

NARRATIVES OF 'US' AND 'THEM' AND URBAN TRANSFORMATIONS IN OSLO

Abstract

This paper discusses the increasing attractiveness of inner-city areas of eastern Oslo as residential areas for middle-class members of the majority population. In previous research, affordability and the preference for urban lifestyles were regarded as the predominant factors explaining such urban transformations. The present paper shows that it is also necessary to look more closely at the impacts of ethnic identification and categorisation on the attractiveness of neighbourhoods. It is argued that the increase in the affluent members of the majority population in this part of the city can be linked to the emerging perception of these areas as becoming 'less dominated' by ethnic minority populations (more 'mixed').

Keywords

Urban transformation • residential segregation • perception of place(s) • ethnic identification and categorisation

Astrid O. Sundsbø*

University of Bergen, Norway; Humboldt-Universität Berlin, Germany; Universität Hamburg, Germany

Received 5 January 2015; Accepted 28 December 2015

Introduction

Since the recruitment of so-called guest workers from the 1970s onwards, the central eastern areas of Oslo have been populated by a relatively high proportion of ethnic minority populations of working-class background¹ (see Statistisk Sentralbyrå 2002; Turner & Wessel 2013: 3), and have not been considered as particularly attractive residential areas among middle-class members of the majority population² (Kjeldstadli and Myhre 1995; Andersen 2014). Over the last decades, however, these areas have become increasingly attractive (see Aspen 2005; Statistisk Sentralbyrå 2006; Haslum 2008; Huse, Sæter & Aniksdal 2010; Huse 2014), which has led to extensive changes both in the physical structure and social environment (for a similar analysis of Berlin, see Häußermann & Kapphan 2002; Holm 2006; see also White 2008 for London, and for an overview of studies from other contexts, see van Kempen & Özüekren 1998; Musterd 2005). When seeking to explain these transformation processes, much of the research has discussed a number of factors as relevant, such as the retreat of traditional industries, liberalisation of housing markets, the emergence of new service markets and economies engaging highly skilled people, as well as a growing preference for urban lifestyles (see e.g. Wessel 1997; Brevik, Halvorsen & Pløger 1998; Aspen 2005). The recent changes in the inner city of Oslo have also been linked to the phenomenon referred to as 'gentrification' (Solgaard 2004; Sæter & Ruud 2005; Hill 2012; Huse 2014) – the increasing demand for inner-

city dwellings changing the social composition of the inhabitants from lower to higher status groups (Hjorthol & Bjørnskau 2005: 353).

This article highlights a further aspect that might be important for understanding the increasing attractiveness of central areas of eastern Oslo and the social changes thereof. The decrease in the proportion of ethnic minority residents (Statistisk Sentralbyrå 2002, 2006) is perceived as a positive development among local politicians and policy-makers alike (see Ruud 2005; Sæter 2005; Sæter and Ruud 2005). Since the late 1970s, politicians from across the political spectrum have expressed the need to attract 'people of a higher housing standard' to the inner-east districts, arguing that this, referred to as 'social mix', will serve to 'lift' areas with poor living conditions (ibid; Huse 2014). The question to be addressed in this paper is whether the perception of inner-city districts of Oslo as becoming 'less dominated' by ethnic minority populations might be an important factor when explaining the increased attractiveness of these areas.

Theoretical framework

To address this question, I focus on the impact of 'ethnic identification' and 'ethnic categorisation' (see Jenkins 1994, 2008) on neighbourhood and housing preferences among majority population members. It should be noted that 'ethnicity' is seen as relationally constructed; its meaning unfolding in social interaction. 'Ethnic

* E-mail: astrid.sundsbo@uni.no

identification' is hence taken to mean a social process by which a person considers another individual or a group to be similar or identical to him or herself, whereas 'ethnic categorisation' refers to a process by which an individual or a group is construed as different in a negative sense (Tajfel and Turner 1986; see also Hall 1988; Lamont and Molnár 2002). This research approach is informed by international studies that address the question of the impact of ethnic identification and categorisation on residential segregation, such as in the U.S. (Clark 1992; Iceland, Sharpe and Steinmetz 2005; Krysan et al. 2009), the Netherlands (Feijten and van Ham 2009; Bouma-Doff 2007) and Sweden (Aldén, Hammarstedt & Neuman 2014; BråmÅ 2006). These studies indicate an interplay of positive identification (sense of belonging) and negative categorisation (e.g. racism), and the occurrence of ethnic segregation. Accordingly, the present study discusses whether the occurrence of ethnic segregation in Oslo (see Statistisk Sentralbyrå 2006) can be linked to — or interpreted — as an expression of similar social processes.

