

## Place-names in Oslo, Seen from an Inhabitant Perspective in Three Different Ethnic Groups

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DOI: 10.2436/15.8040.01.45

### Abstract

The aim of this paper is to describe the differences in attitudes towards place-names in Oslo, the capital of Norway, and the use of these names in three different ethnic groups: ethnic Norwegians and people with a Pakistani or Polish background. Oslo has in the last decades become a highly multicultural city where more than 25 per cent of the population has an immigrant origin, and therefore I decided to conduct the investigation among inhabitants with different ethnic backgrounds. The reason for my choice of the two non-Norwegian target groups is that people from Pakistan and Poland compose the main groups in two of the largest immigration waves to Norway in the 1970's and the 2000's respectively.

I try to answer the following questions: Is the perception of place-names in Oslo similar among ethnic Norwegians and among people with an immigrant background? What kind of names are considered as 'good names' and what kind of names are perceived to be 'bad names'? What kind of unofficial toponyms exist in the different ethnic groups? And last but not least, I discuss whether creating new place-names based on the non-Norwegian communities of Oslo is an important issue for citizens.

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### 1. Research background and data

Place-names, and among them urban place-names, are connected to local history, culture and values (Azaryahu 2009, Kostanski 2009, Særheim 2007, Wahlberg 2005). The way the identity of urban dwellers is reflected in and influenced by place-names in urban space is a new and growing field in name studies (see for example Ainiala and Vuolteenaho 2006, Ainiala 2007). This field of research is based on the premise that inhabitants of the same city do not form a homogeneous group of name users, and that adopting toponyms and attitudes towards them is influenced by the individuals' cultural background, the area where they live, as well as by their social networks in the urban space (Ainiala 2007: 30). The new socio-onomastic approach, which is concentrated on learning about perceptions of names and name usage among non-linguists, has in particular been called *folk onomastics* (Ainiala and Halonen 2011: 193).

Norway, with a total population of five million people, has in the last decades become highly multi-ethnic: there are 600,900 immigrants and Norwegian-born persons with immigrant background living in the country. One third of them live in Oslo, and today approximately every fourth inhabitant of the city has a non-Norwegian background. The aim of my research project is to describe the attitudes towards urban place-names in Oslo and the use of these names among citizens. Because of the increasing ethnical diversity in Oslo, I chose to conduct my research among inhabitants who belong to different ethnic groups: ethnic Norwegians, people with a Pakistani background and people with a Polish background. The reason for my choice of these specific target groups is that I wanted to compare perspectives on place-names among ethnic Norwegians, inhabitants from an immigrant group which has lived in Oslo for many decades (people with a Pakistani background), and inhabitants who represent more recent immigration processes connected to the expansion of the European Union (people with a Polish background).

The topic of names in multicultural and multilingual societies has become popular and relevant among name researchers, and a number of studies about place-names seen from a name user perspective have been conducted (Ainiala 2007, Ainiala 2009, Johansson 2007,

Johansson 2009, Reponen 2010). This is without any doubt connected to the significant globalization processes of the last decades, which have led to increased cultural and linguistic contact. Nevertheless there exists no comprehensive study in attitudes towards urban toponyms where the main focus lies on the name users' ethnic background and their years of residence in the city.

