The City of Oslo

Intercultural Profile

1. Introduction

Oslo is a dynamic and changing city. It is the second wealthiest metropolitan region in the world[1] with a per capita income of over $74,000, and the fastest growing in Europe[2] with a metropolitan population of 1,442,318 (2012), although the size of the municipality is smaller at 613,285. The two factors are connected. Because the Norwegian and Oslo economies continue to grow despite recession in the rest of Europe and the OECD countries, their demand for labour of all kinds continues and they attract migrant labour (and their families) from both traditional and non-traditional sources.

Oslo has been receiving significant numbers of foreign migrants for over 40 years and has developed a large body of knowledge and expertise in managing the process of integration. This is exemplified by the fact that Oslo is placed second in the Intercultural Cities Index[3] and is the highest placed of the larger cities. The Index particularly favours cities which have established a rational and robust policy framework across a wide-ranging agenda, with clear political backing and which can demonstrate the resources and competence to deliver it into practice.

Most recently Oslo has introduced a new policy directive entitled "City Government Decision 152/12 - Diversity Opportunities", which is an updated statement of the city's ambitions and commitments, continuing along a course first established in 2001 with the founding of the OXLO Oslo Extra Large campaign[4].

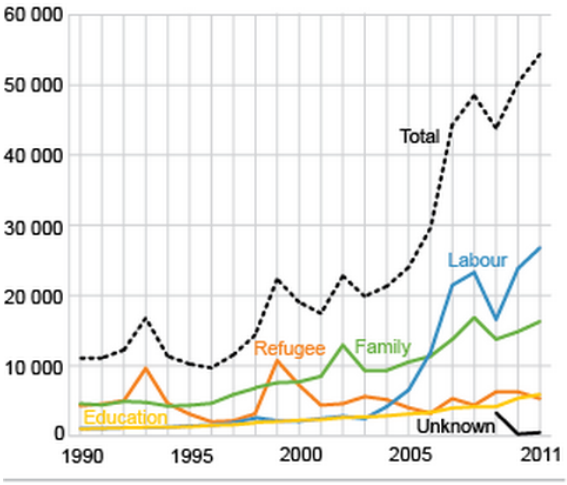
The ICC team chose this as an opportune moment to visit, in order to monitor the relationship between Oslo's impressive ranking in the ICC Index and its performance on the ground; to understand how City Government Decision 152/12 will take matters forward; to observe the relationship between municipal and national policies; and, more generally, to monitor the mood of the city in the year after the Anders Breivik atrocities. As such, this report is written as an update on previous reports of August 2008 and February 2010.

[1] According to the Brookings Institute (2011) see http://tinyurl.com/6tnhk7e
[2] According to United Nations estimates http://www.osloby.no/nyheter/Oslo-europamester-i-vekst-5114181.html
[3] http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/culture/cities/Index/default_en.asp
[4] See Appendix for full version.

2. Background

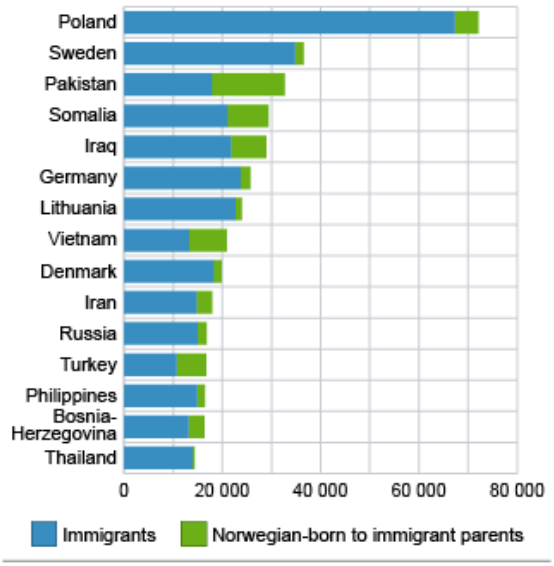
To the uninformed outsider, Norway may not be thought of a place of great cultural diversity. Historically it was isolated from the main flows of internal European migration and was not a colonial power. It is still a relatively new nation only recently celebrating its centenary of independence. For many years it was primarily a country of emigration as people left behind poverty for a new life in the US and Canada. Only in the 1970s, with the revival of the economy led by offshore oil production, did the tide turn and Norway became a place of attraction for immigrants.