In urban sociological theory, social identification with people in one's home environment is considered to be an important factor when explaining neighbourhood preferences and choices, which in turn is seen as an important factor for urban segregation and transformation (for an overview, see Häußermann and Siebel 2004; Sundsbø 2014). A number of studies demonstrate that people tend to prefer neighbourhoods where they feel secure and have a sense of community (Bourdieu 1991; Sennett 1971; see also Schroer 2005: 246). For instance, Bourdieu (1991: 32) considers the aspiration for social homogeneity to be a strong driver of social segregation processes (see also Häußermann and Siebel 2004: 159). This suggests that it is not only factors such as affordability, centrality and the structure and size of buildings and housing units that should be taken into account when studying neighbourhood preferences, but also feelings of social belonging (Wessel 1997; Hansen and Brattbakk 2005; Häußermann and Siebel 2004) in conjunction with negative processes of 'othering'.

Several studies within the field of migration and ethnic relations point to oppositional dynamics by which ethnic minority populations are culturalised and rendered subordinate to members of the majority population (see e.g. Gullestad 2002; Gressgård 2005). Some studies have found that the perception of 'immigrants'³ as being different or more inclined towards criminality than are ethnic Norwegians is widely distributed in the population (see e.g. Statistisk Sentralbyrå 2007; Johansen et al. 2013; Ytrehus 2001). The latter might result in what is sometimes designated as a 'white avoidance' and serve to explain (among other factors) processes of ethnic segregation. Such findings have been largely overlooked by studies seeking to explain the occurrence of ethnic segregation in Oslo (see e.g. Turner and Wessel 2013: 13; for further discussion and references, see also Sundsbø 2014: 17–23). However, there are a few studies (Andersen 2014; Vassenden 2008; Hewitt 2013 and Melbye 2014) that focus attention on factors that signify ethnic identification and categorisation in the urban context of Oslo. These studies indicate that members of the majority population prefer to live in areas without 'too many immigrants', which is to say that they prefer living in areas that are inhabited predominantly by those *perceived* as 'ethnic Norwegians' (Andersen 2014; Vassenden 2008; see also Hewitt 2013; Melbye 2014). The research presented in this paper was conducted in order to strengthen the connection between these acknowledgements and the research on residential segregation, by exploring the perception of places and their inhabitants and their potential of determining neighbourhood preferences and choices.

Methods and analytical approach

The research interest is to study collective patterns of understanding and interactions, such as social identification, perceptions of space and neighbourhood preferences. For this reason, the data collection for the present study is based on qualitative, semi-structured group discussions (Bohnsack et al. 2010)⁴. I chose young urban childless majority adults (aged 25 to 35) with a higher education qualification (at least a university bachelor degree) as the target group for this study⁵. This is due to the assumption that such individuals have sufficient economic resources to make choices in the housing market, and are likely to have an interest in living in the (changing) inner-city areas of Oslo (Turner and Wessel 2013: 12). Additionally, given their educational background and age range, the members of the target group are likely to have some experience of making housing choices. According to the annual national survey conducted by Statistics Norway, it is a group that are generally 'more tolerant' than other populations towards diversity in general, and cultural diversity in particular (see e.g. Statistisk Sentralbyrå 2007).

This case study from Oslo comprised six group discussions, each set up by an individual recruited through snowball sampling from within the researcher's personal and professional networks. In all cases, this individual (who also met the inclusion criteria and was previously unknown to the researcher) was asked to arrange a meeting involving themselves, the researcher and four individuals from their own networks who met the inclusion criteria. Most of the discussions took place in a café selected by the participants.⁶

The total number of participants was 23 (17 women, 6 men)^{7, 8}. The majority (15 of 23) lived in central East Oslo (nine in Grünerløkka, four in Gamle Oslo and two in Sagene), whereas eight lived in the western part of Oslo (four in St. Hanshaugen, three in Frogner and one in Nordre Aker). Six participants were lifelong residents of Oslo, whereas the remainder had relocated there during different periods: two during 1995–1998; eleven during 1999–2002; and four during 2003–2006. Participants' per capita monthly net income was between 16,000 and 25,000 NOK (approximately between 2000 and 3000 Euros)⁹.

Before starting the discussion, the participants were informed about the general aims of the study, concerning urban residents' perspectives on: what is important when seeking and deciding upon where to live in a city; exploring the impact of identification (the feeling of sameness/commonality with neighbours) in those processes; and (without further elaboration) whether the recent changes in the inner-city areas of Oslo affected their neighbourhood preferences or housing choices, and if so, in which way and why. From this point on, the group discussions started with the researcher posing a very general question to the group in order to establish an atmosphere of sharing views, thereby allowing the researcher to retire from the assigned role as the dominant person in the conversation (Kruse 2008; Helfferich 2005). The warm-up phase lasted 10–15 minutes. Subsequently, the participants were asked to describe and evaluate some of the different parts of the city. The participants were given hand-outs containing a map, a list of the different urban areas (according to the 1988–2004 municipality structure) and were asked to spend some minutes to individually select five of the areas they spontaneously felt that they could describe and discuss, and to make some notes in preparation for the discussion. They were then asked to share their selected areas and associated reflections with the rest of the group, which led to a self-perpetuating discussion. When the discussions were coming to an end, the participants were given a new task using the same procedure: they were asked to

