is a good friend, but he feels rather threatened by the other two. Alfred proves not to be up to the harsh conditions of the landscape of Finnmark and fails to prevent Arne from falling to his death. He returns home a disappointed man, without any of the grand scientific results he had hoped for.

[2] PRESENTING PERSONS: THE LINGUISTIC POINT OF VIEW

Let us get back to the basics. For a balanced evaluation of the use of names in a literary text, it is helpful to bear in mind the ways in which an author can designate characters in his or her work. We should also keep in mind that what is normal in the ‘real’ world is not automatically normal in the fictional world (Lamping 1983, 58).

We can distinguish three linguistic ways of designating characters, namely (1) by labelling them with proper nouns; (2) by using appellatives that describe their genders, roles in society, etc.; these descriptions are usually indefinite noun phrases ('A woman', 'A policeman') unless the same persons are still within view of the narrator/reader after their first mention, when they become definite ('THE woman', 'THE policeman'); and (3) by using passive verbal phrases, for example 'my suitcase and rucksack *are weighed* at the airport' (Hermans 2006, 71) (my italics), which implies that there must be staff at the airport taking care of this weighing. This last linguistic process keeps the designated persons almost invisible to the reader. The second process (use of definite/indefinite appellatives) does show the characters, but they are mostly kept in the background, so to speak. A proper noun, however, draws a character into the foreground and seems to give him or her a definite identity (Gutschmidt 1981, 490).

When persons are kept invisible – kept in the background – or are given a position in the foreground, this situation helps to convey something about the importance of these persons or about the perspective of the novel and/or the emotional situation of the narrator. As Lamping states about those anonymous characters who occur only once or twice in a text, their anonymity represents their function in the text: they are only ‘servants’, ‘passers-by’, and are therefore

[2] See the Digitale Bibliotheek der Nederlandse Letteren (dbnl; Digital Library of Dutch Literature) website: http://www.dbnl.nl/letterkunde/enquete/enquete_dbnlmnl_21062002.htm#14 (Active 28 July 2012).

not very important in the text. These characters are often people like messengers or taxi drivers (Lamping 1983, 59). This is the type of anonymity that does not clearly have an accentuating function, because it is very much expected, ‘natural’, in the context of the story (Lamping 1983, 58). The same goes for the following example. Near the end of *Beyond Sleep*, Alfred alerts the authorities, which recover Arne’s body and take it to a hospital. Alfred travels separately to the place where the hospital is located.

Next morning **someone** from the police comes to see me. (...)
Together we walk to the clinic where his (Arne’s) body has been taken.
A DOCTOR receives me, after which **the policeman** leaves.
‘Are you a relative?’ THE DOCTOR asks. (p. 279)

In another context, both the policeman and the doctor could have introduced themselves to Alfred by mentioning their names, or Alfred could have seen their name tags, for instance. But at this point in *Beyond Sleep*, the narrator (Alfred) does not mention their names. As readers, however, we expect Alfred to be not very alert to his surroundings: he is still in shock as a result of Arne’s death. The name and identity of neither the policeman nor the doctor are relevant to him. However, the fact that he meets a policeman or a doctor is relevant. To take this a step further: we as readers would be surprised if Alfred were to remember the name of the policeman or the doctor. It would be a deviation from the intratextual norm were names to occur here. Alfred would mention their names only if he had something strange or significant to relate about them or about the occasion on which he met them. Although the absence of names here cannot be characterized as ‘accentuating – anonymizing’, it can be described as a stylistic device that helps to depict Alfred’s emotional situation at that point in the story.

This last example will be differently experienced by different readers: some will find it a convincing example of deviating anonymizing, while others will feel the situation to be so ‘natural’ that they will not regard it as a deviation. Some readers may want to link their interpretation to their idea of whether or not the anonymity is a conscious choice of the author. However, this is not relevant for the literary scholar: the text resulting from either conscious or unconscious stylistic choices remains the same, and is the basis for analysis and interpretation. But there are several examples that even the most sceptical reader will regard as instances of the name function of ‘accentuating – anonymizing’. These are presented in the following three sections.

[3] NO NAME, NO FAME

For Alfred Issendorf — the young scientist who is the main character and the narrator of the story in *Beyond Sleep* — names are important. When someone’s name

is known (by the right persons, of course), he or she is a success in life, and scientific success automatically implies social success. This becomes clear on several occasions, and especially when Alfred tells us his recurring thoughts when he browses through a certain book, namely the ‘Mallinckrodt memorial volume offered by his students’ (p. 128). This book commemorates the famous (fictional) Professor Mallinckrodt, for whom Alfred’s father (who was also called Alfred) worked as a young researcher. Together with this professor, Alfred Sr. attended the (fictional) Botanical Conference at Lausanne in July 1947. The book contains a photograph showing all those who attended the conference. On the facing page, a schematic diagram shows the silhouettes of the heads that appear in the photograph, along with numbers corresponding to a list of names.

However, there are two heads without numbers, and consequently without names. One belongs to a girl in the far left of the front row. Some secretary, no doubt, who happened to be there when the portrait was taken. But the other head belongs to my father. Not yet famous enough, I suppose, when he accompanied the great Professor Mallinckrodt to the conference in Lausanne in 1947. (p. 129)

It is not surprising that no name is given to the secretary: she is one of the ‘passers-by’ so adequately described by Lamping ([Lamping 1983](#), 59). There are several anonymous secretaries (all female) in *Beyond Sleep* (and all the scientists Alfred meets are male). The anonymity of Alfred’s father in the photograph, however, is very pointed and clearly deviates from the presented normal situation in which all silhouettes are clearly intended to contain a number and all persons are intended to be known by their names. Alfred muses that of all the people who possess a copy of the book, he and his mother and sister are the only ones who know the identity of the numberless young man.

Alfred the First, I mutter, sliding the book in amongst the others on the shelf. Usually I glance in the mirror after that. *Died young. Before he had the chance fully to develop his talents.* (...) Arne and Qvigstad might well become very famous (Mikkelsen strikes me as too dim). One of the pictures we took in Skøganvarre will be published in a book, duly furnished with names and date. My name has got to be there along with the others. It must be. (pp. 129–130)

Alfred explicitly links his father’s fate with the fate he fears for himself – and a photograph without his name below it is the grimdest symbol of that fate that he can imagine.

[4] MISUNDERSTANDING NAMES

Alfred has a lot of problems with the Norwegian names he encounters during his trip to the north. He repeatedly hears other people pronounce names, but he just cannot make them out clearly or recognize them. This makes him feel very insecure, and sometimes to fear that he is being tricked. An example is when director Oftedahl tells his (anonymous) secretary:

I suggest you give Frøken [*unintelligible*] a ring in Oslo, ask her to take a look in the catalogue so she can give you the numbers of the Finnmark photographs, then you will know which box they are in. (p. 54)

The same thing happens when Alfred listens to a conversation between his three Norwegian colleagues in the middle of Finnmark:

'That reminds me, I ran into [*unintelligible*] the other day. Just back from India, for some United Nations welfare programme, I believe.
(...)'
'What did [*unintelligible*] say to that?' (p. 185)

Alfred emphasizes his problem with Norwegian names when he reaches Ravnastua after finding Arne's dead body. He meets a scientist who is stationed in Ravnastua and who informs the authorities about Arne's fatal accident.

I didn't catch his name, of course, and keep wanting to ask him what it is, but don't get round to it. He's a biologist and mycological expert working for the Natural History Museum in Tromsø. (p. 276)

After all Alfred has gone through, he seems to no longer bother so much about this. This explicit remark emphasizes Alfred's problem understanding Norwegian names. Especially the word 'unintelligible' in the earlier quotes presented above highlights this — accentuating the anonymity of these characters only for poor Alfred. His feelings of insecurity are pointedly sketched by foregrounding the fact that these names are unintelligible to his Dutch ears.

[5] HVALBIFF

Ironically, there is one Norwegian name that Alfred does hear and reproduce exactly as it is meant to be — but even this leads him into a web of uncertainties. His professor in Amsterdam, Sibbelee, had written to his old mentor Professor Nummedal asking whether Alfred could collect from Nummedal the aerial photographs of Finnmark that he needs. The Norwegian professor had replied, giving the date on which Alfred would be welcome to visit him at the University of Oslo.

During the visit, Nummedal is not forthcoming about the photographs and Alfred has to explicitly ask for them. Nummedal states that he does not have the photographs and refers Alfred to the Geological Survey in Trondheim.

If you want aerial photographs, you must go and get them from the Geological Survey in Trondheim, which is where they are kept. It is on your way up north, anyway. Pay a visit to the Geological Survey! Østmarkneset, Trondheim. Direktør Hvalbiff! He will be pleased to see you. (...) Hvalbiff is your man. I will telephone at once and tell him to expect you. (p. 27)

Alfred acts on Nummedal's advice. He travels to Trondheim and takes a taxi to the Geological Survey's new building. As he enters it:

A figure emerges from a laboratory filled with throbbing machines. He comes towards me, smiling. He has white wavy hair and wears a bow tie. I give him a meaningful look, thinking he must be Direktør Hvalbiff in person.

