Linguistic Landscape and Inhabitants' Attitudes to Place-Names in Multicultural Oslo

1. Introduction

In the recent years, an increasing number of researchers around the world have begun to take a closer look at the public signage in bilingual or multilingual urban spaces (Shohamy & Gorter, 2009; Shohamy et al., 2010). By studying the *linguistic landscape* (LL), or the "visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region" (Landry & Bourhis 1997: 23), it is possible to learn about the linguistic diversity among the area's inhabitants (and visitors), about local linguistic practices, as well as about the linguistic ideologies of those who have created the LL.

Place-names on street signs and commercial names on restaurant and shop signs constitute an important element of the urban LL. Recent studies (Puzey, 2011; Tan, 2011) have highlighted the opportunities that an LL approach can offer for the study of commercial and official urban names. One of the aims of this chapter is to demonstrate the rewarding possibilities of using the LL methodology in onomastics research. This methodology can provide a better understanding of the language ideologies, attitudes, hierarchies and real-life practices connected to names both in the official sphere and in the less established but by no means less visible commercial sphere.

In Norway there are approximately 593,000 immigrants and around 117,000 Norwegian-born people with immigrant parents (SSB 2013). These two groups represent 14 percent of Norway's population. The capital Oslo has the largest proportion of immigrants – they constitute almost 30 percent of all the citizens (approximately 189,000 out of 624,000). The main immigrant groups in Oslo have their background in Poland, Sweden, Pakistan and Somalia. Today Oslo's population is known to be increasing mainly due to the growth of the immigrant population in the city. In the last ten years immigration stood for 92 percent of the total growth of the city's population.

Due to the rapid flow of people with non-Norwegian background to Oslo, the city has become highly multi-ethnic during the last decades. In some areas of the city the majority of the people are clearly not ethnic Norwegians. The immigrants mostly live in the suburbs, but one area in the city center has been home to immigrants and refugees for over 30 years now – Grønland. Due to the area's ethnic and linguistic complexity I chose Grønland for conducting a study on the use of different languages in commercial names and other elements of the written language in the public space in a multicultural neighborhood of Norway's capital. More specifically, in this chapter I will give an overview of how the use of Norwegian[1], English, and the minority languages[2] that are used by the immigrants living in the area, is divided between the official and the unofficial spheres.

In addition, to give a more personal insight into the topic of official place-names in the public space, I have included a socio-onomastic attitudinal survey among inhabitants of Oslo from three ethnic groups into this chapter. The main goal of this survey was to find out more about people's attitudes towards place-names in Oslo, as well as towards a possible emergence of official names reflecting the immigrant culture. I used both a questionnaire and in-depth interviews for this study.

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[1] There exist two official written forms of Norwegian – Bokmål (literally 'book language') and Nynorsk (literally 'new Norwegian'). In this chapter by 'Norwegian' only Bokmål is meant, because in my material there are no elements of signage in Nynorsk.

[2] By the term 'minority languages' I mean languages other than the official language Norwegian and English. It is possible to classify English as a minority language in Norway as well, but since the focus of the study in a great part is to illustrate the use of English in the public space as a marker of globalization, it is treated separately.

2. Method and data

Grønland lies on the eastern bank of the river Akerselva. The river has traditionally divided the city into two main parts – the West End and the East End. The eastern part was mostly a workers' area due to many factories there, while the more well-off people lived on the western side of the river. Non-Western immigrants have been living in Grønland for an extended period of time, for example already by the 1970's it was the area in Oslo which had the highest number of immigrants from Pakistan. Today this neighborhood is most diverse in terms of national origin: inhabitants without immigrant background constitute around 51 percent, people with non-Western background 40 percent, and immigrants with Western background account for 9 percent of Grønland's population (Oslo City Council 2010). People from Somalia are the largest immigrant group in the neighborhood (8.2 percent of the area's total population), followed by inhabitants with Pakistani background (7.6 percent) and immigrants from Sweden (3.3 percent). Around 96 percent of the immigrants with Western background and around 69 percent of the non-Western immigrants in the neighborhood belong to the so-called first generation of immigrants, that is, they were born outside of Norway. In recent years the area has become popular with many young and trendy ethnic Norwegians who have opened businesses and cafés there. One of the main reasons for this is certainly the fact that Grønland is located in the center of Oslo. Today Grønland has a significant diversity of people with different ethnic, cultural and economic background and has become a true symbol of the multicultural capital of Norway.