Immigrations, by reason for immigration. 1990-2011



Early immigration was of an economic nature but as Norwegian society transformed itself into one of the most prosperous in the world, it took an increasing interest in international human rights. It became one of the most important recipients of asylum seekers and refugees and, for its size, perhaps the largest. As the table demonstrate[5], the earliest group of immigrants was refugees from Eastern European countries who settled after World War II. The next influx was of migrant workers from Pakistan, Turkey and India in the 1960s and 70s. During the 1980s and 90s most immigrants came as refugees and asylum seekers, or to be reunited with their families. However over recent years, the strength of the Norwegian economy has also once again made it a place of attraction for migrant labour. Significant groups of people arrived from Sri Lanka, Somalia, the former Yugoslavia, Vietnam, North Africa, Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan. More recently there has been a large rise in numbers from the EU Accession States (particularly Poland and Lithuania) and at the moment there are growing numbers of Swedes and Spaniards arriving to take up a range of skilled and non-skilled work.

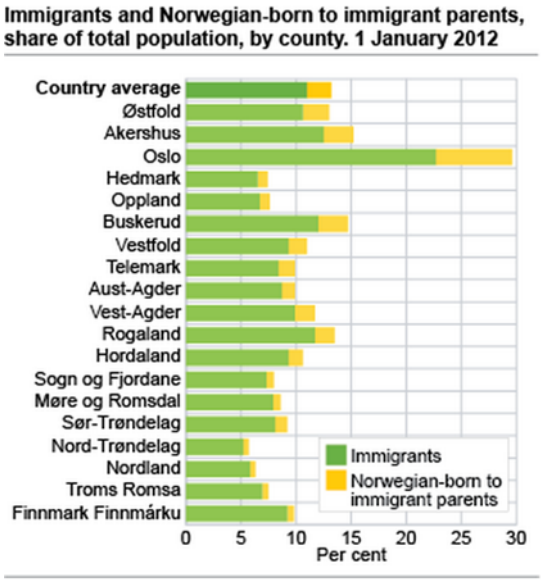
The 15 largest groups of immigrants and Norwegian-born to immigrant parents in Norway. 1 January 2012. Absolute figures



Immigrants and those born in Norway to immigrant parents currently constitute 655 000 persons or 13.1 per cent of Norway's population, among which 547 000 are immigrants and 108 000 are born in Norway to immigrant parents.

[5] Statistics Norway

Oslo is an international and ethnically diverse city where 27% of the population have origins outside Norway from more than 150 countries whilst half of children and adolescents in Oslo have a minority identity through their own or their parents' immigration history. With the outlook for the economy remaining buoyant, and with the maintenance of an open labour market, Oslo is well on the way to being one of Europe's most diverse cities. However, it is unlikely to become a 'multi-minority' city as continued in-migration by ethnic Norwegians is likely to ensure this group maintains its majority. Although government policy has been to disperse migrant settlers around the country, and all the main cities are becoming increasingly diverse, it is clear that Oslo is a unique phenomenon within Norway for the size, diversity and sheer dynamic energy of its population.



Number of minorities (1st and 2nd generation) in Oslo by country of origin (1. January 2012)

1	Pakistan	22,034	11	Philippines	4,968
2	Sweden	13,665	12	India	4,064
3	Somalia	12,779	13	Germany	3,501
4	Poland	12,180	14	Denmark	3,477
5	Sri Lanka	7,365	15	Afghanistan	2,986
6	Iraq	7,336	16	Bosnia and Herzegovina	2,861
7	Turkey	6,206	17	Russia	2,809
8	Morocco	6,116	18	China, People's Republic of	2,658
9	Vietnam	5,822	19	United Kingdom	2,644
10	Iran	5,729	20	Kosovo	2,535

3. Local/National relations

The main policy responsibilities for immigrants in Norway are shared between central government and the municipalities. Integration, for example through training, education, health and social work and housing is largely a municipal responsibility. The work is financed through per capita grants from central government.