'I'd like to speak to Direktør Hvalbiff, if I may,' I say.

All innocence.

And I *am* innocent.

'Direktør Hvalbiff? He is not in today. I am Direktør Oftedahl, of the Statens Råhstoff laboratory.'

'Isn't the Norwegian Geological Survey in this building?'

'Not in its entirety, or rather not yet. But maybe I can help you. Come with me.' (p. 47)

Alfred explains the purpose of his visit and Oftedahl replies that Professor Nummedal did not call. He tells Alfred:

'They don't know anything about a phone call. Direktør Hvalbiff was here briefly yesterday, then went straight back to Oslo. We are in the process of moving, you understand, and most of the property of the Geological Survey is still in Oslo.' (p. 48)

A few minutes later, Oftedahl explains:

'Direktør Hvalbiff and Nummedal do not see eye to eye. It is probably just as well Hvalbiff is not here to receive you. Because if he were here I doubt he would have given you the photographs you want, even if he knew where to find them.' (p. 52)

Because of the missing index to the aerial photographs that are available, Alfred fails to obtain the ones he needs. During the next stage of his trip, he arrives in Alta and meets his Norwegian colleague and friend, Arne Jordal. Alfred tells Arne about his trip to Trondheim:

'I could have got here two days ago,' I tell him, 'if I had travelled straight here from Oslo. But I went to see Nummedal, and Nummedal said I should call at the Geological Survey in Trondheim on the way.'
'Who did you talk to over there? Was it [*unintelligible*]?'
'Hvalbiff wasn't there.'
'[*Unintelligible*] is Nummedal's sworn enemy.' (pp. 78–79)

Here, the foregrounding of the unintelligibility of the name as described in section [4] is key to the interpretation of the whole novel. This is where all the confusion could have been cleared up by the author had Alfred heard all of Arne's words correctly. Later, when Alfred and Arne are travelling through Finnmark with Qvigstad and Mikkelsen, Alfred sees Mikkelsen using the sought-for aerial photographs. He asks Mikkelsen:

'Where did you get them?'
'Nummedal gave them to me.'
'Did Nummedal have any others besides these? More copies, I mean?'
'I don't know. These are from Hvalbiff's institute. Nummedal borrowed them from Hvalbiff.'
'When was that?'
'I don't know.' (p. 192)

Alfred tells Arne about this and reminds him of the visit he made to Trondheim. Arne seems to have forgotten that Alfred told him about Hvalbiff and Oftedahl. Arne:

'Oftedahl? I don't remember. And the director's name was Hvalbiff, you say? Strange, that is not a Norwegian name.'
'Yes, Hvalbiff. But Hvalbiff wasn't there.'
'Shame you missed him,' Qvigstad says. 'He sounds good enough to eat.'
'Oh,' I say dully. 'I didn't know Mr Qvigstad went in for cannibal humour. But that's what the name sounded like to me.'
'Hvalbiff means whale meat,' Arne explains.
(...)
'Hvalbiff, or however you pronounce it, wasn't there,' I tell them. 'I ran into a geophysicist by the name of Oftedahl. He knew nothing

about the photographs, but he did know who I meant when I said I was looking for Direktør Hvalbiff.’

‘Oh, come on now,’ Qvigstad says. ‘But let’s sit down, shall we?’
He sounds concerned. (p. 197)

After Arne’s death and Alfred’s return to civilization, Alfred visits Nummedal again. As he leaves Nummedal’s house, Alfred has an epiphany. It has taken him a lot of time and a lot of fretting to get to that point, but he has finally got there: he is certain he heard the name Hvalbiff correctly when Nummedal mentioned it.

Hvalbiff, was what Nummedal said. No doubt about it.

Nummedal hates the man. Blind hatred — surprise, surprise.

Damn! It could just be a *nickname* Nummedal invented for the director of the Geological Survey. How they must have laughed behind my back ... Hvalbiff. That means whale meat, Arne had said. Funny eh, Qvigstad had said, not a trace of fat in it, just like beef.

Like a crash of thunder, it comes to me: the pink, fleshy face of the man I spoke to in Trondheim and who, when I asked for Direktør Hvalbiff, introduced himself as a geophysicist by the name of Direktør Oftedahl.

Could ‘Hvalbiff’ and Oftedahl be one and the same person?

I am not going to bother to find out. (p. 291).

Thus, he has finally formulated the hypothesis that Hvalbiff is the nickname that Professor Nummedal hatefully bestowed on Director Oftedahl. He is still not absolutely certain of it, though. And, of course, the unintelligible name in Alfred’s first discussion with Arne is key to this uncertainty for both Alfred and the poor reader of his story:

‘[Unintelligible] is Nummedal’s sworn enemy.’ (p. 79)

From the first stop on his trip to the north (in Oslo with Professor Nummedal) until almost the end of it, Alfred suspects that he is being tricked by his Norwegian colleagues, and especially by Professor Nummedal. Each time he thinks badly of the professor, he counters his own suspicion with disbelief: he just cannot believe that a respected scientist like Nummedal would deprive a student of one of his old students of the aerial photographs that are necessary for his scientific expedition, even if he thinks that the student’s ideas about meteors in Finnmark are stupid. But this really seems to be the case. Or (and this appears to be another of Alfred’s thoughts), Nummedal is just a pitiful old man who did not do it on purpose. Alfred’s thoughts keep wavering, turning this way and that, continually revolving. This special case of mistaken identity spans the entire novel, expressing all the

uncertainties and insecurities that Alfred suffers throughout his Finnmark expedition.

As stated, even the reader never gets the complete picture. What role did Oftedahl play? Let us look again at some of the things Oftedahl said to Alfred when he was in Trondheim:

'Direktør Hvalbiff? He is not in today.' (p. 47)

'Direktør Hvalbiff was here briefly yesterday, then went straight back to Oslo.' (p. 48)

'Direktør Hvalbiff and Nummedal do not see eye to eye. It is probably just as well Hvalbiff is not here to receive you. Because if he were here I doubt he would have given you the photographs you want, even if he knew where to find them.' (p. 52)

Especially this last sentence is tantalizing. Is Oftedahl simply being very kind to and protective of the foreign student Alfred? This interpretation is perhaps confirmed by a remark Alfred makes near the end of his conversation with Oftedahl. In Dutch, it reads:

Weet u wat dit is? zegt Oftedahl en het lijkt of hij helemaal niet meer beseft waarvoor ik gekomen ben. Hij gaat college geven. Hij neemt mij in bescherming tegen mijn eigen onwetendheid. ([Hermans 1966/1993](#), 52–53)

Which can be translated as:

'Do you know what this is?' Oftedahl says, as though he's completely forgotten what I'm here for. *He acts like someone teaching a class. He protects me from my own lack of knowledge.* (my italics)

The italicized sentences are subtly adequate when we remind ourselves that Alfred is probably making an enormous blunder by calling Director Oftedahl 'Whale meat' to his face. The sentences, however, are translated differently by Ina Rilke: "Do you know what this is?" Oftedahl says, as if he's forgotten completely what I'm here for. Instead, he launches into an enlightenment session for my benefit' ([Hermans 2006](#), 54). Rilke would perhaps have translated this sentence differently had she possessed the onomastic knowledge presented above.

At the same time, however, Oftedahl's statement on page 52 might suggest that he did know where to find the aerial photographs and had decided not to help Alfred in order to thwart his enemy Nummedal. But then the reader might think that it would be very strange for Mikkelsen to have photographs that Hvalbiff lent to Nummedal, as Mikkelsen clearly states (p. 192). We will never be certain about

this; the insecurity will never be resolved either for Alfred or for the reader and the literary scholar. But we onomasticians have definitely gained a better understanding of how Willem Frederik Hermans consciously, or perhaps unconsciously created this feeling of insecurity for his narrator and his readers by making very subtle and efficient use of the accentuating and anonymizing function of names.

[6] CONCLUSIONS

A literary onomastic analysis of the novel *Beyond Sleep* reveals several cases of *Akzentuierung – Anonymisierung* as name function. According to Debus and Lamping, the accentuating part of the function could be implemented by sounds, formal deviations, alliteration or certain metrical characteristics, an archaic form of a name, and so forth. In *Beyond Sleep* the actual device is the fact, explicitly mentioned by the character Arne, that Hvalbiff is not a normal Norwegian surname. The anonymizing counterpart of the name function — when someone or something does not have a name in the text or is not referred to by name by the characters in the text — is implemented in three ways. First, only the name of a secretary and that of Alfred’s father are absent from the list of names linking those who attended the congress to their pictures in the photograph in the memorial volume for Professor Mallinckrodt. Second, several Norwegian names are repeatedly [unintelligible] to the young Dutch scientist Alfred. And third, the fact that Hvalbiff is probably a nickname is revealed only gradually during the story and is never confirmed.