I concentrated my study on the signage displayed in six streets in Grønland: *Brugata, Christian Kroghs gate, Mandals gate, Rubina Ranas gate* and *Smalgangen*. These streets constitute the center of the neighborhood and at the same time represent the most commercial area of Grønland. Following the example of other research conducted in LL analysis (Backhaus, 2006; Ben-Rafael et al., 2006; Hult, 2009), I used the method of comprehensive photography of all visible elements of the LL. The items of public signage were then divided into groups according to the language(s) used in them and whether they belong to the so-called top-down flow or bottom-up flow, that is whether they were displayed by the authorities and institutional agencies, or created by individual social actors who "enjoy autonomy of action within legal limits" (Ben-Rafael et al., 2006: 10). To the first category belong items such as street signs, regulations on walls and other official signs, while names of non-governmental institutions, companies and restaurants, together with other elements such as posters, constitute the second category. Top-down items represent the dominant official policy and can throw some light on the power relations in the society as a whole. Bottom-up signs are designed more freely according to individual strategies and represent the local collective identity or identities, but they are without doubt dependent on the official directives to a certain degree as well.

One of the main problems that arose during the research was deciding which particular objects should form the selection for my analysis of the LL in Grønland. Difficulties often arise in the course of defining what is meant by the concept of "public space", deciding where the border between public and private spheres lies. My material is limited to shop, restaurant and café names and slogans, street signs, parking regulations and other official signs, posters and handwritten notices. Another problematic issue was classifying some restaurant and shop signs, which include non-Norwegian proper names. Should signs that contain such exotic names as Ali Baba, Hassan, Lakshmi (Hindu goddess of wealth), Thasha and Zacly together with a Norwegian or English text, be considered multilingual? A similar problem is connected to names of foreign food. Loanwords like *kebab, tandoori, wok* and *cheeseburger* are well known among the majority of Norwegians and have been integrated into the Norwegian vocabulary, but some of them do retain a certain hint of exotic realities.

Paula Sjöblom (2009), who has conducted a research of a few thousand company names in Finland, regards such words as "neutral", i.e. belonging to any language or many

languages at the same time. She uses this term for three kinds of elements (characterizing the other parts in the company names as belonging to a particular language): 1) abbreviations and numbers, 2) proper names, 3) international words, such as *casino, design, kebab*. I believe that with the help of the linguistic surroundings of such words it is possible to understand whether the foreign word should be considered as adapted into the lexicon of Norwegians. In my material most of such "neutral" words appeared side by side with Norwegian words in the same sentence, and therefore I did not classify the signs including these words as multilingual.

In the two tables below I have given an overview of the languages and language combinations used in my material (Table 1), as well as of the use of Norwegian and other languages in the top-down and bottom-up flows (Table 2). The total material consists of 179 items, of them only 12 representing the top-down flow. The category 'many languages' in the Table 1 represents a poster in 11 languages, which I will comment on further below.

Table 1. Types of language use in the public space in Grønland, Oslo.

Language	Quantity (%)	Language	Quantity (%)
Norwegian	94 (52.5%)	Arabic and English	1 (0.6%)
Norwegian and English	37 (20.7%)	Arabic and Swedish	1 (0.6%)
English	23 (12.8%)	Persian	1 (0.6%)
Urdu	5 (2.8%)	French	1 (0.6%)
Urdu and Norwegian	3 (1.7%)	Kurdish	1 (0.6%)
Tamil	2 (1.1%)	Many languages	1 (0.6%)
Kurdish and Norwegian	2 (1.1%)	Tamil and Norwegian	1 (0.6%)
Arabic and Norwegian	2 (1.1%)	Tamil and English	1 (0.6%)
Arabic	2 (1.1%)	Urdu and English	1 (0.6%)

Table 2. Norwegian and other languages in the top-down and bottom-up flows.

Top-down flow		Bottom-up flow	
Language	Quantity (%)	Language	Quantity (%)
Norwegian	11 (91.7%)	Norwegian	83 (49.7%)
Other than Norwegian	1 (8.3%)	Other than Norwegian	84 (50.3%)
Total	12 (100%)	Total	167 (100%)

3. Norwegian in the public space

The most obvious and expected tendency in the collected material is that Norwegian is the most frequently used language in Grønland's LL, especially when it comes to the official sphere. Half of all the signs consist exclusively of Norwegian, and on 139 signs out of 179 (around 77.7 percent) Norwegian is the only language or one of the languages used. All street signs, notices about parking and private territory, signs of shops that belong to a larger Norwegian chain, as well as other official signs are in Norwegian. The high proportion of Norwegian in the public space indicates the role of this language in the linguistic ecosystem as the main language that is (or should be) common for everybody living in the country. The frequent use of Norwegian is connected to a number of political practices regarding the special position of the official language of the country, for instance compulsory Norwegian language courses for immigrants, language policy on the national TV channel and the work of the Language Council of Norway.