spend some time thinking and reflecting (first individually) upon the areas of the city in which they could envisage living or would prefer to live in; which areas they would not and to note their reasons. Again, participants were asked to share and discuss their positions and reflections with the group. In this discussion of (potential) neighbourhood preferences, as well as in the previous discussion of how to describe the selected urban areas, the groups discussed without much instruction or intervention from the researcher as an interviewer. In some cases, the researcher merely asked for more details on the claims made (e.g. 'What do you mean by that?'). These two tasks represented the heart of the group discussions and lasted for about 30 minutes, thus making up around half the total duration of the group discussions (60–70 minutes). Following these open discussions, more direct questions were posed, in order to ensure that the data collected would be appropriate to address the research question (Strauss & Corbin 1990).

The analysis focuses on three interrelated questions, which reflect the theoretical framework outlined above.¹⁰ The first question is whether the urban residents from the selected group express perceptions of 'us' and 'them' along ethnic lines. This question addresses the relevance of 'ethnic identification' and 'ethnic categorisation' (Jenkins 1994, 2008; see also Lamont and Molnár 2002) in the urban context of Oslo. The second question is whether the different areas of the city are perceived and described through the use of ethnic labels, and if so, whether this attribution is associated with a lower or higher attractiveness of the area. The third question is whether the respondents consider ethnic identification to be important for their neighbourhood preferences. As pointed out above, some international studies suggest that neighbourhood preferences and choices made by members of the majority population might involve ethnic identification, closely related to the assumption that urban residents in general prefer to live in areas dominated by people similar to themselves (Schroer 2005: 246; see also Bourdieu 1991; Sennett 1971).

Neighbourhood preferences, ethnic identification and categorisation

Some inner-city districts, such as Grünerløkka, Tøyen and Grønland, were by the participants taken to be characterised by 'many immigrants'. When asked to be more explicit about the people they referred to as 'immigrants', the response in all of the groups was that 'immigrants' are people who 'do not look like ethnic Norwegians' (some considered immigrants to be 'people who don't have a white skin color', or 'dark people'), it was also mentioned that 'immigrants' were people who 'behave differently' than 'Norwegians'.

Some participants described the presence of 'immigrants' in the city in positive terms, mentioning access to cheaper and more exotic food and the willingness of 'immigrants' to take jobs that were unattractive to Norwegians. Others stated that there is nothing positive to say about 'immigrants'. For instance, during a discussion about the Grønland district and just after it had been defined as a place where 'many immigrants' lived, the participants were asked whether there were anything else one could say to describe this area. One participant responded to this by saying: 'Well, probably there are some nice things there also'. In another group discussion, one participant said that the presence of 'Africans' makes her feel a bit scared. Many associated 'immigrants' with crime, and some claimed that many 'immigrants', especially 'Somalis', refuse to 'integrate' or to adapt to Norwegian norms and values. There was also considerable

discussion about 'immigrants' problematic understanding of women's role and value.

Although Grünerløkka, Grønland and Tøyen were all characterised as 'immigrant areas', they were seen as slightly different from one another. Grünerløkka was by some depicted as a 'former immigrant area' that had now become more 'hip' and 'trendy', populated mainly by 'Norwegians' or 'whites'. One participant explained that she moved to Grünerløkka because she feels comfortable among the people who live there, describing the local inhabitants as creative, not extremely rich, rather alternative, around the same age as herself, and as reflecting her values (more or less). Because of this composition of residents, she summed up that she feels 'extremely comfortable' in this area. And then she added that 'a great deal of the people there are white'. Similarly, other participants stated that they preferred to live among people with the 'same ethnic background' because it creates a sense of security and familiarity, in contrast to 'immigrants', who are perceived as "threatening" and/or 'different'. Tøyen was by some described as an area of the city 'where the clash of cultures becomes particularly evident', whereas others described Tøyen as a 'traditional immigrant area' that was about to change, as an increasing number of 'ethnic Norwegians' had started to move in and the share of 'immigrants' had decreased. Grønland was taken to be the most persistent inner-city 'immigrant area' among the participants, but they highlighted that also here things had started to change lately, as 'Norwegians' had move in.

Akin to how 'immigrants' are ambivalently associated with positive as well as negative attributes, the label 'many immigrants' was considered to have both positive and negative effects on an area's attractiveness. One participant stated that Grønland reminds her of Africa, emphasising the positive qualities that she associated with a multicultural neighbourhood: Grønland has residents of many nationalities; the neighbourhood is lively/vibrant; and people readily greet one another. Another participant stated that she likes Grønland and Tøyen because of the contrasts that characterise these areas — the kebab shops and the 'dark men' sitting in front of the cafés versus the 'hip locations' visited by 'Norwegians'. However, even if what she describes as 'dark men' and kebab shops are taken to be positive characteristics in this context, it becomes clear that they are considered as positive only to the extent that they constitute a contrast to what is perceived as 'Norwegian'.