As stated in the introduction to this article, the stylistic term foregrounding involves ‘a stylistic distortion of some sort, either through an aspect of the text which deviates from a linguistic norm or, alternatively, where an aspect of the text is brought to the fore through repetition or parallelism’ (Simpson 2004, 50). In the names in *Beyond Sleep*, these characteristics of foregrounding are conspicuous in several ways, that is, because (1) Hvalbiff is not a normal Norwegian name; (2) Alfred’s father is not referred to by name in the memorial volume; (3) the Norwegian names are repeatedly [unintelligible]; (4) the fact that Hvalbiff is a nickname is only gradually revealed; and (5) the name Hvalbiff/Oftedahl is unintelligible to Alfred exactly at the key moment, and there is no certainty for the reader about the identification of Hvalbiff/Oftedahl.

Foregrounding is also described as ‘a linguistic surprise’ that makes the reader conscious of the power of language — and Hvalbiff is a surprise in more ways than one. Finally, foregrounding as an ‘artistically motivated deviation’ that can be qualitative (a deviation from the linguistic norm) or quantitative (a deviation in frequency) is implemented by the explicitly stated fact that Hvalbiff is not a normal Norwegian surname and that the Norwegian names are repeatedly [unintelligible] to Alfred.

There is much more to tell about the usage and functions of names in *Beyond Sleep* (Van Dalen-Oskam 2009). In this article, however, I focused on the most important name function in the novel, as it is closely related to the topic ‘name and identity’. Based on sections 3–5 of this article, we can conclude that in this novel, names in their accentuating – anonymizing function are subtle stylistic foregrounding elements used by the author to structure the text and to efficiently build the plot. The fact that Alfred does not understand names either phonologically or semantically defines his identity in that it is an important stylistic tool emphasizing Alfred’s feeling of being a victim of scientific powers that are way beyond him and visualizing how Alfred feels hindered in making his scientific name and thus becoming a social success.

The observation that in *Beyond Sleep* the accentuating – anonymizing name function seems to be identical to ‘foregrounding’ as used in stylistics, may be helpful in further literary onomastic research, which in my opinion should look at names and their usage and function as powerful stylistic elements.

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SURNAMES AND IDENTITIES

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ABSTRACT

This paper¹, based on a survey of 314 Oslo residents, investigates the relationship between surname and identity. 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 bond exists 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. If one's surname is experienced as part of one's identity, what then is the main reason for this? Are there in fact different experiences of identity based on some typology of names borne by individuals?

[1] INTRODUCTION

In Norway, approximately 70% of the population bears a surname which is originally the name of a farming area. Thus, these surnames represent certain connections with specific places. As a result of this, it has been assumed that individuals with a farm name as surname may have an affective relation to the place the surname refers to.² Norwegian onomastics has its roots in the patriot movement formed in the latter half of the 19th century ([Helleland 1999](#)), and farm names have been viewed as carriers of the nation's distinctive character and history. In 1926, the Norwegian onomatologist, Magnus Olsen, asserted that the oldest farm names used as surnames were considered the most prestigious amongst Norwegian family names, and furthermore that these names were a reflection of the individual's place in society ([Olsen 1976 \[1926\]](#)). Since the eighties, the concepts of *post-modernism* and *globalization* have widely been interpolated as encapsulating contemporary society. In the phraseology of sociologist Anthony Giddens, modern social life is characterized by a *separation of time and space*; this condition of articulation of social relations across wide spans of time and space is seen in *dis-embedding mechanisms* which separate interaction from the peculiarities of locales,

[1] The current paper is a re-edited version of my papers read at the two *Names and Identities* conferences at The University of Oslo ([Wikstrøm 2007](#); [Wikstrøm 2008](#)) and further based on the main results of my Masters thesis ([Wikstrøm 2009](#)).

[2] See, for example, the description of the project *Names and Identities* by Research Group for Onomastics at the University of Oslo, <http://www.hf.uio.no/iln/forskning/forskergrupper/namn/prosjekter/> [6th of July 2009].

and in *institutional reflectivity* which is the regularised use of knowledge over the circumstances of social life and forms a constitutive element in its organisation and transformation (Giddens 1991, 2). Modernity is essentially a post-traditional order, where the globalising tendencies are inherent, and thus, one would imagine that late modernity has caused a certain breach in the name-bearer's view that the surname is a means for showing background related to family and "homeland".

[2] SURNAME TYPES IN NORWAY

Until the latter part of the 19th century, most Norwegians didn't carry surnames. The common name system provided the individual with a Christian name (in some cases more than one) and a patronymic whose function was to show who the bearer was son or daughter of. In addition, the individual could be characterized by the name of the farm where he or she lived or came from. This name could change if he or she changed dwelling place. When the surnames became fixed as result of the first Norwegian law on personal names of 1923, the farm names and patronymics thus became the distinctive types of Norwegian surnames (Nedrelid 2002, 134). Surnames in Norway have been classified, as per Helleland, into five main groups:

- (i) Surnames from place-names, mainly farm names
- (ii) Patronymics (ending with *-sen*)
- (iii) Surnames brought into the country some hundred years ago by officers of the crown or craftsmen
- (iv) Surnames from recent immigration
- (v) Newly designated, "ornamental" surnames; often of the same type as group (i) (Helleland 1997, 51).

Group (i) is, as mentioned above, the largest group. Some farm names are ancient, often more than a thousand years old, in both non-compound names such as *Haug* ('hill') and names compounded with for example *-vin* or *-heim*, where the ending is usually reduced, e.g. to *-en* and *-um* as in *Vøyen* and *Holum*. Often the more recent names refer to smaller farms and are given the definite form (e.g. *Haugen*, 'the hill'). These names are relatively frequent. 26 % of the population bears a hereditary patronymic in group (ii). One masculine compound with *-sen* ('son') is the most frequently occurring surname in Norway — *Hansen*. The rest of the population bear foreign or constructed names. Some foreign names have been used in Norway for some hundred years, first mainly by Danish, German and Scottish officers of the crown or craftsmen (iii), such as *Meyer*, *Møller* and *Smith*.

Even if these names are frequent in their countries of origin, they are however relatively infrequent in Norway and commonly associated with the bourgeoisie. Similarly, names from recent immigration (iv) are primarily a city phenomenon. Obviously, this is a very complex group, consisting of names from all parts of the world — the most frequent names from this group in Norway are *Nguyen* and *Ali*. The constructed names in group (v) are primarily of Swedish descent, as result of a tradition with ornamental names ([Brylla 1995](#)). Frequent names of this type are *Lindberg* and *Berglund*. Also belonging to this group are new names constructed on Norwegian ground which are aimed to resemble traditional farm names.

[3] QUESTIONNAIRE

The survey consisted of 22 questions, 13 for those who didn't need to answer follow-up questions. Further, it was separated in 9 parts. In brief, the questionnaire asks about what the present surname is, former surname for those who have changed name, reasons for name change, geographic connection, etymology, like or dislike of the surname, and the extent to which the surname is a felt to be a part of the individual's identity. At the end of each part a text box is provided to encourage the respondent to give further comments. The text boxes are important as they potentially supply valuable knowledge in additional information which otherwise might not be covered by the declarations in the questionnaire. The themes in the questionnaire are thoroughly described in [Wikstrøm \(2007\)](#).

[4] RESPONDENTS

I chose to use what Dillman (2007) terms a *mixed-mode survey*:

[...] the Web is evolving as a mode that must be used in conjunction with more traditional modes such as telephone and mail. This means that there is an increase in the occurrence of mixed-mode surveys, whereby some data are obtained by the Web and other data are gathered by another mode or modes ([Dillman 2007](#), 450).

In light of this, I chose to have several groups of respondents who were invited through different channels (such as members of a sports club or visitors to a specific web page); in all, six different groups participated in the Web survey. A control group was contacted by telephone as a random sample and asked to participate by filling in a paper version of the questionnaire. A total of 314 answers was obtained, with 49 of these constituting the control group ([Wikstrøm 2008](#)). Surveys on the Web require access to a computer online and some skill using it. This means that the more resourceful are assumed to answer the survey. I tried to check the partiality by comparing the answers I got from the different groups to record any potentially substantial differences in answers. This comparison revealed that the six groups who had answered the questionnaire on the Web did

not differentiate essentially from the control group. However, the groups differentiated from the population as a whole, according to figures from Statistics Norway (SSB), as overall the respondents proved to be slightly younger and considerably better educated. Thus, I have reached a specific part of the population. Unn Røyneland states that traditional sociolinguistics requires the selection of respondents to be representative of the actual population; for example, covering all the members of a particular language group or dialect ([Røyneland 2005](#)). However, following Røyneland, a specific group of the population can usefully be investigated in respect to attitudinal meanings. In the interpretation of Broady, sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and associates seldom use random samples of respondents in investigation. Rather, they are interested in the individual and groups, in their attitudes and qualities which are representative in the sense that they portray certain social phenomena of interest ([Broady 1991](#)). The group I wished to find out about was urban citizens, those who presumably have a distanced relationship to their often rural family names. The respondents are accordingly not representative for the population as a whole in statistical sense, but they are representative for the part of the population I wished to reach.

