

URBAN SEGREGATION

How Does the Problem Take Place in Modern Planning Procedures, and the Built Environment of Oslo.

Ingrid Rabo Halvorsen

Norge

1. Introduction

When looking into the definition of urban segregation, (Timberlake and Ignatov, 2014) states the term is based on the spatial separation of a number of individuals within a geographic area. Furthermore they claim segregation can also be based on the socioeconomic status and can take place on several scales within our built environment, everything from within one housing block to the greater neighbourhood or even at regional level.

The reason why urban segregation is a challenge to the society is according with (Timberlake and Ignatov, 2014) because it leads to a reduction of life quality for the urban poor due to the spatial occupation of this problem only benefits social groups with a high level of income. In other words the problem of residential segregation taking place in our built environment will most likely make it harder for people from a low income family to break out of this socio-economic cycle, which ultimately leads to a parallel society.

I perceive the problem of urban segregation as very visible in the housing typology in Oslo, as for instance here in figure.1, taken from the area of Nordstrand. The picture shows that the further south you go, the area changes from a single detached neighbourhood with private gardens into timber based medium scale shared housing, while the furthest south there is the big scale concrete social housing from the post-war expansion of working class housing. In this example we can see that not only does the typology of structures and materiality change, but so does also the density of the area. Recently in Norwegian news stories, there have been a rise of youth crime in the south part of Nordstrand, and this challenge is even greater the further south you go into areas such as Holmlia.

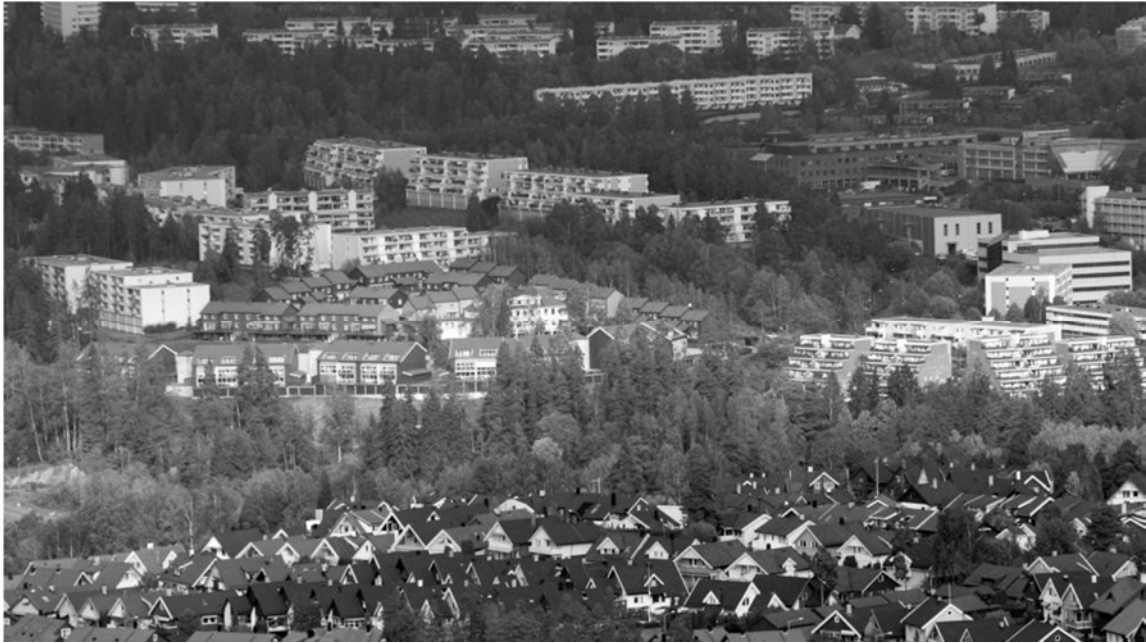


Figure. 1

In order to tackle the issue of urban segregation such as in the areas of Nordstrand and Holmlia UN-Habitat (2016) stated within the 1996 Habitat Agenda that the focus should be revolved around providing housing for all social groups in order to provide a sustainable human settlements within the rapidly urbanizing world we live in. Unfortunately this has been rarely been taken into consideration on a worldwide basis, as the UN-Habitat (2016) has stated the majority of the global construction industry has systematically been enabling tenure for the middle to the upper class, while the access of tenure for the increasing number of the urban poor has totally been disabled and neglected.