Overall, the urban districts designated as 'immigrant areas' were negatively evaluated by the participants, associated with insecurity, crime, social problems and failed integration. The negative impact of the category 'immigrants' on the evaluation of urban areas becomes particularly clear when areas where 'many' 'immigrants' live are designated as 'ghettos'. On the maps where participants indicated where they could/could not envisage living, Grønland was often marked with an 'n' ('never'). The reasons they gave were either directly or indirectly linked to perceptions of 'too many immigrants' in the neighbourhood. One participant expressed that she does not feel safe there, referring to 'gangs' hanging around in the evenings. When asked for clarification, she responded that these feelings were triggered by the many people there (from the context, it is obvious that she refers to 'immigrant' men). She further explained that she had not experienced any negative incident; nevertheless, she felt threatened even to pass these groups, and so she had decided to avoid the entire area. Another participant claimed to feel insecure because the area is, as he expressed it, 'dominated by certain kinds of people who are disproportionately involved in crime'.

Another reason given for not wanting to live in Grønland or in other urban districts characterised as 'immigrant areas' was the lack

of 'identity' with the area and the people who live there. For instance, some participants agreed that the 'lower' part of Grünerløkka is not attractive as a housing area because of the 'many immigrants' who live there, and that this place has a specific kind of atmosphere with which they cannot identify. Another participant explained that the presence of 'many immigrants' in an area makes it unattractive: 'I would never want to live in Grønland. I don't know why exactly. Maybe it is because there are so many immigrants there'.¹¹

Several of those who refused to live in the areas designated as 'immigrant areas' expressed a preference for areas that were described as 'more mixed'. These were areas where 'immigrants' were 'visible', though not dominating. For instance, one participant explained that the lack of diversity is the main reason why she decided to move from Majorstuen (perceived as 'typically Norwegian') to Sandaker. To her, Sandaker is preferable because of its mix of different groups: 'There are many people here who are in exactly the same situation as we are; young couples around thirty years old. But there are also different people here. Some immigrants, and...well, kind of everything. Academics and non-academics, side by side. That was exactly an area in which I wanted to live.'

In contrast to those who do not consider 'immigrant areas' as potential residential areas, a third group of participants responded that they would like to live in 'immigrant areas', however for various reasons. To some, the assumed foreignness of the areas was a motivation for wanting to live there. One participant explained that she feels more at home in an 'international setting' than in a 'typical Norwegian setting'. Another participant described that when she initially moved to Oslo and settled in Grønland, she found it strange and rather uncomfortable that there were 'only immigrants' around, but this is no longer an issue, so she still lives in the area. Another motivational factor that was mentioned by participants who included 'immigrant areas' in their potential or preferred neighbourhoods, is the observation that these areas are becoming increasingly attractive to members of the majority population. From this point of view, it is the prospect of a declining proportion of 'immigrants' that makes the inner-city districts attractive as (potential) neighbourhoods. Some participants also mentioned that many 'Norwegians' have come to recognise the economic incentives to invest and settle in 'immigrant areas', as housing prices there remain comparatively low. However, it becomes evident that 'ethnic identification' matters a great deal to many of the participants.

Although none of the participants explicitly refused to live with an 'immigrant' neighbour, many expressed scepticism towards neighbours who they categorised as 'immigrants'. For instance, one participant mentioned her experiences as a social worker. During visits to her clients' homes, she explained, garbage was lying around in and around the buildings where 'many immigrants' lived, and she therefore did not want to live in a building with 'many immigrants'. A similar rhetoric was used by another participant, who mentioned her experience of living in an apartment building in Tøyen for two years, claiming that 'immigrants' leave garbage everywhere. She came up with a cultural explanation for this, arguing that people from other countries do not care about — or are simply unaccustomed to — dealing with garbage in an appropriate manner. Another participant adhered to the stereotypical view that 'immigrants' have many children, whom they allow to play outside, making noise throughout the day and night. Other participants expressed their scepticism towards 'immigrant' neighbours in a circuitous manner. For instance, a participant expressed that he would not be very 'pleased' 'if all of his neighbours' were 'immigrants'. He adds: 'I think one must be honest and admit that'. In another group discussion, when asked about the

most important aspects when looking for a place to live, a participant stated that she would pay attention to the (assumed) social identity and biographical history of the people in the house, and only would choose to live there, if the composition seemed 'well balanced'. 'Of course, only immigrants, that would make me sceptical', she explained. It would be preferable, another participant stated, if 'immigrants' were more widely distributed, because 'nobody' (which means no 'Norwegians') wants to 'live alone' with 'immigrants'.