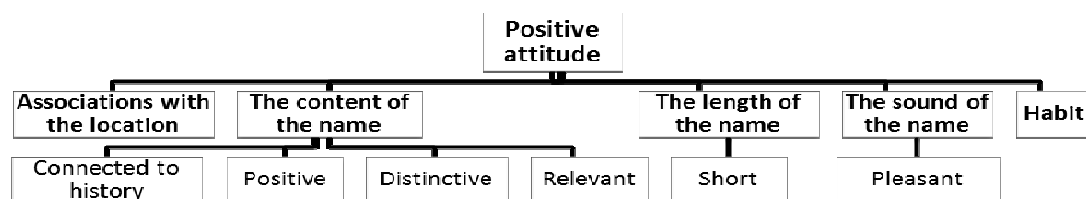
I used both quantitative and qualitative research methods for conducting my study. Most of the data was collected through an anonymous online and paper-based questionnaire where both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used, and additionally qualitative in-depth interviews with members of the three ethnic groups were conducted. The questionnaire consists of 52 questions, of which 21 refer to specific place-names in Oslo. In these 21 questions the informants are asked about whether they know where the place is located and what their attitudes are towards the name of that place. The reason for conducting individual interviews was to go deeper into a number of topics, for example: the importance of having meaningful place-names; attitudes towards possible place-names in Oslo that would reflect a foreign culture; the difficulties connected to differentiating between attitudes towards a place and the name of that place, and many more. In order to get in touch with the ethnic Norwegian target group, I asked 14 personal acquaintances to distribute the link to the online version of the questionnaire among Oslo citizens of various ages and gender. As regards to the two foreign target groups, the questionnaire was distributed online to the members of the Muslim Student Society, The Polish Club in Norway, the Polish-Norwegian news portal *MojaNorwegia*, as well as among the Polish employees of a Norwegian publishing house. In order to achieve a broader contact with the Pakistani community of Oslo, I also distributed a number of paper-based questionnaires in person among the Pakistani employees of an auto repair shop, in the office of Pakistan International Airlines and in a Pakistani leisure club.

I received answers to the questionnaire from 108 inhabitants of Oslo: 47 ethnic Norwegians, 32 people with a Pakistani background and 29 people with a Polish background. Six in-depth interviews (with two members of each target group) were conducted. The informants were younger and better-educated than the population average: 91.5% of the ethnic Norwegian informants, 69% of the informants with a Pakistani background and 82.5% of the informants with a Polish background belong to the age group of 20–39 years, and around 80% of all the informants had received higher education at college or university level. 55% of the informants were women and 45% were men.

## 2. Name preferences among Oslo inhabitants

I will now give an overview of the main factors that influenced the informants' attitudes towards place-names in Oslo. The focus will first of all be on the factors which have led to a positive attitude, but I will use both positive and negative comments to illustrate the various tendencies. Factors that have led to a negative attitude can, in a majority of cases, be defined as opposite to the positive factors. The conclusions in this chapter are based on the informants' evaluation of 21 place-names (cf. chapter 1), 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 the informants would like to have in Oslo. An overview of the main factors that led to a positive reaction to place-names among the informants is presented in fig. 1.

Figure 1. 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 that 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. It is the designating, identifying function which is strongest in place-names with an ambiguous content, and the border between place and name is in such cases more vague. However, in a number of cases in my project 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 a 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*,<sup>1</sup> *St. Olavs gate*, *Leiv Eirikssons 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') and *Abildsø* (from Old Norse *\*Apaldrsvin*, i.e. 'apple tree field'), received a positive evaluation.
- b. *Positive*: names which contain positive words, as well as names that bring about personal positive associations, received a number of positive comments from the informants. For example, such street names as *Sorgenfrigata* 'Sorrowless street' and *Eventyrveien* 'Fairytale road', as well as the name of the district *Sjølyst* 'Sea delight' were pointed out as good names. However, it must be underlined that there were some significant variations on the individual level as to which names were perceived as positive. For example, six informants with a 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 also got good reviews. For instance, many informants had a positive reaction to the name *Bukken Brusens vei* which is a road called after a character from a Norwegian

<sup>1</sup> Here and further for generics of commemorative names: *gate* 'street', *vei* 'road'. The specific elements of commemorative place-names in Norwegian have the genitive ending *-s*.

fairy-tale, and the street name *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*: when a name was perceived to be relevant for the location, it was accepted well by the informants. This is 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), when a name signifies the location of a naming object (e.g. *Tøyengata*, a street in a district called *Tøyen*), and when a name points out the direction of a street (e.g. *Trondheimsveien* which is an old name for the road out of Oslo that used to be the main road northward towards the city of Trondheim).

Another factor that turned out to influence attitudes towards place-names was *the length of the name*. Some of the informants disliked such names as *Arnlfot Gelinnes vei*, *Joachim Nielsens gang* and *Professor Birkelands vei* because they thought these names were too long. To the question about what kind of place-names they would like to have in Oslo if they could decide themselves, two informants answered “short and easy names” (man with a Pakistani background, 26) and “names that are easy to remember” (man with a Pakistani background, 28). It is important to point out that the preference for short names (or, as the examples show, dislike for long names) was found exclusively among informants with a Pakistani background. I believe that this tendency is a marker of a weaker connection to the naming basis: if one has a personal attitude towards the content of a name, then one would not make a point of how many letters the name consists of. An additional factor that could have influenced the preferences for short names among the informants with a Pakistani background is that streets in Pakistan are often numbered or have no names at all (in these cases the location is most likely referred to by the district or a landmark in the vicinity).