[5] CHANGE OF SURNAME

By asking if, and then why, the respondent has changed her surname, I wished to find out if there are certain surname types which seem to be preferred. The most recent Norwegian law on personal names, in effect from January 1, 2003, has enabled greater freedom to choose the name that best expresses one's identity. Still, there are no respondents in my survey who state that they changed their surname in direct consequence of this law. Most respondents changed their surnames as a result of marriage: 44,6 % of women and 4,8 % of men who are married changed their surnames. I consider the numbers too low to be represented usefully by percentages, but in general, for both sexes, the patronymics seem to be the name type which loses on the name change. Some respondents state that they experience these surnames as "too common". Furthermore, the women generally seem to change name as a result of tradition. Many, especially younger women, keep their maiden names as middle names, as an expression of their initial social and personal identity. Many children are given their mothers' maiden name as a middle name as well, with some women stating the reason for this is that the child's attachment to both branches of the family should be shown. The few men who claim to have changed surname seem to have changed to a name which is commonly associated with a higher social class. This is in accordance with the findings of sociologist Renee Thørnblad, who concludes that women gain respect when they follow the tradition and change their names to their spouses', while men gain respect when the new name in itself gives higher status ([Thørnblad 2003](#)). The names frequently preferred are those of type (i)

and (iii), as outlined in section [2] above. Other name changes show that the respondents use the freedom they have to choose among traditional farm names or create new names with a basis in the place-names they have a family relation to. The material shows no cases of change in spelling to achieve what traditionally have been regarded as status names, for example by change to older orthography (e.g from *Kvam* to *Quam*), or by deletion of the definite article (e.g from *Haugen* to *Haug*), or with the hyphenation of two family names (*Berg-Hansen*). The change of surname seems to incorporate a certain conservatism, whereby the relationship to one's family, continuity and, perhaps, as Olav Veka claims, fear of being considered pretentious (Veka 2001). The results show that no one has made name changes which can be said to signify a break with Norwegian naming traditions.

[6] SURNAME AND PLACE

61,8 % of the respondents have a surname from a Norwegian place-name, and this result is not inconsonant with the country as a whole. More have a foreign name of type (iii), (iv) and (v) shown in section [2] by comparison to the rest of the country, as is expected within urban populations. Many of the respondents are able to supply the geographical origins of their names, with 87,1 % knowing the county. However, only 52,1 % of the respondents with a farm name as a surname considered, upon direct questioning, that the connection to this place is meaningful. Even though this amounts to more than the half of the respondents, I claim that it is a relatively low number when we relate this to Norwegians' presumably strong connection to their "homeland". 27,3 % assert that the connection reflected in their name is not important. Thus, being able to trace the surname back to a specific place does not seem to give attachment to this place as a natural consequence. Three of those with surnames from place-names have surnames from farms in Oslo. Of the rest, 61,8 % have a physical connection to the place their surname refers to, as they have grown up there or their families came from that place. Compared with the proportion of respondents who reveal that the connection is regarded as meaningful, these numbers may show a certain disparity between what we can call an actual connection and the connection one experiences through the name. 12,9 % of the respondents with a farm name as a surname claim that their surname does not originate from a specific place. 10,3 % have not answered the question which concerns relation to the place. Thus, the respondent doesn't always have a notion that the surname she bears is (or has been) used for a specific place, and this obviously exposes a weak relation to this place. Questions concerning provenance are, of course, not so relevant for those with patronymic surnames. The other name types reveal that approximately a third of the respondents with names of type (iii), (iv), and (v) feel an attachment to the place or country their name comes from. However in group (iv), consisting of respondents with foreign names from recent immigration, not many claim such

an attachment to place: 6 of 24 respondents. Thus, to understand the identity which is associated with the surnames of foreign origin, it is probably reasonable to put less focus on the assumption that the names say something of importance about the attachment to a specific place, as some of these names build on very different cultures and mentalities. For example, both respondents who claim that they or their family come from Pakistan, gave additional information in the text boxes explaining that their names are primarily Muslim and thus less associated with a certain country. Cases where the attachment to place via the surname is apparently of low import to the name-bearer, may suggest that the name has another function than tying the bearer to a place of origin. Whereas, for example, surnames from farm names have their parallels in toponyms, they actually function as anthroponyms; while some respondents don't recognize their surname as a toponym at all. Gudlaug Nedrelid states that most toponyms give meaning to Norwegian speakers, whereas anthroponyms are more frequently empty of meaning (Nedrelid 1993, 169). As mentioned above in section [2], surnames from farm names and the patronymics were in pre-modern society used as by-names, and consequently names which characterized the bearer by stating, for example, which farm she came from or who her father was. Today, these names are fixed surnames. Kristin Bakken suggests that when patronymics became fixed, they lost their original, specific, meaning, and the new meaning can be something like 'family connection' (Bakken 1995, 43). This may have occurred in respect of the original farm names as well, that is, they might have been emptied of their original meaning, for example 'place connection' and the new meaning may be 'family connection'. If so, we might say that the anthroponym has, to some degree, displaced the toponym.

[7] ETYMOLOGY

The respondents were asked if they know what their surnames mean, and, overall, slightly under the half, 47,1 %, claim they do know the meaning. The highest proportion of these – but nevertheless surprisingly low – was the group with surnames derived from patronymics. Here, 56,9 % state that they know the meaning, and all elaborate that their names are compound with a man's name and 'son'. Of those with surnames from farm names, 46,9 % claim to know the meaning of the name. Most furnish this in the text boxes following the question. Names with an etymology in accordance with modern Norwegian, like *Haug* 'hill' and *Sandvik* 'sand' and 'bay' are relatively often understood by the respondent, as are more obscure names like ancient names compound with, for example, *-vin*. Yet, many respondents claim not to have investigated what their names mean (33,5 %), and some of these names have an etymology easily comprehensible to Norwegian speakers, such as *Bakken* 'the hill', *Hauger* 'hills', *Torp* 'croft', and *Wold* 'meadow'. It is of course difficult to conclude which appellatives native Norwegians "should"

understand, but these examples may show that the surname to a certain extent has lost its connection to the language for the bearer. Both amongst those with surnames from farm names and those with patronymics, there are some respondents who state that their names don't have a meaning at all (4,6 % and 19,4 % respectively), and for the farm names concerned, this also includes names one might think should be possible to understand for native Norwegians (e.g. *Huse* 'house(s)' and *Øien* 'the island', 'flat area bordering water').

I will claim that the fact that many of those who don't understand their name, or parts of it, is not owing to their possessing names with more obscure meanings. Quite the reverse, many have knowledge about the etymology of the older names, and their answers often reveal that they represent a more educated part of the population. The division is thus not only between those with names which are "easy" or "difficult" to interpret, but also between those who experience that their names have a meaning and those who don't experience such a quality. This might show that some have a notion that their names have another, different, or "deeper" meaning — a meaning which is detached from the language. In section [6], we learned that some respondents didn't experience that the farm name they bear as surname is or has been a place-name, and in some cases, this might have eventuated due to the name's usage in relation to other content linked to the expression. In this case, the name now functions as a surname, and thus the anthroponym has displaced the toponym. A similar process could have occurred in the case of influence over linguistic meaning. As it is a popular topic, many will be able to explain what their names mean. Still, the question is in some cases not understood. This can be explained by referring to Bakken, who suggests that the distinctive feature of anthroponyms is that their connection to the vocabulary is, in many cases, broken, that the relationship between the name and the bearer often is arbitrary, and furthermore that anthroponyms more often than toponyms are regarded as empty of meaning ([Bakken 2000](#)). As we saw in section [6], the farm names may have been emptied of their original meaning and the new meaning of the surname can thus be 'family connection'.