Norwegian is also used when Norwegians, and foreigners who have been fully integrated into the Norwegian society, are the target group of an advertisement or a typical clientele of a shop or a restaurant. Some examples of this are: a sign of a shop that sells

equipment for cottages; a sign of a firm of undertakers where everything is done according to Norwegian traditions; a poster advertising a concert by a Norwegian musician in a church. Some of the examples of the use of Norwegian described above are shown in Figure 1.

There is only one exception to the rule about the top-down information being in Norwegian: on one poster there are 10 languages used beside Norwegian. This poster is an advertisement of Norwegian language courses from the Municipality of Oslo, and it has text in English, Arabic, Serbo-Croatian, Polish, Russian, Urdu, Somali, Vietnamese, Persian and Spanish. The choice of languages demonstrates well which regions the largest immigrant groups in Grønland (and Oslo in general) come from. The language use in this case should not be given a significant ideological or symbolic value, as the information on the poster is supposed to be accessible to the immigrant groups that don't speak Norwegian and having it in many languages has simply a functional value.

Figure 1. Examples of Norwegian used in the public space in Grønland, Oslo. Photographs by the author, 2009.

4. The use of English

The second language which is most visible in the LL of Grønland, is English. This could perhaps come as a surprise since there is no reason to believe that many of the shops and restaurants in the area are owned by people who have English as their mother tongue or that the clientele are from English-speaking countries. In some cases the use of English can be explained by the fact that the particular shop or restaurant belongs to a foreign chain, such as *McDonald's* or *Specsavers*, but this explanation counts only for a few cases.

Many of the English and the Norwegian-English signs belong to shops and restaurants, representing the bottom-up flow, or more specifically, the commercial bottom-up flow. This can lead us to the thought that the shop and restaurant owners have commercial reasons for using English in the names and slogans of their enterprises. Due to the effect of globalization in the cultural and ethnic field and as a result of the increased contact level with different cultures, Norwegians have acquired new habits and new expectations. With time people have become very used to hearing English, in some situations they might even expect the use of English instead of Norwegian, and commercial signs are a good example of this. It is as if such features of enterprises, goods and services as 'international' and 'modern' are associated with

the use of English. Many of the enterprises that use English on their signs are connected to beauty, fashion, jewelry and so on, and this is most likely because the use of English has a connotation of up-to-datedness and international commerce and has a more symbolic than practical value. Spolsky (2009: 33) calls this phenomenon "symbolic value condition": a preference "to write a sign in your own language or in a language with which you wish to be identified". The use of English in this case hasn't necessarily been intended as a "means of verbal communication but rather to appeal to people's emotions" (Edelman, 2009: 142). It is the connotation, rather than the denotation of English, that is of importance. The significant presence of English in the LL as one of the most obvious markers of globalization and the use of English in commercial names as a sign of modernity has been discussed in a number of other studies (e.g. Ben Rafael et al., 2006; Huebner, 2006; Lanza & Woldemariam, 2009).

Some examples of the use of English on the signs of shops and restaurants are the following: *Duale's Textile Shop: Your beauty, is our duty!; New City Jewellery; Sheikh's Fashion: Gull og Tekstil – Barne og Dameklær* (Gold and Textile – Children's and Women's Clothes); *Anarkali Fashion Center: stoffer, sysaker, sarees, smykker, barneklær, ready made suits, gardiner* (fabric, sewing goods, sarees, jewellery, children's clothes, ready made suits, curtains) (see Figure 2). These examples demonstrate that often the name of the shop is in English whereas an "explanation" about the goods sold there is given in the one language that is common for most of the clients – Norwegian. There is a possibility that some shops might be using English because it is connected to the native country of their owners. This could especially be true in the case of shop-owners from Pakistan where English is one of the official languages and is largely used in government and business alongside with Urdu (Library of Congress, 2005). Additionally, newly arrived immigrants who have only just started with Norwegian courses, might feel more comfortable with English signs. However, I believe that the use of English in commercial names and slogans in my material mostly comes from the connotations of English mentioned above, and this can to a large degree be concluded from how English is often used for the name of a shop, while further explanation of the shop's function might be in Norwegian.