One of the reasons why some of the respondents with a Pakistani background showed a preference for short names can be that longer names are often more difficult to remember and pronounce. An additional factor that could have influenced the preferences for short names among these informants is that streets in Pakistan are often numbered or have no names at all (in these cases the location is most likely referred to by the district or a landmark in the vicinity).

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/, another one (woman, 26) liked the name *Ryen* because “it’s funny to pronounce it in Polish”, 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) did not like the name *Holstein* because it sounded German, and a Polish informant (man, 28) criticized the name *Thune* because it did not 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, it turned out that sometimes it is enough that an informant is 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, a well-established name (Norwegian woman, 32); 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).

As we see, sometimes when a place-name is well-established among name users and is perceived by them to be an integral part of their everyday life, the question about a positive or negative attitude towards the name is no longer relevant.

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 a Pakistani background, seen in comparison to the other informants. As noted above, the informants with a 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 a 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 an ethnic Norwegian background showed a stronger connection to the surrounding place-names, and this can be explained by the fact that they associate themselves with the naming basis to a larger degree.

### 3. Unofficial place-names

The use of unofficial place-names can be an expression of the name users' belonging to a certain social group and therefore a stronger identity marker than the use of the official toponyms. Place-names that have appeared not as a result of planned naming by the authorities, or the so-called *top-down flow* (Ben-Rafael et al. 2006: 10), but have come to life among the name users themselves on an unofficial level (*bottom-up flow*), can be defined as an expression of the name users' identity. The use of unofficial place-names can have significant variations between social groups, in contrast to the use of official place-names.

Before I give an overview of the unofficial place-names pointed out by my informants, I would like to underline that the use of a name or a name variant is highly dependent upon whether the informants perceive the discussion context to be official or unofficial. Ainiala (2009: 74) points out that there is a significant possibility that informants generally perceive filling out a questionnaire or participating in an interview as an official situation, and therefore it is likely that they use more official place-names than they would normally use in less official situations. There are also a number of other factors, such as complexity, intensity and time pressure, that can influence the informants' memory (Andersen 2006). Finally it must be noted that many of the informants with a Pakistani or Polish background responded to the question about unofficial place-names in a language other than their mother tongue. This played without doubt a significant role in the results of the survey: unofficial toponyms can often be used unconsciously because they are connected to a play on words or sounds in the name user's mother tongue.

The ways of creating unofficial names for places in Oslo that were mentioned by the informants from all the three ethnic groups can be categorized into *abbreviation*, *pronunciation* and *description/association*. Unofficial toponyms that have been created by

abbreviating the official name or changing its pronunciation are secondary names, while toponyms that are descriptive or based on an association are primary names (Ainiala 2005: 17).

The largest part of unofficial place-names that were mentioned were created through *abbreviation*. Such names are derived from an official name that consists of two or more parts: one part is omitted while sometimes an ending is added. For example, *Grünerløkka* becomes *Løkka*, *Uranienborgparken* becomes *Urraparken* and *Majorstuen* is simply referred to as *Maja*. It is first and foremost names of well-known locations that are shortened. This can be explained as a natural consequence of frequent use of longer names of places which a significant part of the citizens regularly visit or refer to. Riina Eskelinen (2009: 354) writes the following in connection to the different functions of toponyms: “One reason for creating new (unofficial) place-names is to facilitate our usage of names”. This seems to be the case with shortening frequently used place-names in Oslo. According to my findings this kind of names are more in use among ethnic Norwegians and people with a Polish background than among people with a Pakistani background.