The reason why this topic interests me, is because problem is visually prominent and have caught my eye while growing up in Norway, and especially within certain areas of our capital Oslo, such as the older area of Grünerløkka, the cultural hub of the central Grønland district, and lastly the newly constructed high risers known as “The Barcode” along the sea shore of the capital. Therefore, this essay aims to compare these areas of Oslo to the historical perspective on urban segregation, and look into the effects of what modern planning procedures has on segregating and the inclusive areas within the built environment of these areas. Moreover I also aim to develop a set of principles from the discussion of these challenges, that I believe will benefit a more aware understanding of the problem of urban segregation in which can also work as a tool to prevent it.

2. Historical Perspective of the Global Urban Segregation based on Literature Review.

If we were to look at why the urban segregation of a number of individuals takes place within modern cities Rao (2012) claims the reason for this within the megacities of the Southern hemisphere is a destructive capitalism as a result to a post-colonial response which has been caused by the constant pressure of modernity.

Perhaps is this the reason for the spatial separation taking place in Europe as well. Seen from my own Scandinavian perspective, my home country of Norway within Northern Europe have not been colonized, but on the other hand this country have been in union with both Sweden and Denmark until the liberation in 1905. When talking about liberation Rao (2012) states the modern and empirical idea of promised freedom

and equality can lead to an anxious association with the urban environment, due to the tension between the cultural heritage and the newly proposed principles of the modern planning.

Speaking of cultural heritage within an European context, England on the other hand has been playing a prominent role as a colonizer within the pre colonized world. And as the great empire has been massively reduced, I remember getting the impression after having lived in Oxfordshire for three years that in some ways this is a country that glorifies the old days where England played a more dominating role. I remember having read the ideas proposed by Rajagopalan (2012) where he states the previous colonizing countries such as England had a tendency to claim cultural heritage from the colonized territories in an attempt to claim it as their own authentic cultural value. This is for instance evident at the previous world expo exhibitions of the early 1900s like in the one from Paris 1931 shown in figure. 2 and 3.



Figure. 2

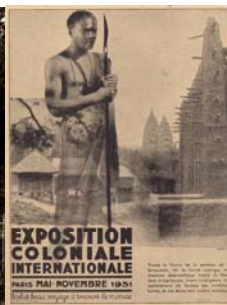


Figure. 3

Rajagopalan (2012) also suggests the problem of the transition between a pre colonized nation into a liberated one, is the fact that in many of the british occupied colonies within Africa the national authorities were removed too abruptly which led to a tendency towards anarchist conditions in which no sufficient government were left behind to continue the liberated transition.

Due to the pre colonized nations the urban segregation of our modernized world is very much intertwined, as we are for instance dealing with the current refugee crisis which escalated in 2016, in which we are not only dealing with refugees from Syria, but also African countries such as Somalia, and Eritrea.

I believe we should actively share this common responsibility to provide housing and shelter for the world wide population, and Europeans should also take part in this the process of providing sufficient means to contribute and support the current nations who are currently dealing with heavy migration as a result from the post-liberating revitalization of previously colonized communities. This is revitalization is particularly evident when we look at the numbers of people lacking housing today and the future need which is according with UN-Habitat (2016) 1.6 billion people who will require affordable housing by 2025.

In order to meet this rapid growing housing need and avoid the urban segregation, there are several ideas from the 1900s concerning rural sociology proposed by Henri Lefebvre, in which he according with Elden (2003) claims there is a three stage dialectical process of regression and progression in order to learn from the past before moving forward. Maybe that is exactly what we have to do when looking back at our pre colonized world in which there has been left traces in the built environment today, and use this as a buffer zone to create a more integrated society.