Finally, I would like to point out that it can sometimes be difficult to classify the names of some world-wide known chains, such as *McDonald's* or *Subway*. Brand names of this type have in a way become one of the many symbols of globalization and perhaps cannot really be considered as belonging to a particular language anymore. It is of course possible to track such names back to their etymologic and linguistic origin, but their use in the LL should be considered to be more a sign of globalized culture, in many cases the so-called Americanization, rather than a sign of influence of one specific language. Spolsky (2009: 31) uses such terms as "international signs" and "global signs" for such names and emphasizes that "it is important to distinguish local signs from global signs – the existence rather than the language of the latter is what is most likely to be relevant". This way, when it comes to wide-spread brand names, one should first of all pay attention to the cultural, and not the linguistic impact that they illustrate.

Figure 2. Examples of English used in the public space in Grønland, Oslo. Photographs by the author, 2009.

5. Signs in non-Western languages

Practically all the signs where non-Western languages, such as Arabic, Urdu, Tamil or Kurdish were used, represent the bottom-up flow. Of these languages Urdu was used most frequently, and this is not surprising considering the large percentage of immigrants from Pakistan who have inhabited the area for a long time. One would perhaps have expected a greater number of signs in Urdu, Arabic or Tamil in one of Oslo's most multicultural districts, with a great deal of ethnic minority owned shops and restaurants. However, the use of non-Western immigrant languages seems to be restricted to a highly unofficial part of the LL of the area. These languages are mostly used on handwritten notices, posters, or as part of the name of a café or shop. It is of course important to keep in mind which language groups the information on the signs is meant for. Norwegian or English are practically not used when the information is meant only for immigrants. The use of minority languages in the LL in Grønland can to a large degree be explained with the words of Hult (2009: 100) who in his research of the LL in Malmö came to the conclusion that "minority languages are not perceived foremost as community indexicals but as languages of transaction within the community".

Some examples of elements of the LL in Grønland that use a non-Western immigrant language parallel with Norwegian, are the following: the signs of shops selling Iranian sweets, traditional Iranian clothing or halal meat, posters advertising organized pilgrimage tours to Mecca and the sign of a Kurdish leisure club. Monolingual objects from the immigrant culture are, for example, the sign of a mosque, movie posters and a poster summoning people to the Tamil Christian Assembly Church. Also *Alkhair*, a Norwegian relief organization that to a large degree is oriented towards improving living conditions, education and healthcare in Pakistan, has its poster exclusively in Urdu. The target groups of the monolingual signs and posters mentioned above are clearly limited to representatives of a particular immigrant group. As for signs and posters using a minority language parallel with Norwegian, they are directed towards other ethnic groups as well. There can be many reasons for this parallel use of languages. For example, in the case of the shop selling Iranian sweets, Norwegian is used for marketing purposes, for inviting more customers. The use of Norwegian on the sign of the

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shop that sells halal meat and on the pilgrim tours poster can be explained by the fact that Norwegian is the common language for Muslims from many cultures that are living in Oslo. See Figure 3 for some of the elements of Grønland's linguistic landscape in non-Western languages.

Figure 3. Examples of non-Western languages used in the public space in Grønland, Oslo. Photographs by the author, 2009.

6. Attitudes towards place-names from foreign cultures

Oslo has during the last decades developed into a truly multicultural city. One of the features of place-names is that they characterize the location. The question arises whether creating new toponyms that reflect the non-Norwegian communities of Oslo is an important issue for the citizens. Most of the place-names in Oslo are an expression of the local society, history and culture, but what about place-names that would express a new important feature of the city, namely its multiculturalism?

Official place-names are created through top-down planning while unofficial names arise spontaneously and are an expression of the identity of different groups. It can therefore be expected that the changes in a society's ethnic composition first will be reflected in the unofficial toponyms. In multicultural cities there are unofficial names for areas with a significant immigrant population, and such names are often jocular and can even be pejorative. Such names are mostly used by the inhabitants that live outside of the multicultural areas (Nyström, 2007: 70). In the case of Oslo, it has been noted that such unofficial names as *Lille Pakistan* 'Little Pakistan' and *Lille Karachi* 'Little Karachi' (Senneset, 2009: 26) are used for the areas Grønland and Tøyen, which have some of the largest groups of immigrant population.