[8] LIKING AND DISLIKING OF THE SURNAME

The respondents were asked to answer the question "Do you like your surname?" by picking one of four alternatives. This showed that 84,7 % liked their surname, 4,5 % answered no, 3,2 % didn't know and 7,6 % were indifferent. The type of names most frequently valued positively are those brought into the country some hundred years ago by officers of the crown or craftsmen (group (iii) in section [2] above), at 93,3 %, followed by the surnames from farm names (i) at 91,8 %. The patronymics (ii) are the most disliked, but nevertheless, 68,1 % claim they like their patronymic, while 18,1 % are indifferent. Surprisingly many with names from recent immigration (iv) state they are indifferent, 20,8 %. Those who claimed

to like their surnames were asked to pick among maximum three of twelve statements to describe why. The total percentage will thus exceed 100 %, and for this reason I will not detail the proportions. Family connection was most important value here for all groups except group (iii). All the respondents from this group have names which are uncommon in Norway, and they have chosen “The name is uncommon” as the most important reason. As a matter of fact, it is an important reason for all respondents who don’t have one of the more common names. The second most popular reason is “The surname is “me””, as an expression of individual identity. These two, most popular, explanations — that the name shows family connection and that the name is “me” — stand in a dialectical relation, as they are expressions of social and individual identity. According to Brit Mæhlum, the two types of identity cannot be seen as independent of each other, as the individual’s identity is crystallized in the tension field between the individuality and the commune (Mæhlum 2008). The formal properties of surnames, such as spelling, etymology, sound, and so on, do not seem to be of great importance when it comes to liking of one’s name. It is more significant that the name is able to make the individual stand out from the masses in combination with showing family connection. In the comments which are given in the text boxes, many also tell that the first name in combination with the surname is important in order to stand out and be unique. On the other hand, the perception that the name is too common is the most frequently attributed cause for respondents who don’t like their names, these most often are among the patronymic group (ii). As we saw, many in this group are indifferent to their names as well, and some experience them as dull. The surname is, though, a part of them after all — many claim that they would not consider a change of name in such cases. Of the entire survey, only two respondents express that they don’t like their surnames owing to their experience of the name’s negative connotations, with an obscure meaning in modern Norwegian and resemblance to Norwegian or English slang or swear words. In section [1] above, it was suggested that the oldest farm names, with their formal features, would be considered as status names, able to show the individual’s place in the society. In light of this, we would expect a discernment between the older farm names and the younger names used to refer to smaller farms and cotter’s farms. However, this distinction doesn’t appear to be evident today, and is expressed neither by respondents who would gain nor those who would lose on the basis of such comparison. Most positive attributions given are not associated with class, for example respondents of group (ii) frequently experience their names as unpretentious, easy to spell, and easy to use abroad, which are stressed as good qualities. This may show that the individual focuses on and appreciates the typical features associated with the name in order to identify with it. The case where status is not greatly emphasized is a reflection of the names not revealing very much of interest about the bearer’s background. In addition to the fact that most

city dwellers carry all sorts of farm names and patronymics as surnames, the urban community is complex, and we do not have the same tools today to classify somebody socially by their surname. It is thus possible that the exclusiveness of having an uncommon surname today has replaced the exclusiveness one had earlier by having a name type which implied high social class. The assertion just given, that having an uncommon surname is important for modern city dwellers, is emphasized by the assumption that one of the typical constructs of identity in the late modern society is the wish to be unique. The religious historian, Otto Krogseth, employs three criteria to comprehend modern identity: *continuity*, the feeling of being *integrated*, and *individuality* (Krogseth 2007, 60). The three most common attributions the respondents gave when describing why they like their names run concurrent with these criteria. ‘Continuity’ can be considered in relation to the link established by surnames to family. Some respondents also mention that the name has “become” themselves, and that they feel continuity by having a name they are used to. The feeling of being ‘integrated’ is described by Krogseth as our feeling of being able to carry all the diverse roles modern life charges us with. In that context, we can suppose that the surname collates and expresses who we are — the name is nevertheless “me” in a complex society. ‘Individuality’ is most cogently expressed for individuals having an uncommon name. According to Krogseth, we ask “Who am I, as distinct from others?”, and he claims that individuality is confirmed in spite of, and often as a protest against, the threat of unification. This is typical for the post-modern formation of identity. Wanting to show individuality through having a name the individual shares with as few as possible could thus have supplanted the earlier exclusivity of having a name which shows social status — in a society where fewer master the codes for working out what names these are. In the text boxes, many respondents tie the fact that the name is “oneself” to the fact that it is uncommon and gives a feeling of uniqueness in the same reasoning. The name’s link to family is not discussed by any of the respondents, and thus it seems that this is viewed as a matter of course. On the other hand, personal identity is often defined, and this is often clarified as evoking a feeling of uniqueness. As we have seen, this is most important for the group who in all cases have an uncommon name. When the respondents so clearly express that their reasons to like their names have parallels in the criteria for identity, this shows that to like one’s name and relate one’s identity to the name is, in many cases, two sides of the same coin.

[9] SURNAMES AND IDENTITIES

Identity is a complex concept with so broad a range of associations that it must be characterized as a vague conception. As mentioned in section [8], the individual’s identity is crystallized in the tension field between the individuality and the commune. According to Mæhlum, there has been a change in the understanding

of the notion of identity from representing a permanent, eternal and unchangeable condition, to be a condition subject to change and negotiation — named as *essentialistic* and *constructivistic* notions on identity respectively (Mæhlum 2008, 109). As we have seen, it seems that feeling identity with one's surname is closely attached to liking it. In the society we live in, we wish to stand out, to show our own identity by expressing something genuine and particular which can not be reduced to something common. About as many who like their name simultaneously express a personal association of identity with their name (85,7 %). The groups who like their names best, as shown in the previous section, are coincident to the groups who feel strongest identity with their names. Moreover, those with uncommon surnames have the strongest identification with their names. Psychologist Kenneth L. Dion has worked on the relation between anthroponyms and identities. Even though his studies concentrate on first names, the results are comparable with the current analysis which reveals that a positive feeling towards one's name is closely tied to feeling identity with it. Dion even connects this with liking oneself:

Identity and self-acceptance are different, though related, psychological concepts. Identity refers to a person's sense of who or what she/he is. Self-acceptance or self-esteem concerns an individual's evaluation or overall liking-disliking of themselves. It seems reasonable to assume that one's sense of identity and the extent of one's self-acceptance would tend to co-vary with one another. Similarly, from the idea of a close tie between one's name and one's self, self-acceptance and liking for one's own name would be expected to correlate positively with one another, such that greater liking for one's own name is associated with stronger acceptance of self. [...] Individuals who liked their own name tended to identify more strongly with it, in the sense of affirmatively answering the question "Do you feel your first name is you?" Furthermore, individuals who either liked their first names or were neutral toward them scored higher on the self-acceptance scale than those who expressed dislike of their first name (Dion 1983, 251).

To find the most central cause in consideration of how a surname invests us with a feeling of identity, the respondents were asked to select one of five answers. The percentages are shown after the alternatives:

- (i) It gives a picture of who I am – 14,9 %
- (ii) It connects me with my close family or in-laws – 25,7 %
- (iii) It connects me with family history – 44,6 %

- (iv) It connects me with the place where the name comes from – 9,2 %
- (v) Other reasons – 5,6 %

The two most frequent selections above reveal that attachment to family history and close family are highly significant. In this context, an aspect of philosopher Paul Connerton's theories is cogent. Connerton suggests that *social memory* is used together with *historical reconstruction* in order to form an identity based on family history. Here, 'social memory' is understood as the oral tradition concerning family history. Historical reconstruction is gained by using written sources to fill in and adjust social memory, and these sources are often understood as authoritative. Thus, they are able to form the memory of a group, in order to establish a fixed identity based on family and roots. This is, however, characteristic of modernity, which implies that both modern identity and family history can be negotiated and changed (Connerton 1989). In a historical reconstruction of an individual's family history, the individual can thus select and focus on what she feels best expresses her distinctive character. As we can see above, family history is weighted most heavily among the respondents; more important than the more proximate physical (in time-space) and psychological relations with the individual's contemporary family and in-laws. A construction of family history thus makes the individual able to accomplish the project of modernity and construct an identity which is autonomous and has broken free from the closer, contemporaneous, family circle. According to Thomas Hylland Eriksen, the post-traditional realization of identity leads to estrangement and autonomy, but the approximation of a family connection can be important in order to be able to take part in the society's collective memory. However, this is rooted in a deliberate choice where the aim is to show one's distinctive character in this society Eriksen (2008). The third most selected answer, "It gives a picture of who I am", is concerned solely with the individual's identity. Here, connection is of less importance. This can be said to represent a certain autonomy from the family connection the name represents. We can examine this in relation to Pountain and Robins' notion of "Cool", used to describe one of the mechanisms in modern society, where withdrawal from the traditional community is a distinctive feature:

Cool [...] is a form of self-worth that is validated primarily by the way of your personality, appearance and attitude are adjudged by your own peers. [...] Cool has moved from being the pose of a tiny minority and is fast becoming the majority attitude among young people (Pountain & Robins 2000, 153, 167).

The group who most frequently selected answer (i) above consisted of respondents with names brought into the country some hundred years ago from officers of the crown or craftsmen (group (iii) in section [2] above), and as we learned in

section [8], this same group attributed the uncommonness of their names as the cause of their positive association to them. The notion of self-identity can be tied to the feeling of uniqueness through Dion's clarification of other scholars' theories on names as uniqueness attributes:

[...] the personality theorist Gordon Allport (1961) contended that one's name is the focal point upon which self-identity is organized over the course of an individual's life. [...] C.R. Snyder and Howard Fromkin (1980) proposed that names, along with commodities as well as attitudes and beliefs, are "uniqueness attributes" through which individuals may differentiate themselves from other persons. [...] our names are salient to ourselves and others, especially when they are relatively infrequent and therefore distinctive in the context of groups of which we are members (Dion 1983, 246, 249).