Since the Introduction Act of 2005, Norwegian national integration and inclusion policy aims have been to enable new arrivals to participate in the labour market and in society as quickly as possible, enjoying equal living standards and opportunities to those of native citizens. In support of this approach, the government has supported three main programmes, implemented at municipality level:

- The right and obligation to participate in Norwegian language and social studies. The great majority of employers demand mastery of the native language, which is also key to wider integration. Foreign nationals (aged 16-55) with residence or work permits must participate in 300 hours of language training.
- The Introductory Programme for refugees, aiming to enable refugees to enter the labour market or training as soon as possible. The programme offers language and social studies

and preparation for work or further education. Each participant follows an individual development plan and receives an income of around €18,000 per year, conditional on fulltime attendance.

- The Second Chance project (launched in 2005 as a trial programme) is aimed at people with an immigrant background who have no link to the labour market. The target groups include stay-at-home mothers, and young people aged 18-25.

However, most recently the national government has withdrawn the right of migrants to free language tuition. This has transferred costs to individuals but, as many are unable to pay, the burden falls upon employers or the municipality. Oslo city allocated extra resources in 2011, but is deeply concerned about the policy change and is hoping to have it revoked. Recently the national government has decided to terminate its financial support for such programmes. Oslo believes they are so valuable however that it has voted to retain this subsidy from its own budget.

However with a far-flung country with 428 highly autonomous and mainly rural municipalities, the attention of Norway's government is often directed to matters very different than from those which concern the cosmopolitan streets of Oslo and the few large cities. As has been seen in other countries there is a growing divergence between the priorities of large cities and the remainder of their nations, and migration and diversity are often the issues which highlight this. Consequently, Oslo has recently convened a network with Bergen, Stavanger, Trondheim and Kristiansand to share common concerns and practices on integration and to lobby national politicians and civil servants.

4. Local policy context

The combined municipality and county of Oslo has a parliamentary system of government. The supreme authority of the city is the City Council (Bystyret), which currently has 59 seats and representatives are popularly elected every four years. The Governing Mayor of Oslo is the head of the City Government and is similar to the role of the prime minister at the national level. The current governing mayor is Stian Berger Røsland.

The City Government consists of eight elected politicians (vice mayors) and heads the City's administration, making recommendations to the City Council, and is responsible for carrying out decisions made by the Council. The Vice Mayor is the political head of a department or part of a department and their role may be compared to that of national government ministers.

The City Government consists of the following departments:

- Office of the Governing Mayor
- Department of Finance
- Department of Knowledge and Education
- Department of Urban Development
- Department of Cultural Affairs and Business Development
- Department of Health and Social Affairs
- Department of Environmental Affairs and Transportation

Matters of integration and diversity now fall within the remit of the Department of Cultural Affairs and Business Development.

Politically, the largest party in the Oslo municipal parliament is the Conservatives closely followed by the Labour Party. The elections were held shortly after the Breivik atrocities and it is notable that

these two parties gained seats at the expense of the fringe parties, with the greatest loser of all being the far right wing Progress Party, which lost its position as part of the ruling coalition.

The City Council first passed major legislation on migration and integration in 1996 and a series of revisions and updates have followed. Perhaps the most significant came in 2001 with the launching of the OXLO Oslo Extra Large initiative, following a shocking racist murder in the city. OXLO was the city government's expression of values and a political commitment to work for an inclusive city, in particular that:

- The municipality shall cooperate broadly with institutions of higher education, business, NGOs and other actors in civil society;
- Districts and schools shall facilitate meeting places for people to intermix;
- Measures against racism and discrimination shall be given higher priority in the allocation of grant funds;
- Public services shall take into account minorities' needs and preferences;
- Municipal employees shall reflect the diversity of the city's population;
- Immigrant organizations shall be consulted;
- City districts and agencies shall mainstream a diversity perspective in their plans of action, organizational culture and management steering documents.

OXLO has subsequently become a campaign in which the city can engage with NGOs, community groups and businesses to refine policies and practices, as well as a campaign to ensure that the positive aspects of the city's growing diversity remain in the public eye, even when media coverage may be negative.