Basing the unofficial name variant on a different *pronunciation* was most of all pointed out by the informants with a Pakistani background. These informants pointed out fewer unofficial names but mentioned that they use the official Norwegian names pronounced in a different way. This is mostly relevant for place-names in those areas of Oslo where the Pakistani population is most concentrated. Typical examples of this phenomenon are the names of two districts in the city center that have some of the largest groups of immigrant population in Oslo: *Grønland* /grønlan/ becomes /grunlan/, /grunland/ or /grunlænd/ and *Tøyen* /tøyen/ becomes /tuien/. This does not necessarily mean that the inhabitants with a Pakistani background are unable to pronounce these names correctly – pronouncing them in their own way functions as a special code to indicate their belonging to a certain group. The use of such unofficial names can therefore tell us about the name users’ identity. Both first and second generation people with a Pakistani background are considered to be relatively well integrated (Henriksen 2007: 50). People with a Pakistani background who live in Norway also speak Norwegian quite well, though often with a distinct accent (this is especially the case with first generation Pakistani immigrants). The fact that a number of the informants with a Pakistani background pointed out different pronunciation as an example of unofficial names shows that the people in this ethnic group are well-aware of the differences in their pronunciation, and that they perceive this as one of the factors which shows their affinity to a specific group. To what degree a different pronunciation of a toponym can be classified as an unofficial name can without doubt be subject to further discussion. Nevertheless I believe that the fact that the informants themselves pointed out a different pronunciation as unofficial is enough proof that a name pronounced in another way is perceived to be different from the official name. It is also an interesting tendency that some ethnic Norwegian Oslo-dwellers, especially the ones that live in the districts with a significant percentage of immigrant population, pronounce the same place-names in a so-called ‘immigrant manner’, ‘just for the fun of it’. I believe that this among other things has to do with a certain ironizing, and that the opposition ‘we – they’ is expressed by means of the pronunciation.

When it comes to unofficial toponyms that are based on a *description* or *association* (e.g. *Muslim City*, *Somalia* or *Pakistan* for the district of *Grønland*), it can be difficult to draw any certain conclusions. From my material it is not possible to conclude whether the specific names that belong to this group are used by many inhabitants or only in the individual name users’ family and friends circle. None of the unofficial names created through description or association were pointed out by informants from all three ethnic groups.

Finally I would like to point out that when answering the question about unofficial place-names in Oslo, two Polish informants emphasized that they use the official Norwegian place-

names but change them according to the grammatical laws of Polish. For example, they put the names in various cases and thus add an ending to the name: *på* ‘at’ *Majorstuen* becomes *na Majorstuenie*, *på Grønland* becomes *na Grønlandzie* and so on. However, these examples only illustrate a foreign pronunciation of official Norwegian names and are therefore not classified as unofficial name variants.

#### 4. Place-names from foreign cultures

As already mentioned, Oslo has during the last decades developed from a more or less 100% ethnic Norwegian to a truly multicultural city. There are many districts in Oslo where different cultures and languages co-exist on various levels. 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? In this chapter I will discuss these topics and give an overview of my informants’ attitudes towards the issue.

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 will first be reflected in 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), and in this case the name users do not identify themselves with the immigrant groups that live in these areas. 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.

One of the place-names in Oslo that I asked the informants to evaluate is *Rubina Ranas gate*. Rubina Rana was the first person with a non-Western (Pakistani) background to chair the committee of Norway’s national day in Oslo in 1999 and the first non-Western immigrant who had a street named after her (in 2006). By adding this place-name to the questionnaire and asking about possible immigrant place-names in future in 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 Pakistani society, and not the Polish one, since immigration from Poland is 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 called after – there was only one informant (surprisingly enough, with a Pakistani background) that expressed discontent regarding the name of a non-Western immigrant on an official street sign in Oslo. Some of the Pakistani informants had known Rubina Rana personally. Three informants from the younger generation with a 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 a 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 it 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 ‘deserve’ it, and in such cases ethnic background is not such an important issue. This tendency was also confirmed by the attitudes expressed towards the name *Rubina Ranas gate*. 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 might decide to move there. This is a clear expression of toponymic identity.

Generally there were very few wishes expressed among the informants for more place-names reflecting immigrant culture. Only one of the informants with a Pakistani background mentioned that it would be good to have such names in Oslo as *Kharian gate*, *Gujrat gate*, called 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. From what I have concluded from the questionnaire and the interviews, the general tendency regarding this issue could be formulated in the following manner: although the one name reflecting immigrant culture that already exists in Oslo is warmly welcomed, most of the informants with a Pakistani background do not necessarily wish to push names that would reflect their culture on places in Oslo. This is part of a more general wish to be better integrated into local society, rather than to influence it. Thus I conclude that creating new place-names which reflect the non-Norwegian communities of Oslo is not a high-priority issue for the city’s inhabitants.