As part of another research project (Berezkina, 2011) I conducted a survey about attitudes towards place-names in Oslo among three ethnic groups: ethnic Norwegians, and people with Pakistani or Polish background. I received answers to an anonymous online questionnaire from 108 inhabitants of Oslo: 47 ethnic Norwegians, 32 people with Pakistani background and 29 people with Polish background. Six in-depth interviews (with two members of each target group) were also conducted.

One of the place-names in Oslo that I asked the informants to evaluate in the survey, is *Rubina Ranas gate*. This street is located in Grønland, and the main building in the street is The Islamic Cultural Center[3]. Rubina Rana (1956-2003) was the first person with a non-Western (Pakistani) background to chair the committee for Norway's Constitution Day celebrations in Oslo in 1999 and the first non-Western immigrant who had a street named after her (in 2006). The appearance of the first street named after a person with immigrant background is an important sign of the integration of immigrants into the Norwegian society. By adding this place-name to the questionnaire and asking about possible immigrant place-names in future Oslo in the interviews, I tried to find out what kind of attitudes Oslo inhabitants have towards creating more place-names that would reflect a non-Norwegian culture. More specifically, when it comes to my research, the question is first of all directed towards toponyms reflecting the Pakistani society, and not the Polish one, since immigration from Poland is perhaps still too recent a phenomenon for this topic to be relevant.

The reactions towards the street name *Rubina Ranas gate* were mostly positive among the informants who knew who the street was named after. Some of the Pakistani informants had known Rubina Rana personally. Three informants from the younger generation with Pakistani background underlined that it is positive to create new street names that reflect today's multicultural Oslo. However, not all the young people with Pakistani background who filled out the questionnaire had heard about Rubina Rana. Among the Norwegian informants there were clearly more positive than negative reactions towards this street name, and some of the informants gave comments like "it's good that people with foreign names have places in Norway named in their honor" (woman, 32), "this is a good choice for a new street name" (man, 36) or "I like that Oslo gets more place-names that reflect the diversity of its population" (man, 30).

The topic of possible names in Oslo that would reflect an immigrant culture was also discussed in the interviews and two tendencies can be pointed out. On one hand there were no informants that were against naming places after people of foreign cultures if the individuals had been important to the local society, and in such cases the individuals' ethnic background was not such a significant issue. On the other hand the informants were hesitant towards place-names from another culture that are not commemorative names. Two of the informants expressed a concern that giving foreign names to locations in Oslo could result in a ghettoization: as a consequence of giving a place a foreign name, ethnic Norwegians might no longer perceive the place as a 'good place to live', while people that associate themselves with the culture the foreign name belongs to, could decide to move there.

Here I would like to point out that since we are talking about an originally more or less homogeneous Norwegian society, Norwegian names appear neutral in Oslo. However, giving a street or another location a name from, for example, Pakistani culture, marks the place as belonging to this specific culture. But all ethnic groups are of course free to move inside the city, and after a while the representatives of the specific culture may move to another area and leave behind them names that then stop being descriptive of the location. Therefore, there is a possibility that with time the immediate connection between the initial naming motive and location will change from descriptive to historical, as is a common phenomenon for place-names both in urban and rural areas.

Generally there were very few wishes expressed among the informants for more place-names reflecting immigrant culture. Only one of the informants with Pakistani background mentioned that it would be good to have such names in Oslo as *Kharian gate, Gujrat gate*, named after places in Pakistan where many of the immigrants from Pakistan originally came from. Other than this, no clear wish for names from the immigrant culture was expressed. The general tendency regarding this issue could be formulated in the following manner: Although

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[3] It is noteworthy that the name of the cultural center is written in Arabic and English on the sign, but not in Norwegian.

the one name reflecting immigrant culture, that already exists in Oslo, is warmly welcomed, most of the informants with Pakistani background do not necessarily wish to push for names that would reflect their native-born culture in places in Oslo. This can be interpreted as part of a more general wish to be better integrated into the local society, rather than to influence it.