Now in 2012, the city government has decided to renew and refresh its policy initiative with the new City Government Decision 152/12. It is an acknowledgement that while much has been achieved, there remain many challenges, particularly the high rates of school drop-out by minority youth and the lower representation of minority women than of women of majority origin, in the labour market. Its main decisions are to:

- Make the Eurocities Charter on Integrating Cities as the basis for integration and diversity work in Oslo
- Develop a plan for the project Job Match Oslo as a venue for collaboration, making immigrants visible as a resource for business and industry in Oslo
- Fight all forms of racism, bullying and discrimination, and establish a contingency network against hatespeech and harassment of minorities on the internet
- Launch www.oxlo.no for conveying facts about integration and diversity
- Profile OXLO through information materials, conferences, events, and participation in international and national city networks.

In the remainder of this report we will review the major policy areas in which the city is active and update our earlier findings with those from the recent expert visit.

5. Education and Training

The municipality of Oslo owns and governs the schools, appoint the teachers and principals, and governors. It has developed its own educational standards and conducts more tests than other cities in Norway. Contrary to the position in much of the world – where the capital city often

demonstrates some of the lowest educational standards in the country – Oslo is the highest-achieving county education authority in Norway.

Collecting of data on the educational attainment of minorities is very good and there is anonymised information about every individual in the system. The main test of integration is whether children of second generation migrant origin are out-performing their parents. Most migrant kids come from families with little previous educational attainment. Extensive research has found that the grades of majority children and children of migrants are almost the same, and when the social class of parents is included, the results are equal.

The Norwegian educational system has some serious structural problems demonstrated by a huge dropout from upper secondary school: only 33% of children complete vocational training, and about 70% complete academic upper secondary. However, there is no significant difference by ethnicity, and in actual fact if one controls for family background, the ethnic minorities are actually doing better, partly because a proportionally higher percentage of children of migrants follow the academic track. 60% of drop outs (regardless of ethnicity) are unemployed or partly employed three years after dropping out.

Perhaps because education-minded minority groups are fearful of their kids becoming contaminated with Norwegian drop-out culture, private secondary schools in Oslo have a bigger proportion of children from minority background.

There has been a huge political debate in Oslo about freedom of choice in secondary schooling. The result was that free competition is considered best for migrant children's' social mobility and the achievement. The competence of teachers and the leadership of principals is considered the main success factor in achieving equal outcomes for minority pupils. Differences between schools are smaller than differences within schools; depending on the teacher. Millions have been spent to strengthen intercultural competence of teachers and there is a competence plan for teacher training for the whole city.

Oslo is anxious to avoid the emergence of "ghetto" schools and there is little evidence to suggest they are a growing phenomenon, although a certain amount of 'white flight' is reported. The city believes its most effective tool is to make schools in areas of high cultural diversity more attractive than those in homogeneous areas by offering high quality staff and facilities. Therefore many of the schools in the poorer eastern part of Oslo are in the highest rank of the city's schools. The city now needs to do more to publicise this achievement, for example through the OXLO campaign.

Since 2002 additional tuition in Norwegian in primary schools has been provided and the educational outcomes of minorities have increased dramatically. Newcomer children attend a special course for 10 months to master Norwegian available in 30 schools. The authorities want to mix more the newcomers into mainstream classes believing too long a period of segregation is deleterious.

Provision of education for adult migrants is taken very seriously in Oslo, but this too has been hit by the loss of government subsidy for language tuition. The Quo Vadis programme, established in 1991, aims to help migrant women with little previous education to access the labour market. It encourages women to value their existing craft and catering skills which are then employed in a range of enterprises[6]. It is deemed to have been so successful that extra funding has been voted through to 2015 and extended to men. Language tuition has also been extended to people working in low skill public service jobs, with the aim of encouraging them to consider applying for more ambitious jobs.

[6] See http://www.quo-vadis.no

The number of teachers from migrant backgrounds is still very low. The city is preparing a programme to increase the numbers but there is a major blockage in the current regulations, which require that all teachers in Norway must have competence in both the official languages of the country Bokmål and Nynorsk, even though it is quite feasible to function completely effectively in Norwegian society with knowledge of only the former. This seems to the outsider an outdated and eccentric regulation which is particularly irrelevant to the situation in Oslo. If it is not addressed it will seriously handicap the ability of the education system to be a vehicle of intercultural integration. Apparently there is now a national commission looking into this.