I would like to point out that since we are talking about an originally 100% 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 there is a certain ‘risk’ connected to calling a place after something or someone from a culture other than the original local one: with time the representatives of this culture may move to another area and leave behind them the names that then stop being descriptive of the location.

## 5. Differences in the perception of place-names in Oslo among the three ethnic groups

In this chapter I will give a short overview of the differences in the perception of place-names which exist among ethnic Norwegians and among people with an immigrant background.

As already pointed out in chapter 2, the differences in the perception of place-names were mostly found among the informants with a Pakistani background when compared to the other two target groups. It turned out that a long time of residence in Oslo does not necessarily lead to a better knowledge of and a stronger connection to the place-names in the city. This conclusion can be drawn from the answers of the informants with a Pakistani background, 90% of whom had been living in Oslo for over 10 years. Compared to the informants with ethnic Norwegian and Polish backgrounds, they showed a weaker interest in place-names in their home district and less knowledge of naming basis. They experienced most difficulties in differentiating between their attitudes towards the place and their attitudes towards the name of that place, and were the only group who criticized the length of the names. Since they showed a weaker interest in and connection to place-names, it can be concluded that they have a weaker toponymic identity when it comes to place-names in Oslo.

The ethnic Norwegian informants wrote longer and more detailed answers, as well as giving a general impression of being more interested in the place-names around them. They looked at the naming of places in Oslo as one of many expressions of society. Others who



gave somewhat similar answers were some of the informants from the younger generation with a Pakistani background. Together with the ethnic Norwegians they seemed to have a more personal connection to the toponyms and treat them more as ‘their own’ names. I think that this tendency can be illustrative of the fact that the second generation of Pakistani immigrants is relatively well integrated into the local society.

There were fewer differences in the perception of place-names by the ethnic Norwegian informants and the informants with a Polish background. This is in spite of the fact that the research among the Polish population of Oslo was conducted mostly among people who had arrived in the city not longer than 5 years earlier (71% of all the Polish informants). The weaker toponymic identity among the Polish informants does not come as a surprise, taking into account their short time of residence in Oslo and, in many cases, insufficient knowledge of Norwegian. However, a couple of informants with a Polish background who had been living in Oslo for a longer period of time showed more interest in the local place-names and a more personal connection to them.

My general impression is that the Polish informants had developed a personal attitude towards place-names in Oslo in less time than the informants with a Pakistani background. I assume that this is connected to the fact that in spite of a long time of residence in Oslo and generally in Norway, most people with a Pakistani background preserve a stronger connection to their original society, culture and values. Immigrants from Poland, on the other hand (at least those who have lived in Norway for longer than a couple of years), become integrated into Norwegian society faster. Nevertheless it must be underlined that the selection of the informants in my project is not representative for the whole population and therefore I will not draw any definite conclusions. From all the possible variables, I have concentrated my research on the informants’ ethnic background and their years of residence in Oslo, and it is possible that a classification based on other variables could have given different results. I believe that a larger investigation is required where such variables as education level, age and the mother tongue(s) of the informants would also be taken into account.

## 6. Conclusion

My research has shown that differences do exist in how ethnic Norwegians, people with a Pakistani background and people with a Polish background perceive place-names in Oslo. It is both the ethnic background and the years of residence in Oslo that have determined the inhabitants’ attitudes towards the place-names in the city and their knowledge of these names. There were a number of factors which appeared to influence the name users’ attitudes towards place-names in Oslo. These factors were connected both to the features of the names themselves (the content, length and sound of the names) and to external factors, such as associations the name users have with the location the name refers to, and the habit of using a name. As for the use of unofficial toponyms, the name variants pointed out by the informants were either secondary names created through abbreviation or different pronunciation of the official name, or they were primary descriptive names. Creating place-names in the multicultural Oslo which would reflect immigrant culture was not pointed out as an important issue by the informants.

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