'Immigrants' as the undesirable 'others'

Based on the findings of this study, it could be argued that members of the middle-class majority population make use of both ethnic identification and categorisation when they describe urban places and their inhabitants. Although there are differences between how they describe and evaluate 'immigrants', there is no critical reflection on the stereotypes and perceptions of 'immigrants' as 'others', only a variation in the degree to which they could appreciate the 'foreignness' of 'immigrants'. The material also highlights how the issue of social class is present but nevertheless overlooked in the experience of difference. Cultural and racialised differences at the fore, feeding into narratives of 'us' versus 'them'. The data material also indicates that the urban context and the situations in which encounters take place ('casual contact situations' — pass by, shopping, etc.) might reaffirm the prevalent perceptions of 'immigrants' as (threatening) 'others' (Wagner et al. 2006; see also Liggett 2003). Several of the informant claims about 'immigrants' could be seen as examples of 'ethnification' or 'culturalisation' (Eriksen 1996: 62). These terms describe the (false) perception of, for instance, behaviour, norms and values as being quasi-inherited and common to all members of a particular (ethnic) group. One dimension in this is the act of declaring social problems as 'ethnic' or 'cultural' issues (ibid.).

The perceptions of 'immigrants' expressed during the group discussions resemble the public understanding of 'immigrants' as identified in studies of 'immigrant discourses' (Gressgård 2005; Gullestad 2002; Vassenden 2007; Ytrehus 2001). Media representations as well as policy and popular discourses serve to link 'immigrants' (particularly 'non-Western immigrants') to crime (Fossen 2002; Johansen et al. 2013), underpinned by media reports that equate high immigrant populations with a 'ghetto' (Sæter 2005: 156; Vassenden 2007: 8f.; see also Akerhaug 2012). Even though this study does not include analysis of public debates, there seems to be a mutual relationship between local identities, practices and experiences on one hand, and negative representations of immigration, integration and ethnicity in public debates on the other (Huse 2014).

This seems also to be true of the more positive emphasis of 'social mixing' that dominate public debates, including policy discourses (Akerhaug 2012; Gakkestad 2003). A 'mixture', or 'balance' of immigrants and non-immigrants, is presented as the best strategy to prevent social isolation and criminal activity (for critical comments on this from the academic debate, see for instance Lees 2008). Yet, as many migration and urban scholars have pointed out, the underlying assumption — that a mix of groups in an area improves contact between them; and further, that desegregation facilitates social cohesion and the integration of immigrants, is highly questionable (see e.g. ibid.).

The issue of 'socially mixed' neighborhoods, which implies a mix of both culture and socio-economic status, is a manifested major urban policy and planning goals (Huse et al. 2010; Sæter and Ruud

2005). This view seems to be reflected in the data material. We have seen that many participants conceive of 'mixture' or a 'balance' of minority and majority populations as a quality that adds to a district's attractiveness.

However, the most dominant view among the participants in this study is that a predominance of 'immigrants' within a single house or a neighbourhood is undesirable. The findings indicate that the preference for (some) 'ethnic Norwegian' neighbours might have less to do with ethnic identification and more to do with ethnic categorisation pertaining to the perception of 'immigrants' as a certain (problematic) kind of 'others'. The key argument for this interpretation is that the participants hardly talked about their preference for members of their own group ('us'), but stressed the problems that they associated with (too many) 'immigrants' gathered in one place. In other words, when respondents expressed a preference for 'other Norwegians' around them, they presented this as a strategy for avoiding 'uncomfyness', insecurity or even threat, as personified by 'immigrants'.

The categorisation of 'immigrants' as 'others' involve a racialisation and culturalisation of specific urban populations. Within this discursive framework, immigrants (particularly those from 'non-Western' countries) are imagined as having certain cultural attributes that are distinct from those of 'majority population members'. This, in turn, seems to invoke a dichotomy of 'good' and 'bad' characteristics (Eriksen 1996: 51). Whereas 'good' characteristics include socio-economic power and 'Western norms and values', 'bad' characteristics include poverty and 'non-Western norms and values'.

Conclusion

The study indicates that the decline in the proportion of 'non-Western immigrants' in inner-city districts of Oslo is evaluated as 'a good thing' by middle-class members of the majority population and that a 'high' concentration of 'immigrants' is seen as something negative per se, either on a larger (urban areas) or a smaller (house, street, etc.) scale.

According to urban sociological theory, social identification with people in one's home environment is considered to be an important factor when explaining neighbourhood preferences and choices, which in turn is seen as an important factor for urban segregation and transformation. From the empirical material collected in this study, both positive 'ethnic identification' in terms of feelings of social belonging and negative 'ethnic categorisation' seem to be relevant factors when explaining neighbourhood preferences and perceived attractiveness. Although both process of identification and categorisation play important roles when the participants describe urban places and their inhabitants, the study suggests that especially 'ethnic categorisation' – pertaining to a scepticism towards/ fear of 'immigrants' as 'others' – is vital to the preference/ choice of neighbourhood made by affluent members of the majority population.