3. Argumentation from the Historical Perspective

In our rapid modernizing world I do believe it is vital to take into consideration the pros and cons of the capitalist function in our built environment. I do recognize that we as inhabitants are completely dependent

on commercial activity in the city core, as for instance through our weekly grocery shopping at the local grocery store, or food market. I do believe this can also serve as a social buffer zone where one can prevent urban segregation through meeting your friends and colleagues while looking for the perfect ripe apple at an immigrant food stall, in which there is a delightful mix of people shopping from different cultural backgrounds and age groups which one can see in this picture in figure. 4 Taken from the Sunday market of Grønland, Oslo.



Figure. 4

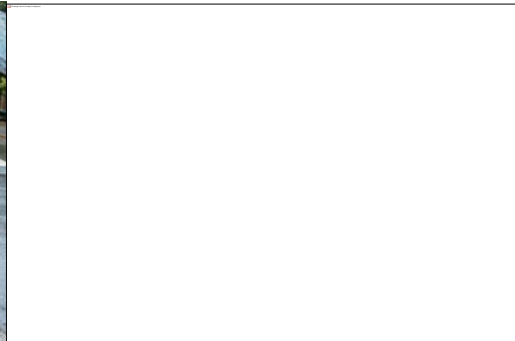


Figure. 5

But on the other hand I also do understand the point made by Rao (2012) that capitalism can serve a destructive purpose in our built environment, that one should feel forced to perceive commercial activity in the city in order to occupy an urban space such as in city malls like the one in figure. 5 of the Grønland Bassar. On the other hand I also do believe commerce can definitely lead to a greater scope of urban segregation. In this matter I do agree with the thoughts made by Henri Lefebvre in Elden (2003) that one should prioritize spaces and activities in our urban environment where one does not have to spend any capital in order to take part.

Moreover one should be careful in the matter of claiming someones elses cultural heritage as your own, I believe a substantial urban integration is created through accepting and highlighting the differences of cultural backgrounds and social background. But as the way I see it; only more stigma and polarization is created when for instance you would see a model on the cover of Vogue dressed in a kimono such as in figure. 7, or a native american headwear figure. 6.



Figure. 6



Figure. 7

Besides from claiming authentic values of others, we should also embrace the fact that the ongoing refugee crisis and emigration of war and conflict survivors is a common responsibility, due to the fact that it is globally intertwined through the prehistoric colonization and many of especially the western european countries should share a welcoming consciousness and responsibility towards the matter. In recent times there are indications of more immigration scepticism after the referendum of Brexit took place in june 2016, and I have personally met a British accountant who claim there where more racial violence showed towards

brits with another ethnicity or coming from a second generation of immigrants in the aftermath of Brexit in the streets of London. Therefore I hope examples such as this one is only a temporary counter effect of the as previously mentioned by Elden (2003) a dialectic process of regression and progression.

4. Urban Segregation within Planning Procedures based on Literature Review

On our road to creating a more integrated society, planning procedures plays a prominent part. And according to Jacobs (1961) the application of city zoning regulations tend to result into sterile and regimented empty areas. This is especially evident when Jacobs (1961) claims by doing so the planning authorities are rejecting the area from evolving into a spontaneous diversity by providing the necessary conditions for growth.

This lack of growth is something I have recently noticed in the rapid and newly construction of the harbour area within the city Oslo. This project is known as the “Barcode” shown in figure. 8, and is basically a line of medium high risers provided for big scale consultancy firms stacked very close together, resulting in a shadowed concrete jungle in the in between spaces as portrayed in figure. 9, and a big wall towards the sea view for the rest of the city. This is exactly the same problem as stated by Rao (2012) in which the contemporary urbanist has completely overlooked the everyday life of the place by prioritizing the economic activity as the ultimate and substantial urban presence and identity.