Despite the caveats, education remains at the heart of Oslo's success in building an intercultural city

6. Employment and Business

Norway has a growing economy with demand for skilled and unskilled labour in the public and private sectors, which can only be fully met by migrant workers. It also has a relatively benign climate for entrepreneurship with one of the most accessible and streamlined processes for starting a new business. On the other hand, the upper echelons of the labour market remain resolutely white Norwegian. This is being tackled slowly through the successes in education outlined about, but it is still difficult for any foreigner (both Western and non-Western) to be taken seriously in certain professions. Some of this is due to crude prejudice and discrimination (which will be tackled with legislation) but much is down to the residual insularity of a small and recently homogenous nation, which will slowly fade. Also, because job security is extremely strong in Norway it is very hard to fire poorly-performing staff, which makes recruiters more risk-averse. Research has shown that people without a Norwegian name stand a 25% less chance of being called for a job interview. Prejudice of this sort remains a source of great resentment to the people of migrant origin who we interviewed.

The city government is trying to lead by example by increasing opportunities to minorities. It has increased the proportion of non-European staff from 11% to 19% in the last decade, but accepts it still has much to do at the higher levels of management.

The agency for Business Development in Oslo is dealing with an increasing number of enquiries from people of migrant background seeking support to start a business. The Agency has observed that whilst the regulatory environment in Oslo is much simpler than in most other countries, issues such as the understanding of Norwegian language, business culture and tax law remain a serious impediment to business start-up. Some people believe there is a danger of a two-tier economy emerging, with many migrant-owned businesses operating on the edge of legality.

The majority of new starts by migrants are in the ethnic and service economy. As Oslo is almost exclusively a service-based economy it is difficult to find evidence of migrants moving into other areas such as manufacturing or technology but there may be cases elsewhere.

What is clear though is that people of migrant origin are far more entrepreneurial than their fellow Norwegians. The Youth Enterprise service that encourages school children to set up small businesses as part of their studies has found that fully 50% of their graduates are of migrant background. 75% of Oslo schools participate in the Youth Enterprise programme but only few people in each school. It is suggested the courses and entrepreneurship programmes could be more focused and proactive in presenting the advantages of diversity. In the youth enterprise programme the main question is – what are you good at, what is unique in your background? In teaching creativity they explicitly promote the development of mixed teams.

Given what we already know about the high drop-out rate of Norwegian school kids, this is arousing a discussion on the question of whether the new generation of the majority population in Norway is becoming complacent and that in a few years they will be seriously out-competed in the economy by kids of migrant stock. There is also a trend for many young ethnic Norwegians to seek higher education and work abroad in places such as the UK, but who return in order to start and raise a family because of the favourable welfare regime. With a growing economy it is possible to accommodate these trends, but were growth to slow down, these returnees might find themselves in stiff competition for better jobs with rising numbers of the highly-educated children of migrants.

This is the third time we have examined this topic in Oslo and it is the one which has demonstrated the most dynamic progress, exemplified by a very lively meeting this time with some of the city's key protagonists. A number of interesting programmes are now running with support of the city, such as:

- *Global Future*[7]
  which is a talent mobilization programme for highly educated women and men with a multicultural background and good knowledge of Norwegian. Through training and mentoring they are helped to access key management positions and directorships in large Norwegian companies.
- *Diversity in Focus in Academia*[8]
  which is devoted to increasing the number of students from minority groups at Oslo University, and transforming it into a multicultural study environment
- *Diversity in the Workplace*[9]
  which aims to get more people of migrant background into mainstream workplaces and to change the culture of Norwegian business.
- *The Top 10*[10]
  which seeks out and highlights 10 (five women and five men) immigrants who have exercised leadership and / or taken a leading role in the Norwegian labour, social, or cultural scene, in order to demonstrate the "road to success" for others to follow.
- *Alarga*[11]
  which offers to help Norwegian companies meet international competition by supplying them with highly qualified students with intercultural backgrounds, who aspire to work in a diversified cultural and language environment; and to be a network for intercultural knowledge and experience.
- *Jobbx*[12]
  a careers centre for young minorities, offering 3x3 hour job search workshops which are aimed at helping them overcome the fact that 80% of appointments in Norway come through networks rather than formal means.