Based on my findings, I argue that the perceived increase in 'ethnic Norwegians' in central East Oslo could represent one factor (among others) that makes this area increasingly attractive to members of the ethnic majority population and hence a part of the explanation for the urban transformation processes in the inner-city eastern parts of Oslo. However, there is undoubtedly a need for further inquiry into the issues raised here. Based on existing research, it is not possible to estimate the influence of ethnic identification and categorisation on the (transformation of) social structures in Oslo. As of yet, there has been no comprehensive and systematic study of possible correlations between the occurrence of ethnic segregation,

ethnic categorisation and neighbourhood preferences among majority population members.

Nevertheless, the findings suggest that the influence of ethnic identification and categorisation is more relevant than currently assumed. There appears to be no reason to play down the potential significance of perceived ethnic differences in guiding neighbourhood preferences, given the findings of previous research into contemporary (inter-)ethnic relations in Norway; and the stated lack of comprehensive studies specific to Oslo, concerning the role of ethnic identification and categorisation in the transformation of inner-city areas of eastern Oslo.

Astrid Ouahyb Sundsbø (Ph.D.) is a postdoctoral researcher at Uni Research Rokkansenteret, and is affiliated with the research unit International Migration and Ethnic Relations (IMER), University of Bergen; Georg-Simmel Center for Metropolitan Studies, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin; and The Center for a Sustainable University, Universität Hamburg. Her research interests include social inequality, urban segregation, and migration and ethnicity. Her recent publications include: *Grenzbeziehungen in der Stadt. Ethnische Kategorien und die Wahrnehmung und Bewertung von Wohnorten* (Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien, 2014) and *Warum benachteiligt schulische Segregation die „Bildungsfernen“?* (In: *Brennpunkt(-) Schule*, Opladen, Berlin & Toronto: Verlag Barbara Budrich, 2015).

Notes

1. The term "non-Western immigrants" was previously used by Statistics Norway (SSB) as the status assigned to persons with at least one parent born in a "non-western country" (see Statistisk Sentralbyrå 2002). Statistics Norway now refers to the "continent of origin" (i.e., Asia or Africa) in cases where it is considered relevant.
2. Members of the majority population refers here to residents whose parents were both born in Norway.
3. In the following, the marking "immigrants" (with "") refers to the usage of the word in the context of a social categorization (and not the statistical categorization based on parents'/own place of birth).
4. The interviews were conducted between autumn 2008 and spring 2009.
5. In this paper, I refer to this group as "middle class". This is based on their high level of formal education and relatively well-paid jobs.
6. In order to create an atmosphere for the group discussion that appeared rather normal or familiar to the participants (see Kruse 2008; Kruse 2008).
7. The unequal representation of men and women in the sample was unintended.
8. The methodological approach chosen and the data collected here do not enable a reconstruction of housing biographies, nor do they provide a systematic inquiry on actual impact factors on housing preferences/choices. The following information is provided in order to contextualise and understand the claims made in the discussions.
9. Only one participant reported an income less than 10.000 NOK per month (net).
10. This focus was applied both in preparing the questions for the interviews and in analyzing the produced material (see the cycle described by Strauss and Corbin 2008). The analysis of

the collected data (complete transcripts of the audio-recorded group discussions) is informed by grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin 2008; see also Bryant and Charmaz 2007). In order to systemise the material, the various coding steps described in that approach (open, axial, and selective coding) were applied (ibid.; Mey and Mruck 2010). I used the tool MAXQDA 10 to systematise the data in relation to the codes.

11. This statement was made as a response to the question whether the preference for Grünerløkka instead of Grønland could have something to do with different proportions of immigrants in these areas.