7. Name preferences among Oslo inhabitants from different ethnic groups

Finally, I will give an overview of the main factors that led to a positive attitude towards place-names in Oslo among the city's inhabitants from three ethnic groups (for more details see Berezkina, 2011). The conclusions in this chapter are based on the informants' evaluation of 21 place-names in Oslo, their comments about place-names from their home district in Oslo, as well as on the answers to the question about types of place-names they would like to have in Oslo. An overview of the main factors that led to a positive reaction to place-names is presented in Figure 4.
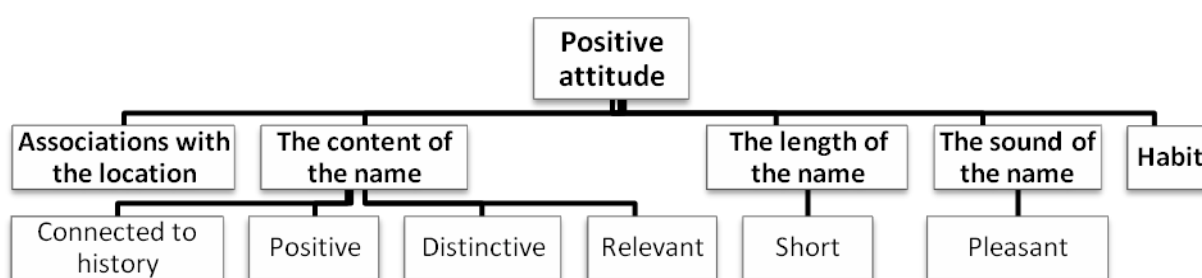

Figure 4. Factors that determined the informants' attitudes towards place-names in a positive way.

One of the factors that influenced the informants' attitudes towards place-names the most, were the *associations with the location* that the name refers to. It was clear that not only the features of the names themselves determined the inhabitants' attitudes towards these names, but also the connotations with the location that the names refer to had an influence. This was one of the main problems in conducting a survey in order to describe attitudes towards place-names: The informants often found it difficult to differentiate between their attitudes towards the name and their attitudes towards the location. This tendency did not come as a surprise, since place and name in many ways form an entity. A toponym can develop from carrying a meaning and being descriptive for a place, to being almost exclusively designating for the name users, who can perceive a place-name simply as a combination of sounds. Especially when the meaning of one or several name elements or the story behind a commemorative name is unclear for the name user, the attitude towards the name is almost exclusively connected to the attitude towards the location.

However, in a number of cases in my survey even the attitudes towards a name with a more or less transparent content were exclusively determined by the connotations that the individual informants had with the location. This tendency was especially striking among the informants with Pakistani background. Many of them responded to the question about their attitude towards a place-name as if they had been asked to describe their attitude towards the location the name refers to.

When it comes to preferences related to *the content of names*, there are tendencies that can be found in the answers from the members of all three ethnic groups. The informants showed a clear preference for place-names that they perceived to be:

a) *Connected to history*: Commemorative names (e. g. *Dronning Mauds gate*[4] 'Queen Maud Street', *St. Olavs gate*) and other names that the informants saw as connected to history (e. g. *Torshov* (from Old Norse *Þórshof*, i. e. 'place of worship for Thor').

b) *Positive*: Names which contain positive words, as well as names that bring about personal positive associations (e. g. *Sorgenfrigata* 'Sorrowless street', *Eventyrveien* 'Fairy-tale road', a district called *Sjølyst* 'Sea delight'). However, six informants with Pakistani background disliked the name *Sorgenfrigata*, because they only reacted to the word *sorg* 'sorrow', and not to the word *fri* 'free'.

c) *Distinctive*: Names that clearly stand out from others and names that can have a double meaning (e. g. *Bukken Bruses vei* 'Billy Goat Gruff Road' (named after a character from a Norwegian fairy-tale), the street *Mikrobølgen*). The latter name means 'short wave' and was initially given to the street in connection to a radio station located in that area. However, many of the informants associated the name *Mikrobølgen* with the word *mikrobølgeovn*, which means 'microwave oven' in Norwegian.

d) *Relevant*: Names that are perceived to be relevant for the location. This is for example connected to those cases when a name is descriptive of the location (e. g. *Gressholmen* 'Grass islet' that refers to a small grass-covered island in the Oslo fjord), or when a name signifies the location of a naming object (e. g. *Tøyengata*, a street in a district called *Tøyen*).

Another factor that turned out to influence attitudes towards place-names was *the length of the name*. Some informants disliked such names as *Arnljot Gelinnes vei*, *Joachim Nielsens gang* and *Professor Birkelands vei* because they thought these names were too long. It is important to point out that the preference for short names (or a dislike for long names) was found exclusively among informants with Pakistani background. This can to some degree be due the fact that long names are often more difficult to pronounce and to remember, especially for those with a linguistic background other than Norwegian.