Names are thus salient for ourselves and the community around us, especially when they are less frequent. The theories Dion refers to, illuminate what represents the core of my investigation; that an uncommon name is best-liked and the best marker of individual identity. As we have seen, the surname's ability to show where the respondent has her roots seems to be of less importance. The option of, "It connects me with the place my name comes from", was selected by a mere 9,2 % of respondents.

Of those with surnames from farm names, group (i), 11,3 % chose this alternative. Aside from "other reasons", this is the least often selected alternative for this group also.

Therefore, it appears that the connection to place is generally of lesser importance, as reflected by the results of the present investigation. This suggests that a close association between surname and place, especially among surnames from farm names, is uncertain. Agnete Wiborg has investigated the connection between place and identity, and she claims that the tie to a specific place in current society departs from the traditional assumption of a close attachment between place and identity. Connection to place must be viewed as a tool in construction of the individual identity (my translation):

Place of origin is more frequently disconnected from family, social class, and way of living, even if these connections are operating on a symbolic level and regulating how place of origin is experienced and given meaning. The assumption that there is a close attachment between individuals and places which is grounded in Norwegian ideology and way of thinking still exists, but has now come to a discursive level where these assumptions may be contradicted and negotiated

[...]. The rural district or the place as a social, cultural, and geographical background represents a repertoire of symbols which individuals use in different ways to build their individual identity of choice ([Wiborg 2003](#), 148, 149).

As we can see, place of origin is a difficult conception. When the individual doesn't live at the place from where her background originates, the attachment will be more marked by symbolic and emotive associations with place, rather than with place as constituted by 'real' interactions. Wiborg suggests that attachment to place is experienced symbolically, evocative of good memories and relations. When place gets detached in time and space, one can reconstruct it with forgetting or repressing what one does not choose to remember. For example, the scenery of the place can symbolize what the individual wants to remember from the past and the picture one has constructed of the place from the current position ([Wiborg 2003](#), 137, 141). In light of this, and in light of the results presented in section [6] and [8], it seems that the place the surname originally connoted is subordinated. The surname is a bearer of one's identity because it is a means utilized in the individual's intentional construction of self, not because it attaches the individual to a "homeland". "Other reasons" respondents gave clarifying why the surname is experienced as an important part of one's identity can be divided into two streams of responses: The name's ability to make the bearer unique and the name's ability to ensure continuity. These are both — as we saw in section [8] — important aspects of why the individual likes her surname.

[10] CONCLUSION

What I have tried to portray situates the complex of modernity whereby national and local traditions meet global trends, as illustrated through a group of city dwellers' relationship to their own surnames and their geographic origin. Globalization and late modernity have influenced many individuals' attachment to family and homeland, and I would suggest that the distinctive characteristics of global society have marked many individuals' relationship to their own surnames as well. What seems to be important is that the surname makes it possible to point out the individual as unique in her community, and this community isn't necessarily tied up to the notion of "homeland" expressed through the surname. As we have seen, Giddens (1991) proposes that human relations are separated from time and space in late modern society. In light of this, one might say that many individuals seem to be marked by what Zygmunt Bauman ([Bauman 2001](#), 56) summarizes as the message of the 'cosmopolitan' way of being: "it does not matter *where* we are, what matters is that *we* are there".

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PERSONAL NAMES AND IDENTITY IN LITERARY CONTEXTS

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ABSTRACT

This article is an attempt to show the close connection between a person's given name and their feeling of identity and self. This connection is very important – it has even been stated that the parents' choice of name for their child will have an influence on the development of the personality of the child. Moreover, 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. Many authors from different countries have related their view of the significance of names and naming, not only as a source of information for the reader, but also as an important part of making the characters real to the authors themselves during the process of writing.

[1] INTRODUCTION

I would like to start this piece with an extract from a poem by the Swedish poet Gunnar Ekelöf (1907–1968), because it states very clearly the connection between names and identity:

Och människans lott står oföränderligt fast
men du har hunnit ännu ett steg på ditt önskandes byggnad:
Ännu en önskan av alla de tänkbara tusen och tusen
har blivit dig möjlig, nödvändig, viss och slutligen faktum,
liksom du själv som också var önskan från början,
liksom det magiska namnet föräldrarna gett dig
att skydda från mörker och jaglöshet,
att skilja just dig från tusen liknande och nästan lika.
Och ändå är du i botten så namnlös som natten och mörkret:
I verklighet er du ingen.¹

[1] Gunnar Ekelöf, "Tag och skriv", from the collection *Färjesång* (Ekelöf 1941).

Translated into English the poem goes like this:

And the lot of man stands unalterably fast
but already you have taken another step in the structure built by
wishes:

Another wish in the thinkable thousands and thousands
has become possible to you, necessary, certain, and finally fact,
just as you yourself who were also a wish from the start,
just like the magic name your parents gave you
to shelter you from the dark and I-less state,
to separate you from the thousands alike and almost alike.

And still under it all you are as nameless as the night and the darkness:

In reality you are no one.²

The way I read Ekelöf, he is alluding to the difficult and complex relationship between human beings and their own sense of identity – an identity which is closely and intimately related to the names and name-like designations that are given to us by ourselves or by the people surrounding us.

I would like to illustrate this point by relating an incident that took place many years ago, when I was a private tutor for students in high school, helping them to improve their marks in German and English. One day I was approached by the parents of a seventeen-year-old girl who seemed unable to learn German. When I met her, I found she was bright, intelligent – and extremely angry and disconsolate. I could not teach her anything until I had discovered the reason for her agitation. It turned out that her teacher at school had refused to use the students' names in class – he always addressed them only by the number they had been given on his list of students in class. This girl felt that the teacher had stripped her of identity and personality and made her into some kind of robot-like person, which naturally made her feel desolate and angry. As soon as she felt sure that I respected her identity and acknowledged her integrity as a person, she had no problems learning German. And she, in return, taught me a lot of the close connection between personal names and identity.

[2] LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND IDENTITY

Language is an organism developing through the interaction between people. It is alive within each and every person, not only as a down-to-earth and useful means

[2] Gunnar Ekelöf, 'Write It Down', in *Songs of Something Else: Selected Poems of Gunnar Ekelöf*, translated by Leonard Nathan and James Larson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 39.

of communication with the surroundings, but also as an inner tool constituting an essential part of the contents of our consciousness. Language is our most important utensil in our mental organization of experiences and memories, in problem solving, in the very structuralizing of our lives. It is an indispensable instrument in our attempts to interpret our surroundings, when we make associations and when we try to express our feelings.

Language also has an important function as a carrier of culture and identity. Through the words we choose when talking, we create the picture of ourselves that we want others to see. Human nature is polyphonic – our so-called personality consists of many different aspects which, when added up, constitute what we term “our identity”. What aspects of ourselves we choose to present at any given moment will depend on whether the people surrounding us are family members, schoolmates, fellow sportspeople, close friends, acquaintances, a girl- or boyfriend, our boss, colleagues or subordinates. The choice we make will often manifest itself through the name by which we choose to present ourselves to the surroundings. Do we include our title, given that we have one? Do we state our given name, our surname, or both? Maybe we choose to state a nickname or a pet name instead of the name our parents have decided for us. This may seem like a casual choice, or maybe just a matter of habit, but the fact is that the way we use our name constitutes an important part of the impression we want other people to form of ourselves.

Our personal perception of identity does not represent a stable unity. It changes as we gain experience, along with our personal growth. The American psychologist Gordon Allport has done ground-breaking work on the study of the personality. According to his theories our given name is the focal point around which we organize our personality, which is why it is of such crucial importance to us ([Allport 1961](#)). Another American psychologist, Kenneth L. Dion, suggests that the parents' choice of name for their child will have an influence on the development of the personality of the child ([Dion 1983](#), 247). This assertion really gives grounds for reflection. If he is right, it might mean that I would be a totally different person today if my parents had named me Alexandra or Victoria instead of Benedicta...

[3] NATION BUILDING AND CHOICE OF NAME

The connection between names and identity does not only affect people. Names and naming also constitute an important part of the work of the building of a nation. This becomes quite evident if we take a look at the history of Norway during the period following the dissolution of the union with Denmark in 1814. The Norwegian people gained a new feeling of freedom and independence which provoked a strong wave of National Romanticism, and this, among many other things, also called forth a strong agitation to bring back the Old Norse and Nordic names and

put them to use instead of imported, foreign names. This revival of the so called national names has later become known as the Nordic Name Renaissance. It is a well-known fact that quite a lot of the names that flourished during this period, had been found earlier in literature, but had never been in actual use as given names. As a consequence of National Romanticism they were now derived from Old Norse literature such as the sagas written by the Icelandic historian and poet Snorri Sturluson, and adopted as “genuine Norwegian names”. Thus literature was of great importance to the supply of personal names during this period, and the use of the Old Norse names contributed to the construction of national pride and a common feeling of identity.