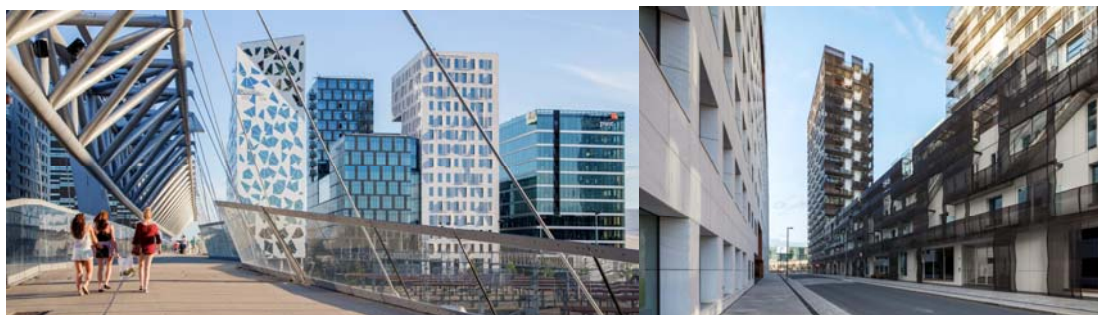


Figure. 8

Figure. 9

Jacobs (1961) on the other hand suggest that we need all kinds of diversity, intricately intertwined within some kind of a mutual support, therefore she suggest our main responsibility as city planners are to develop and not sterilizing the community.

Another area within the capital of Oslo that has achieved this diversified use and developed community, is the area known as Grünerløkka shown in figure. 10, this neighbourhood is surrounded by three floor buildings allowing for a constant natural access of sunlight all year round, which has led to a massive use of the surrounding green park areas, but also the fact that the streetscape is commonly used as a buffer zone as seen in figure. 11, for small-scale shops and dining areas.



Figure. 10



Figure. 11

5. Argumentation from Urban segregation Within Planning Procedures

By comparing the urban life within different areas of Oslo such as the Barcode and Grünerløkka, we can see how important it is to allow cities to evolve and allow for a range of diversified use through the applied zoning regulations. The development of the Oslo harbour such as the Barcode is a good example of how sterile and empty an area can become, if we do not allow for a range of diversified growth. On the contrary we should aim for creating streetscapes that can work as a lively bufferzone and serve a variety of purposes, changing dependent on the time of the day or the week. The bar area known as Blå, shown in both figure. 12 and in figure. 13 is yet again an example within the Grünerløkka area achieving diversified street typology. Every weekend this place turns into a hectic nightclub, but it can also serve the venue of intimate concerts along the riverside at daytime, or a street market every sunday morning where local entrepreneurs sell handcrafted jewellery or printed hand bags.



Figure. 12



Figure. 13

6. How Does the Built Environment Deal with Urban Segregation Based on Literature Review

This diversified and mixed use of the park areas and buffer zones at the street level of the Grünerløkka area is also something to take into consideration when analyzing the inclusivity within urban densified streetscapes. According to Jacobs (1961) she emphasizes this specific importance by claiming the mixed use has to be dealt with when we are trying to understand the core of cities in general, because if we do not do so we end

up separating them. This dealing of mixed urban use also is also evident in the Birkelunden square at figure. 14, this city square within the Grünerløkka area has the quality to turn into a differentiated vibrant and lively neighbourhood with a non-dependency at the seasonal weather changes throughout the year. During the summer time one can experience people sitting along the fountain or other seating areas in this green city square reading a book, or meeting up with neighbours. While on a weekly basis, just like in the example previously shown at Blå, there is also a weekly flea market as shown at figure. 15, taking place here all year round.



Figure. 14



Figure. 15

Furthermore Jacobs (1961) also claim we can understand an area by looking at a park as a result of this mixed use typology, and by doing so she also claims the mixed public contact also increases the safety of the neighbourhood. I would say this is very accurate to the green park areas of Grünerløkka such as the Sofienbergparken shown in figure. 16, as this is both a meeting place for families, dog owners, students having a barbeque, or even small salsa dancing communities. By cross mixing these people from different backgrounds and age groups as portrayed in figure. 17 you end up with a very satisfying vibrant city life. And as Elden (2003) claims that without this occupancy of the everyday life the space would only consist of a geographical idea or association of the mind.