A number of informants reacted more to *the sound of names* rather than to their meaning. This factor became mostly clear from the answers given by the ethnic Norwegian and Polish informants. For instance, one Polish informant (man, 25) disliked the name *Kringsjå* because of the combination of sounds /r/ and /ʃ/, an ethnic Norwegian informant (man, 28) liked the name *Sagene* because he thought it was funny to pronounce it with a nasal sound, another ethnic Norwegian (man, 49) didn't like the name *Holstein* because it sounded German, and a Polish informant (man, 28) criticized the name *Thune* because it didn't sound Norwegian. It can be concluded that it is *pleasant-sounding names* which received positive evaluations. Among the pleasant-sounding names there can also be pointed out a specific type of names: *names that sound Norwegian*. However, due to a small amount of examples that could be used to illustrate this tendency, this type is not included in the overview presented in fig. 1. I would nevertheless like to refer to a tendency pointed out by Laura Kostanski (2009: 184): "People are more likely to form an identity with toponyms which are perceived by them to be 'normal' than those which are considered 'foreign'".

Finally, sometimes it was enough that an informant was used to a place-name in order to have a positive attitude towards that name. I have only been able to connect this factor to attitudes expressed towards the name of Oslo's main street *Karl Johans gate*, but in this case the tendency is so obvious that I have chosen to add *habit* to the main factors that have influenced the informants' attitudes. A number of examples illustrate this tendency:

> I like the name because it is so well-known and established (Norwegian man, 33); Yes, this name is so well-known that it is impossible not to like it (Norwegian man, 31); I like the name, it is not easy to forget (Polish woman, 17).

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[4] Here and further for generics of commemorative names: *gate* 'street', *vei* 'road', *gang* 'passage'. The specific elements of commemorative place-names in Norwegian have the genitive ending *–s*.

The differences in attitudes towards place-names among the three target groups were mostly connected to the perception of the names among the informants with Pakistani background, seen in comparison to the other informants. As noted above, the informants with Pakistani background differentiated the least between their attitudes towards the name and the location the name refers to, and they were also the only ones that criticized the length of names. According to Kostanski (2009: 173), it is not only place identity but also toponymic identity which "helps to connect a population with their history". A possible explanation of the difference in attitudes among the informants with Pakistani background and the attitudes among the informants from the two other target groups can be based on this thought. If a person does not quite associate himself with the history and culture that form the naming basis, then the connection to the names is weaker. Throughout the survey the informants with ethnic Norwegian background showed a stronger connection to the surrounding place-names, and this can be explained by a stronger association with the naming basis.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the use of various languages in commercial names and other written elements of the public space in a multicultural area of the ethnically and linguistically complex city of Oslo, as well as shed some light on the naming preferences among the inhabitants with different ethnic backgrounds. From a methodological point of view, I have combined results from fieldwork in the local LL with a socio-onomastic approach in the form of an attitudinal survey. In this way, I have been able to discuss the general tendencies for naming motives and language choices in place-names and commercial names in a multicultural urban space, while at the same time gaining an insight into how the local place-names are perceived by name users with different cultural backgrounds.

In Grønland, the multicultural neighborhood where the fieldwork was conducted, the use of Norwegian, English and minority languages varies significantly, depending on whether the element of the LL belongs to the top-down or bottom-up flow. Minority languages in Grønland are almost exclusively found on elements of the LL that are only relevant for a certain immigrant group, while the rest of the public signage uses Norwegian and/or English. The use of Norwegian is logical since it is expected to be the common language for everybody in the area, and in the top-down elements it illustrates the official language policy. The broad use of English is to a large degree connected to globalization and constitutes a typical picture in the LL in many places of the world today.

According to an attitudinal survey conducted among representatives of three ethnic groups living in Oslo (Norwegians, Pakistani and Polish), the factors that influence the inhabitants' attitudes towards official place-names, can be connected to both the features of the names themselves (their content, length and sound) and to external factors, such as associations with the location the name refers to, and the habit of using a name. Differences in the perception of place-names could mostly be noted in the answers given by informants with Pakistani background. The survey also showed that although there have been expressed some wishes to have more official place-names reflecting the immigrant culture, the general tendency is that there is no distinctive pressure from the minority communities to influence the linguistic composition of official signs in Oslo.

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