This influence also worked in the opposite direction, however. The Nordic Name Renaissance became a source of inspiration for the choices of names in literature. This of course is manifest first and foremost in the literary works of Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson and Henrik Ibsen, who both took a very active part in the project of nation building, but it is also evident in the works of e.g. Johan Falkberget. The Norwegian researcher Ola Stemshaug has described the early works of Falkberget as an example of “programmatic and stereotyped use of names regarded as representative of the National Romanticism” ([Stemshaug 1981](#), 17 f.). Both Ibsen and Bjørnson were strongly influenced by National Romanticism and centred their works on national topics. Ibsen wrote national dramas and chose Nordic and Norse names for his characters, e.g. *Solveig* and *Åse*, *Einar*, *Kåre* and *Sigurd*. Bjørnson’s peasant tales drew the readers’ attention to names like *Øyvind*, *Arne*, *Ingrid*, *Synnøve* og *Torbjørn*. The old Nordic names like *Harald*, *Håkon* and *Sverre* also play a significant part in the Norwegian national anthem “Ja, vi elsker dette landet”, written by Bjørnson in 1859.³

The Norwegian Nobel laureate Sigrid Undset couldn’t resist the temptation to make fun of the most bizarre effects of the Nordic Name Renaissance. In her novel *Ida Elisabeth* (1932) she presents a family of brothers and sisters with names like *Frithjof*, *Geirmund*, *Herjulf*, *Jarngerard* and *Vikarr*. Their parents mostly wear jackets knitted in Norwegian lice pattern, and their father plays a Hardanger fiddle.

Naturally this wave of Nordic and Norse names did not arouse the same amount of excitement among all Norwegian authors. Knut Hamsun disapproved of it even in his own private life. When he and his wife Marie were discussing which name to choose for their firstborn son, she wanted to call him *Tore*, and Hamsun answered her in a letter dated March 16th 1912:

[3] The names included in the national anthem are not only names or fictional characters but refer to major figures of Norwegian history.

Mærkelig; jeg har selv tænkt på Tore. [...] Per maa vi ialfald ikke kline paa ham, der er en hel Generation nu med Per og Aase og Ola og slikt Norgesmesterskap.⁴

Obviously Hamsun was not aware of the fact that also *Tore* was among the Norse names gaining in popularity during the Name Renaissance. Had he known this, he would probably have given his son another name.

Naturally the interaction between literature and “real life” is not limited to the period of Norwegian National Romanticism. There are innumerable examples of children being named after literary characters from the favourite novels of their parents. Literary names are taken from books and made part of the reservoir of names in actual use. The Ossian cycle of poems put together by James Macpherson around 1760 – who incidentally played an important role in the reclaiming of Gaelic culture and the construction of Scottish national feeling – spread like a wildfire all over Europe, creating a new fashion of names like *Selma* and *Minona*. The tale of Napoleon as the godfather of the only son of one of his generals, a certain Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte, is widely known. Napoleon decided to name the child *Oscar*, a name originating from the Ossian cycle of poems. This little Oscar later became king of Sweden and Norway.

[4] LITERARY INFLUENCE ON NAMES CHOICE

Even in our modern times, literary models have a great power of influence on the names that parents choose for their children. The Swedish author Astrid Lindgren has been a great source of inspiration for some recently popular names, in Sweden as well as in Scandinavia generally. The frequent use of the names *Ronja*, *Birk*, *Emil* and *Ida* has been inspired by her lively and likeable gallery of characters. The problem is of course that this kind of naming after literary characters not always brings great joy to the persons bearing the literary names. Sigrid Undset gives an example of this in her novel *Den brennende busk* (1930), where one of the female characters names her daughter *Sunlife* after the heroine of an “enchanting” American novel. When her daughter gets old enough to comment on her mother’s choice of name, the judgment is short and scant: “Sunlife, det er da ikke noget navn i grunden” – “Sunlife is not a real name” (my translation).⁵ It is easy to understand why she always refers to herself as *Synne*, which will by most people be interpreted as short for the traditional name *Synnøve*.

Names have many different functions in real life, and all of these can be transferred to literature. The main condition for the reader to empathize fully with a

[4] Funny; I have also been thinking of Tore. [...] At any rate we mustn’t call him Per, there’s a whole generation now of Per and Aase and Ola and other names representing all kinds of Norwegian Championship.” (My translation). (Hamsun 1988, 547).

[5] Undset: *Den brennende busk*, p. 262.

literary work is that he or she is able to identify with the characters of the novel, their personality and actions. 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. The names in the novel generally will convey important information on many different aspects of the persons – family history, social setting, environment, self-image, personal ambitions, social status, and relationships between the characters. The list is more or less never-ending.

[5] THE LITERARY UNIVERSE

A literary universe is a well-suited starting point for a study of the process of naming and the motives behind it, especially when founded in the psychological realistic and/or the historic novelistic tradition. The French literary theorist Michel Grimaud characterized the process of naming and the use of names as “a deeply social, psychological, and linguistic act” (Grimaud 1989, 19). The social aspect is twofold. Firstly the choice of names and name fashions has mostly been influenced by social belonging, and secondly there are many rules restricting our way of addressing or referring to other people. The psychological function is related to emotions. Names and other terms of address often serve as a means of expressing feelings, and they can run the whole gamut from love to hatred. The linguistic function is relevant because names have different stylistic values and normative functions in different languages and within different geographical areas. In addition to these three aspects mentioned by Grimaud, there is also a historical element showing name fashions and name traditions throughout the ages.

Even Aristotle emphasized the importance of names in literature. In about 300 years B.C. he stated in his textbook on the art of poetry, *Poetics*, part IX:

[...] poetry tends to express the universal [...]. By the universal I mean how a person of a certain type on occasion speak or act, according to the law of probability or necessity; and it is this universality at which poetry aims in the names she attaches to the personages. [...] the poet first constructs the plot on the lines of probability, and then inserts characteristic names.⁶

The satirists and comedians of antiquity had no need for names as a tool for describing the individual personality of their characters, as this feature had already been established in advance. The characters in the ancient comedies were mostly a set of fixed types appearing in a whole series of plays. They did not change or develop in any way from play to play, and thus their names were more

[6] The Internet Classics Archive: <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/poetics.1.1.html>.

like tags telling the audience what to expect from the characters and what role they had been given in the thematic structure of the play. This is also typical of Classicism, which was inspired by antiquity, exemplified for instance in the comedies written by Ludvig Holberg. The servants Henrik and Pernille appear in several in his plays, representing respectively foolishness and smartness, while other characters have not even been given proper names – they are presented only by their profession and thus are characterized by the qualities attributed to a doctor, a lawyer and so on. Even the Romantic movement developed a string of internationally known heroes and heroines, equipped with more or less fixed characteristics – dauntless vigour, irreparable loneliness and melancholy. Again the identity of the person is fixed to the archetype instead of a name. However, as soon as the dramas developed into a free form, the names of the characters obtained a far more important role as bearers of meaning and symbols of their identity.

No literary époque has presented the author with greater challenges or possibilities than Realism. Realist authors based their writing on depictions of everyday banal activities and experiences from all classes of society, including the lower classes, without any romantic idealization or dramatization. Their aim was to give a faithful representation of reality, and thus, if they wanted to make personal names meaningful and relevant to the features and thematic function of their characters, they also had to make sure that they were in line with the actual use of names during the period of time they were describing.

[6] FROM MARIA GRIPE TO SIGRID UNDSET

Many authors from different countries have related their view of the significance of names and naming, not only as a source of information for the reader, but also as an important part of making the characters real to the authors themselves during the process of writing. Maria Gripe, a Swedish writer of books for children and young people, has given much thought to the connection between names and individual experience of identity and self. In her books one will often find a sort of mystery or game in relation to names and personal identity. Gripe has explained this as due to some unsettled feelings or points of view in her own perception of the relationship between people and names, and thus her characters interchange their names, hide their names or forget names. But Gripe emphasizes that this is not a conscious part of her plans for a book before she starts writing it, quite the opposite – it is something that her characters themselves insist on doing. Gripe's view of names is clearly stated by the heroine of *Landet utanför* (1967), a young princess:

Helst borde man också ha rätt att vara namnlös tills man själv finner sitt namn. Namn är ingenting att lättvändigt skänka hit och dit. Nam-

net kan vara både för lätt och för tungt för en människa att bära. Och en boja är det alltid. Det kan utgöra en farlig lockelse eller bidra till att skapa självförakt. Det egna namnet kan bli till en myt som man faller offer för. Det kan splittra karaktären och bestämma ens öde.⁷

It is particularly interesting that even though this book contains several comments on names and the significance of names to each and every individual, not one of the characters has been given a name by the author.