References

- Akerhaug, L 2012, '47 prosent innvandrere i Oslo i 2040: Advarer om ghettotilstander', *VG-Nett* 14 March. Available from: <http://www.vg.no>. [23 November 2015]
- Aldén, L, Hammarstedt, M & Neuman, E 2014, 'Ethnic Segregation, Tipping Behavior, and Native Residential Mobility', *International Migration Review*, vol. 49, no. 1, pp. 36–69, DOI: 10.1111/imre.12066.
- Allport, GW 1954, *The nature of prejudice*, Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., Cambridge Mass.
- Andersen, B 2014, *Westbound and Eastbound. Managing Sameness and the Making of Separations in Oslo*. Ph.D thesis, University of Oslo.
- Aspen, J (ed.) 2005, *By og byliv i endring. Studier av byrom og handlingsrom i Oslo*, Spartacus, Oslo.
- Bohnsack, R, Przyborski, A & Schäffer, B (eds.) 2010, *Das Gruppendiskussionsverfahren in der Forschungspraxis*, Budrich, Opladen.
- Bouma-Doff, WvdL 2007, 'Involuntary Isolation: Ethnic Preferences and Residential Segregation', *Journal of Urban Affairs*, vol. 29, no. 3, pp. 289–309, DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-9906.2007.00344.x.
- Bourdieu, P 1991, 'Physischer, sozialer und angeeigneter physischer Raum' in *Stadt-Räume*, ed M Wentz, Campus Verlag, Frankfurt/Main, pp. 25–34.
- Bryant, A & Charmaz, K (eds) 2007, *The SAGE handbook of grounded theory*, SAGE, Los Angeles, California.
- Bråmås, Å 2006, "White flight"? The production and reproduction of immigrant concentration areas in Swedish cities, 1990–2000', *Urban Studies*, vol. 43, no. 7, pp. 1127–1146, DOI: 10.1080/00420980500406736.
- Brevik, I, Halvorsen, K & Pløger, J 1998, *Byutvikling og bypolitikk i en brytningstid. Om samspillet mellom sosial segregering, bykultur, økonomi og politikk i norske storbyer*, Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (NIBR), Oslo.
- Clark, WAV 1992, 'Residential Preferences and Residential Choices in a Multiethnic Context', *Demography*, no. 29, pp. 451–466.
- Eriksen, TH & Sørheim, TA 1996, *Kulturforskjeller i praksis. Perspektiver på det flerkulturelle Norge*, Ad Notam Gyldendal, Oslo.
- Feijten, P & van Ham, M 2009, 'Neighbourhood Change... Reason to Leave?', *Urban Studies*, vol. 46, no. 10, pp. 2103–2122, DOI: 10.1177/0042098009339430.
- Fossen, E 2002, 'Den sommeren Norge mistet dybden. Oppsummering av Shabana Rehman-debatten', *Prosa*, no. 4.
- Gakkestad, K 2003, *Romsås - en stigmatisert bydel?: en studie av territoriell stigmatisering: medias rolle og konsekvenser for beboerne*. Master thesis, University of Oslo.
- Gressgård, R 2005, *Fra identitet til forskjell*, Spartacus, Oslo.
- Gullestad, M 2002, *Det norske sett med nye øyne. Kritisk analyse av norsk innvandringsdebatt*, Universitetsforlaget, Oslo.
- Hall, S 1988, 'Minimal Selves' in *Identity: The Real Me*, eds H Bhabha & L Appignanesi, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, pp. 44–46.
- Hansen, T & Brattbakk, I 2005, 'Drabantbyene - bedre enn sitt rykte?' in *Storbyens boligmarked. Drivkrefter, rammebetingelser og handlingsvalg*, ed R Barlundhaug, Spartacus, Oslo, pp. 33–66.
- Haslum, H 2008, *Reading socio-spatial interplay*. Ph.D thesis, Oslo School of Architecture and Design.
- Häußermann, H 1995, 'Die Stadt und die Stadtsoziologie. Urbane Lebensweise und die Integration des Fremden', *Berliner Journal für Soziologie*, no. 1, pp. 89–98.
- Häußermann, H & Kapphan, A 2002, *Berlin: Von der geteilten zur gespaltenen Stadt? Sozialräumlicher Wandel seit 1990*, Leske + Budrich, Opladen.
- Häußermann, H & Siebel, W 2004, *Stadtsoziologie. Eine Einführung*, Campus Verlag, Frankfurt am Main.
- Heffnerich, C 2005, *Qualität qualitativer Daten – Manual zur Durchführung qualitativer Einzelinterviews*, VS Verlag, Wiesbaden.
- Hill, D 2012, *Gentrification in Oslo's Inner East: a spatial analysis, 1992 to 2008*. Master thesis, University of Oslo.
- Hjorthol, RJ & Bjørnskau, T 2005, 'Gentrification in Norway. Capital, Culture or Convenience?', *European Urban and Regional Studies*, vol. 12, no. 4, pp. 353–371, DOI: 10.1177/0969776405058953.
- Holm, A 2006, *Die Restrukturierung des Raumes. Stadterneuerung der 90er Jahre in Ostberlin: Interessen und Machtverhältnisse*, Transcript, Bielefeld.
- Huse, T 2014, *Everyday life in the gentrifying city. On displacement, ethnic privileging and the right to stay put*, Ashgate, Burlington.
- Huse, T, Sæter, O & Aniksdal, C 2010, *Tøyengata. Et nyrikt stykke Norge*, Flamme, Oslo.
- Iceland, J, Sharpe C. & Steinmetz, E 2005, 'Class differences in African-American residential patterns in U.S. metropolitan areas, 1990–2000', *Social Science Research*, vol. 34, pp. 252–266.
- Jenkins, R 1994, 'Rethinking ethnicity: Identity, categorization and power', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 197–223, DOI: 10.1080/01419870.1994.9993821.
- Jenkins, R 2008, *Rethinking ethnicity. Arguments and Explorations*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Johansen, NB, Ugelvik, T & Aas, KF (eds.) 2013, *Krimigrasjon? Den nye kontrollen av de fremmede*, Universitetsforlaget, Oslo.
- Kjeldstadli, K & Myhre, JE 1995, *Oslo - spenningen by. Oslohistorie*, Pax, Oslo.
- Kruse, J 2008, *Reader: Einführung in die Qualitative Interviewforschung*, Universität Freiburg.
- Krysan, M, Couper, M, Farley, R & Forman, TA 2009, 'Does Race Matter in Neighborhood Preferences? Results from a Video Experiment', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 115, no. 2, pp. 527–559, DOI: 10.1086/599248.
- Lamont, M & Molnár, V 2002, 'The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences', *Annual review of sociology*, vol. 28, pp. 167–195.
- Lees, L 2008, 'Gentrification and Social Mixing: Towards an Inclusive Urban Renaissance?', *Urban Studies*, vol. 45, no. 12, pp. 2449–2470.