Figure. 16



Figure. 17

In order to avoid these empty geographical areas with a sufficient lack of urban life, Elden (2003) suggests we should mix both mediating and intermediating aspects of the urban life. Furthermore the ideas of Lefebvre also states in Elden (2003) that we should remove the global higher authorities in order to only have site related structures which is connected to it's broader surroundings. This makes me wonder if the city of Oslo would have experienced less urban segregation if we never were to focus on the occupation of the multinational companies as shown in figure. 18, such as Klp, Deloitte, and Pwc of the barcode, which seem to not serve any other greater purpose than office buildings at one of the most valuable harbour areas in the city. It is rather evident how abruptly the typology of the barcode have been made when one looks at the figure. 19, on how great the difference in height and building typology there is between this project and the surrounding context of the city. This seem to create a problem as the left over space surrounding and in between this project seem not to have been focused at a human scale, in which one can end up with almost a

claustrophobic feeling when walking in between the structures through this dark space with no sun access, green spaces, and more or less a completely lack of people and life.



Figure. 18

Figure. 19

7. Argumentation from the Urban Segregation within the Built Environment

Through the combination of allowing for a diversified growth within a city area and also provide an easy access to urban green structure such as in parks or squares seems to be a good indicator for creating a integrated and lively streetscape. It is also yet important to mention that this functionality should be able take place or allow for a different use regardless of seasonal changes. This is an important factor, so the urban social integration does not only take place during for instance the summer months. By comparing the Birkelunden square, and Sofienbergparken there seem to be more social activity preventing urban segregation taking place on the square rather than the park due to the area serving more public contact throughout the whole year.

It is also important to take into consideration that the mixed public contact should involve a diversity of cultural backgrounds and age groups, such as the public areas does not exclude any groups of the society. This can be achieved through making an emphasis on site related structures that blend more into the surroundings and does not only serve one purpose such as the office buildings of the Barcode.

8. Proposed Principles to Prevent Urban Segregation

Based on the previous discussion made, I have come up with this rules set of guidelines, that i believe in my opinion would benefit the social integration and prevent the polarization of urban segregation:

- 1) Create an awareness of the social counter effects of commercial activity. Aim the focus of the urban space occupation towards accessible businesses that create a social buffer zone rather than a stigmatization.
- 2) Prioritize public spaces and activities in our urban environment where one does not have to spend any capital in order to take part in.
- 3) Be mindful of claiming someone's cultural heritage as your own, but rather take an active part in creating a substantial urban integration through accepting and highlighting the differences of social and cultural backgrounds within our urban environments.
- 4) Allow for a diversified growth and use within the city landscape.
- 5) Provide an easy access to urban green structure such as parks and public squares; that is functional regardless of seasonal changes.

- 6) Create streetscapes that works as a lively buffer zone that can serve a variety of purposes, changing throughout the time of the day or the week.
- 7) Remember to allow for the diversified use regardless of cultural backgrounds or age groups in order to avoid any exclusion of social groups.

9. The Active Role towards Urban Integration as an Architect

When it come to the aspect of what measures oneself can make in order to prevent urban segregation, I do believe it is important to think at an international level, but act locally.

Rather than solely focusing on what new construction projects can achieve, I do believe we should also aim to deal with the already existing built environment within our urban areas, in order to contribute, highlight, and improve the existing qualities that might already be there.

Furthermore I also believe we should strive for focusing on creating inclusive social spaces that creates a form of participation in the local neighbourhood. By doing so I believe we can manage to use human connectivity as a resource in our urban community, rather than having urban inhabitants being left with a feeling of isolation.

Therefore it is crucial to maintain this focus of inclusivity in a rapid urbanizing world, and also recognize the segregating factors taking place within the construction industry where sometimes the financial gain and maximum floor rate area expansion is favoured in newly constructed condominiums over the social quality of life within our urban environment.

Bibliography

Elden, S., Lebas, E. and Kofman, E. (2003). *Henri Lefebvre Key Writings*. 1st ed. New York: Continuum

Gandini, E. (2015). *The Swedish Theory of Love*. [video] Available at: <https://www.svtplay.se/video/10458343/the-swedish-theory-of-love?info=visa> [Accessed 5 Apr. 2018].