For example, the Global Future programme is co-funded by six business partners and the city government, and provides courses in leadership and cultural competence free of charge. Farhat Khan, a Global Future graduate, told us "the initiative was a truly empowering experience because it aimed at rebranding the immigrant group from a problem to a resource." After graduation, Farhat established her own management consulting company based on diversity and was nominated for the European Muslim Women of Influence (EMWI) award.

[7] See http://www.nho.no/global-future/er-global-future-noe-for-deg-article22242-610.html
[8] See http://www.uio.no/studier/mifa/
[9] See http://www.mangfold.no/
[10] See http://www.thetop10.no
[11] See http://alarga.org
[12] See http://www.jobbx.no

The diversity advantage concept has clearly started resonating across many business sectors, especially in big legal, medical and engineering companies, which are popular among minorities. But there is also a need to target small companies (which represent 90% of Norwegian business) which are more reluctant to recruit across cultures. To address this, more good practice examples and role models are needed, including from big Norwegian businesses. Greater recognition of foreign qualifications would also enable access to higher level jobs among immigrants. Lastly, the city needs to do more to encourage migrant-owned businesses to break out of restricted ethnic economies and to enter the mainstream economy.

7. Housing and Neighbourhoods

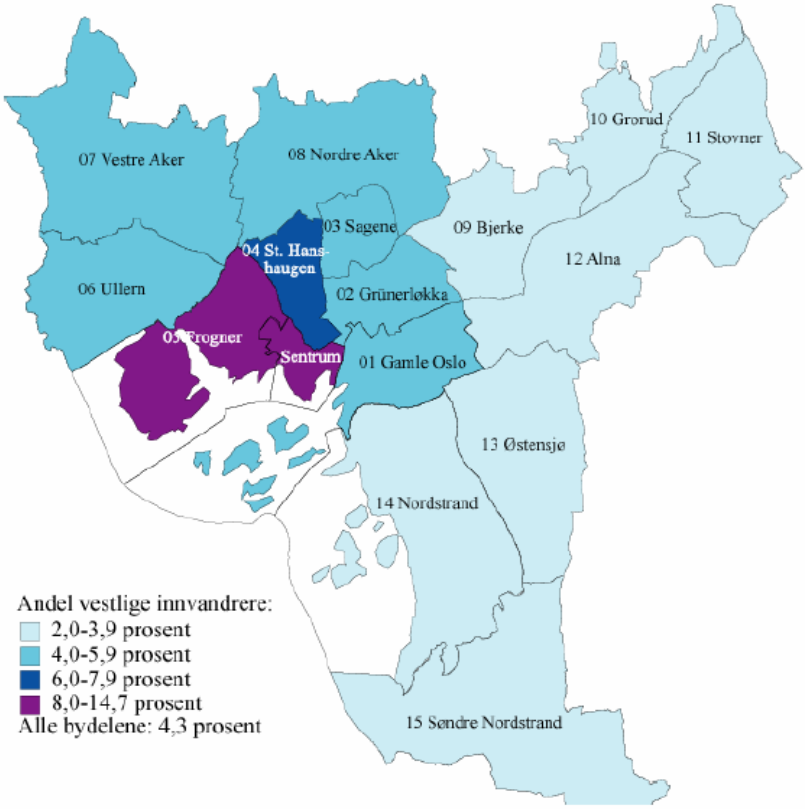
Whilst the two maps below are now a little dated[13], they still provide a reasonably accurate impression of the distribution of Oslo citizens by ethnicity. In summary, the dark blue and purple indicates that most migrants of western origin have settled in the city centre and the inner western districts of St Hanshaugen and Frogner. On the other hand, most migrants of non-Western background originally settled in the old inner-city districts of Gamle Oslo and Grünerlokka, but the more recent trend has been for settlement in the outer city districts of Sondre Nordstrand, Alna and Stovner. The latter two, along with Grorud and Bjerke, will be collectively referred to as Groruddalen in this report. The most recent trend is for more affluent white Norwegians to move into the Gamle Oslo and Grünerlokka districts, often buying property from people of migrant background at attractive prices, who are then relocating to larger properties to Groruddalen. Meanwhile, there is a trend for long-term white Norwegian residents of Groruddalen to move out, often beyond the city limits.