- Liggett, H 2003, *Urban encounters*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.
- Mey, G & Mruck, K 2010, *Grounded Theory Reader*, VS Verlag, Wiesbaden.
- Musterd, S 2005, 'Social and Ethnic Segregation in Europe: Levels, Causes and Effects', *Journal of Urban Affairs*, vol. 27, no. 3, pp. 331–348.
- Sæter, O 2005, 'Det nye sosiale og symbolske bylandskapet – Med politikken som utgangspunkt.' in *By og byliv i endring. Studier av byrom og handlingsrom i Oslo.*, ed J Aspen, Spartacus, Oslo, pp. 153–176.
- Sæter, O & Ruud, ME 2005, Byen som symbolsk rom. Bypolitikk, stedsdiskurser og gentrifisering i Gamle Oslo, Byggforsk, Oslo.
- Schroer, M 2005, Räume, Orte, Grenzen. Auf dem Weg zu einer Soziologie des Raums, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main.
- Sennett, R 1971, *The Uses of Disorder. Personal Identity and City Life*, Vintage, New York.
- Simmel, G 1903, 'Die Grosstädte und das Geistesleben' in *Die Grosstadt. Vorträge und Aufsätze zur Städteausstellung*, ed T Petermann, pp. 185–206.
- Solgaard, KH 2004, On Gentrification: Commercial Businesses and Cultural Institutions in Old Oslo. Master thesis (Hovedoppgave), University of Oslo.
- Statistisk Sentralbyrå 2002, *Innvandrerens bosettingsmønster i Oslo*. Available from: <https://www.ssb.no> [23 November 2015].
- Statistisk Sentralbyrå 2006, *Innvandrerens bo- og flyttemønstre i Oslo rundt årtusenskiftet*. Available from: <https://www.ssb.no> [23 November 2015].
- Statistisk Sentralbyrå 2007, *Holdninger til innvandrere og innvandring 2007*. Available from: <https://www.ssb.no> [23 November 2015].
- Strauss, A & Corbin, J 1990, 'Grounded Theory Research: procedures, Canons and Evaluative Criteria', *Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, vol. 19, no. 6, pp. 418–427.
- Strauss, A & Corbin, J 2008, *Basics of qualitative research: techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*, Sage Publications, Los Angeles, California.
- Stuart Hall - *Race, The Floating Signifier* 1997 (DVD), media education foundation, Northampton, MA.
- Sundsbo, AO 2014, Grenzziehungen in der Stadt. Ethische Kategorien und die Wahrnehmung und Bewertung von Wohnorten, Springer VS, Wiesbaden.
- Tajfel, H & Turner, JC 1986, 'The social identity of intergroup behavior' in *Psychology of intergroup relations*, eds S Worchel & WG Austin, Nelson-Hall, Chicago, Ill, pp. 7–24.
- Turner, LM & Wessel, T 2013, 'Upwards, outwards and westwards: Relocation of ethnic minority groups in the Oslo region', *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, vol. 95, no. 1, pp. 1–16, DOI: 10.1111/geob.12006.
- van Kempen, R & Özüekren, AS 1998, 'Ethnic Segregation in Cities: New Forms and Explanations in a Dynamic World', *Urban Studies*, vol. 35, no. 10, pp. 1631–1656, DOI: 10.1080/0042098984088.
- Vassenden, A 2008, *Flerkulturelle forståelsesformer: en studie av majoritetsnordmenn i multi-etniske boligområder*. Ph.D thesis, University of Oslo.
- Wagner, U, Christ, O, Pettigrew, TF, Stellmacher, J & Wolf, C 2006, 'Prejudice And Minority Proportion: Contact Instead Of Threat Effects', *Social Psychology Quarterly*, vol. 69, no. 4, pp. 380–390, DOI: 10.1177/019027250606900406.
- Wessel, T 1997, *Boligsegregasjon - en drøfting av underliggende prosesser*, Byggforsk, Oslo.
- White, J 2008, *London in the twentieth century. A city and its people*, Vintage, London.
- Ytrehus, LA (ed.) 2001, *Forestillinger om "den andre" = Images of otherness*, Høyskoleforlaget, Kristiansand.