In his dissertation on Agnar Mykle's novels on Ask Burlefot, *Lasso Round the Moon* (1954)⁸ and *The Song of the Red Ruby* (1956), Leif Johan Larsen states that Mykle found the topic of names and naming very fascinating, and that he often quoted the old Roman saying: "Nomen est omen" (Larsen 2001, 59). Mykle has chosen many unusual, almost sensational names in his works, names which – according to Larsen – "nærmest tvinger leseren til å lete etter en intensjonalitet bak navnebruken"⁹. One of the most striking names is the name of the protagonist, *Ask Burlefot*, and even some of the characters in the novel find the name of the protagonist rather funny:

... han skrek Ask Burlefot, og det syntes de var et fornøyelig navn, og han var så hjertens enig med dem, han hadde gjennomgått meget i ungdommen på grunn av det navnet, men det var jo ikke han som hadde valgt det, men det kunne han ikke si; han måtte bare stå som en utstillingsdukke blant dem og hete Ask Burlefot og på det heftigste ønske at han hette Lars Olsen¹⁰.

The protagonist himself obviously feels that the identity given to him through his name is too conspicuous, too striking. *Ask* refers to old Nordic mythology, but also has a cross-reference to Norwegian folk tales and their recurrent figure *Askeladden*, and *Burlefot* is not an ordinary Norwegian surname. With a name like this it is impossible for him to hide in the crowd and try to be anonymous, and it is possible that the psychological explanation of Ask Burlefot's rather unpleasant behaviour through life is to be found in his name.

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- [7] "Preferably you should have the right to be nameless until you find your own name. Names are not something that should be given out light-handedly. A name can be too light, but also too heavy for a person to carry. And it will always be a shackle. It can be a dangerous temptation or it can create self-contempt. Your own name can turn into a myth which you fall victim of. It can split your character and determine your fate." (Gripe 1967, 69). (My translation.)
 - [8] The Norwegian titles are *Lasso rundt fru Luna* and *Sangen om den røde rubin*.
 - [9] "in a way force the reader to look for an intentionality behind the use of names."
 - [10] "... he screamed Ask Burlefot, and they found this a very amusing name, and he agreed with all his heart, he had been through a lot in his youth because of this name, but it was not his own choice, though he could not say that, he just had to stand among them like a display dummy by the name of Ask Burlefot, while wishing intensely that his name had been Lars Olsen." (Mykle 1956, 121). (My translation.)

Had his name been *Lars Olsen*, a very common name in Norway, he might not have felt that he had so much to prove to himself and others, and maybe he would then have been quite an ordinary and likeable young man instead of a selfish, insensitive rebel.

Philippe Hamon describes the function of names in realistic texts like this:

So the family forms a sort of “motivated”, “transparent” (Saussure) derivational field, wherein the surnames play somewhat the role of a linguistic root or stem conveying a particular piece of information (hereditary facts, etc.) [...] while the first names act as a kind of inflection, offering complementary information [...], structures, then, functioning as a sort of “grammar” of characters [...]. (Hamon 1992, 167).

It is, however, not only the “official” names in a literary work that contribute to form the picture which the author wants to convey to the reader, describing the personal, social and geographical identity of the literary characters. Often we find that the characters have been given several names, a pet name or a nickname in addition to one or more Christian names, all of which are equally contextually relevant. Their social standing may be revealed through their way of introducing themselves, through their way of addressing other people, and through their way of referring to each other. This also applies to the mutual relations between the characters and the opinion they hold of each other and, not least important aspect, the opinion they hold of themselves. Pet names, nicknames and bynames can reveal a considerable amount about a person’s position among equals and in his or her surroundings in general, and it is just as revealing when a person does not “feel at home” in their own name, but chooses instead to “hide” behind a pet name or use a name that actually does not belong to them.

Maria Gripe gives a touching example of this in her children’s book *Josefin* (1961).¹¹ The protagonist is a little girl by the name of Anna Grå.¹² She feels much burdened by this grown-up, rather severe name; she feels that it makes demands of her that she cannot fulfil. Because of this she creates a new name for herself: *Josefin Johandersson*. This name provides her with an identity with which she can feel at home and comfortable. She finds that *Josefin* is a funny and quite special name, rather ideal for a girl who wants to play a prank from time to time. *Johandersson* is a combination of *Johansson* and *Andersson*, the two most common surnames she knows. With a name like this she becomes a little bit of both, special as well as ordinary, and she demands that everyone calls her this, even at school. But as *Josefin* develops and matures, she gains the strength to

[11] *Josefin* is the first book in a series of three: *Josefin* (1961), *Hugo och Josefin* (1962) and *Hugo* (1966). It seems significant that these books all use personal names as titles.

[12] Anna Grey.

enter into her real identity again, and can drop the pseudonym she has been using as a mental hiding place.

Authors often make use of the strong connection between names and the feeling of personal identity as an element in their thematic structures. Maria Gripe has written a series of books about a small boy by the name of *Elvis Karlsson* (1972). He is named after his mother's big idol, Elvis Presley, and while growing up, he struggles hard to be allowed to develop his own personality and identity, and to get his mother to accept him as a person in his own right. Luckily he is a very strong boy, and he is able to handle the problems connected with his name. This is not the case in my next example.

The British “Queen of Crime”, Agatha Christie, based the psychological explanation of the character of the murderer in *The A.B.C. Murders* ([Christie 1936](#)) on the influence of the name on the development of a person’s identity and personality, which is exactly the same theory upheld by Kenneth Dion. The murderer is a small weakling of a man who has developed strong personality disorders due to the fact that he has never been able to honour the extreme expectations related to the name given to him by his parents: *Alexander Bonaparte Cust*. He describes his mother as “ambitious, enormously ambitious”¹³, and states that she “had this ridiculous notion that I would grow up and become an important man”¹⁴. His name, combined with his lack of ability to fulfil the ambitions of his mother, has given him extensive inferiority complexes, with the result that he is tricked into believing that he has committed several murders.

Even if you have been so fortunate as to have been given a name that does not make heavy demands on you, but instead a name that indicates positive qualities, a name that helps to create an encouraging picture of yourself, it is still possible for other people to manipulate your feeling of identity and self-view through their way of addressing you. This becomes quite obvious in a novel by the Norwegian author Ebba Haslund, *Bare et lite sammenbrudd* ([Haslund 1975](#)).¹⁵ The female protagonist was christened *Beatrice*. In Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, Beatrice is immensely beautiful. She is a holy person and a symbol of serene dignity and love. Who could imagine a more inspiring ideal for a woman? But the husband of Haslund’s character – who is, by the way, christened *Harald*, an old royal name which immediately indicates that he is the supreme head of the family – always calls her *Lillemor*. In Norwegian this means something like “little girl”, indicating a small and helpless creature, unable to take care of herself and with no real importance. So there she is, safely put in her place.

[13] My translation of “Men hun var så ærgjerrig, så forferdelig ærgjerrig.” The Norwegian quotation is derived from *Mord etter alfabetet* ([Christie 1964](#), 159).

[14] My translation. *Ibid.*

[15] *Just a Small Breakdown*.

Pet names and nicknames are often used as a means to control, manipulate or degrade other people. In literature it can often be observed that a character's newly gained understanding of his or her own self or a strengthened feeling of identity makes them throw away a despised pet name or a pseudonym used as a mask or a smokescreen, and start using their Christian name instead. The above mentioned Lillemor is one example of this – she experiences a personal growth and reclaims the right to be Beatrice again. But the loss of a pet name can also lead to a feeling of lost identity – you lose the part of yourself that was expressed through the pet name, or the part of your life symbolized by the pet name. In a novella by Sigrid Undset, *Fru Hjelde*¹⁶ (1917), the female protagonist Uni reacts with melancholy and sadness when her husband transfers the pet name he has once given her, *Hvitpus*, to their eldest daughter.¹⁷ Because of this, she feels that their relationship has lost its warmth and closeness.

[7] CONCLUSION

The examples I have given here show that the bonds between names and identity are as close in literature as in real life – maybe even closer. Names and naming are some of the most significant parts of the strategy used by an author to present a literary character as a particular individual. Literary onomastics – the investigation of names in literature – is still a young discipline, but more and more literary critics are becoming aware of the importance of names in the interpretation of novels and authorships. Roland Barthes was originally of the opinion that names were empty labels with no inherent meaning at all, but little by little he changed his view and finally became excited by the role of proper names during the process of literary creation. He claims that the personal names in a literary work have an inestimable value for the creativity of the author, and he even went as far as to maintain that Marcel Proust would never have been able to write *In Search of Lost Time* had he not found the right names to make the identity of the characters blossom fully in his fantasy.¹⁸ It is a bold statement, and it is not easy to evaluate its veracity. But there is no doubt that the link between names and identity can give new insights into the development of the personality and important aspects of individual identity, even in literature.

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- [16] *Mrs. Hjelde*. The overarching novel itself is known in English translation as *Images in a Mirror (Splinteren i troldspeilet)*, trans. by Arthur G. Chater (London: Cassell, 1938). Its first translation only included *Fru Hjelde*, not *Fru Waage*.
 - [17] Chater translates *Hvitpus* as e.g. 'little puss' and 'Puss'.
 - [18] (Barthes 1994, 67).

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