Jacobs, J. (1961). *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. 3rd ed. New York: Random House.

UN-Habitat (2016). *Urbanization and Development*. World Cities Report 2016. [online] Nairobi, Kenya: United Nations Human Settlements Programme, pp.47-138. Available at: http://wcr.unhabitat.org/wcr_downloads/world-cities-report-2016-abridged-edition/ [Accessed 24 Mar. 2018].

Timberlake, J. and Ignatov, M. (2014). Residential Segregation. *Oxford Bibliographies Online Datasets*. [online] Available at: <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199756384/obo-9780199756384-0116.xml> [Accessed 24 Mar. 2018].

Rajagopalan, M. (2012). Preservation and Modernity: Competing Perspectives, Contested Histories, and the Question of Authenticity. In: G. Crysler, S. Cairns and H. Heynen, ed., *The SAGE Handbook of Architectural Theory*, 1st ed. London: Sage publications ltd, pp.308-324.

Rao, V. (2012). Slum as Theory: Mega-Cities and Urban Models. In: G. Crysler, S. Cairns and H. Heynen, ed., *The Sage Handbook of Architectural Theory*, 1st ed. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, pp.671-686.

List of Figures

Figure 1. -

<https://www.dagsavisen.no/oslo/hoyere-ledighet-enn-i-stavanger-1.771896>

[Accessed 20 Apr. 2018].

Figure 2. -

<http://www.expositions-universelles.fr/1907-vincennes.html>

[Accessed 22 Apr. 2018].

Figure 3. -

<http://www.arthurchandler.com/paris-1889-exposition/>

[Accessed 22 Apr. 2018].

Figure 4. - <https://www.aftenposten.no/meninger/leder/i/XPVgm/Aftenposten-mener-Nodvendig-a-lofte-Gronland>

[Accessed 22 Apr. 2018].

Figure 5. -

<https://www.facebook.com/gronlandbasar/>

[Accessed 22 Apr. 2018].

Figure 6. -

<https://www.theguardian.com/music/2014/jun/05/pharrell-apologises-wearing-native-american-war-bonnet-elle>

[Accessed 24 Apr. 2018].

Figure 7. -

<https://japantoday.com/category/features/miranda-kerrs-photo-shoot-for-vogue-japan-stirs-up-controversy>

[Accessed 24 Apr. 2018].

Figure 8. -

<https://www.visitoslo.com/en/trade-media-cruise/media/>

[Accessed 24 Apr. 2018].

Figure 9. -

<https://www.visitoslo.com/en/product/?TLp=940560>

[Accessed 24 Apr. 2018].

Figure 10. -

<https://www.dailyscandinavian.com/coolest-region-norways-capital/151217-villa-paradiso-grunerlokka-oslo/>

[Accessed 24 Apr. 2018].

Figure 11. -

<https://www.visitoslo.com/en/articles/shopping-grunerlokka/>

[Accessed 24 Apr. 2018].

Figure 12. -

<https://www.citylife.si/lifestyle/najbolj-hipsterske-soseske-evrope-med-katerimi-je-tudi-ljubljanska>

[Accessed 26 Apr. 2018].

Figure 13. -

<https://www.residentadvisor.net/club.aspx?id=8763>

[Accessed 26 Apr. 2018].

Figure 14. -

<https://krogsveen.no/Selge-bolig/Solgte-boliger/Bolig/Leilighet/Markveien-12-B-891421227>

[Accessed 26 Apr. 2018].

Figure 15.-

<https://www.aktivioslo.no/presentasjon/birkelunden-marked/>

[Accessed 26 Apr. 2018].

Figure 16. -

<http://mapio.net/o/4796579/>

[Accessed 26 Apr. 2018].

Figure 17.-

<http://mapio.net/pic/p-31189994/>

[Accessed 26 Apr. 2018].

Figure 18.-

<https://www.lifeinnorway.net/the-new-oslo-waterfront/>

[Accessed 26 Apr. 2018].

Figure 19.-

<https://plus.google.com/+AlexanderVestrum/posts/XM3bRH57UNe>

[Accessed 2 May. 2018].