Norway has a rather distinctive system of financing housing and this has a powerful influence upon urban and neighbourhood development in Oslo. After the war the government was determined to maintain Norwegian egalitarian traditions but, in contrast to other social democratic states, it was believed the most effective way of ensuring equality was not through state provision of housing but rather to enable as many Norwegians as possible to own their own accommodation. Over 80% of the population are therefore home owners (and about 75% in Oslo itself). Husbanken was established by the state to finance house building and provide personal mortgages.

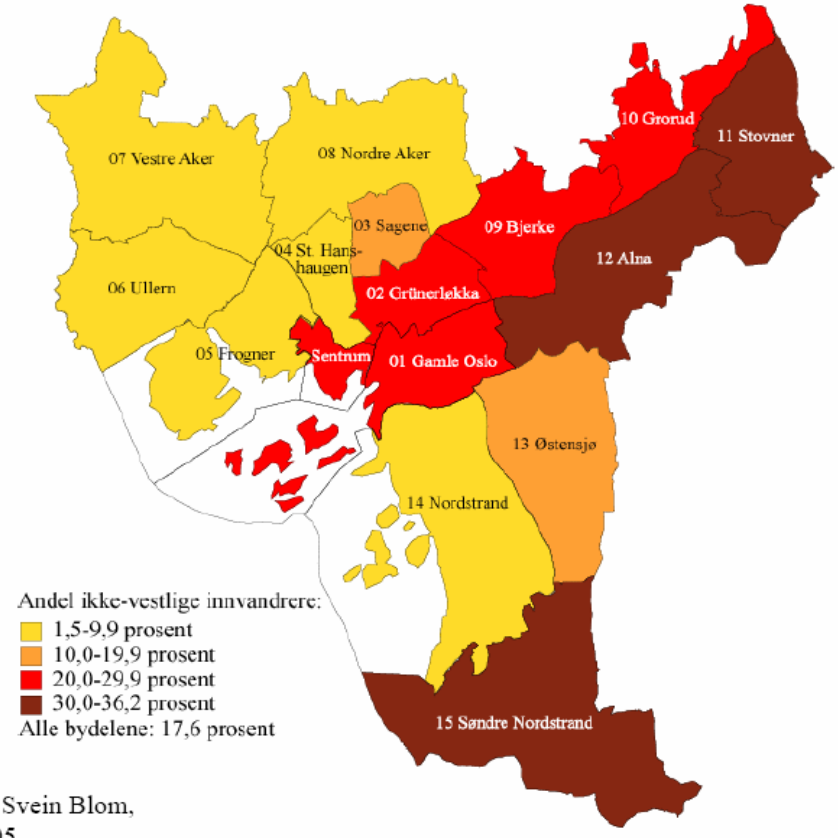
Over 50% of homes are currently purchased in this way. Homeowners are encouraged to form co-operatives. This is particularly common in Oslo with many apartment blocks. Residents are bound by a set of common obligations to maintenance of the building, waste management etc, and are expected to attend group meetings. However these bonds have been losing their strength in recent years (less than 25% now vote in annual meetings and these are mainly of the 50+ age group) and growing cultural diversity is undoubtedly one of the reasons for this. In Groruddalen in particular there is growing concern about how to raise levels of participation in local co-operatives.

[13] Statistics Norway, 2004

Andel vestlige innvandrere i bydelene i Oslo. 1. januar 2004. Prosent



Andel ikke-vestlige innvandrere i bydelene i Oslo. 1. januar 2004. Prosent



Kart etter Svein Blom,
SSB - 2005

The state offers considerable incentives for people to become home owners. For example, interest-free loans which do not have to be repaid if the householder remains in the property. However, this does not seem to deter movement in the market with a 20% annual churn in Oslo. Meanwhile, tenants of the 12,000 council-owned properties must re-apply for their residence every 3 years, which also acts as in impulse to purchase. The impact of this is that far more people of migrant origin are property owners than in other parts of the world, and is in stark contrast with some countries where migrants almost exclusively occupy the poorest quality property rented either from the state or the private sector. It would be interesting to know whether the collateral represented by property is also being used to support loans to establish small business and other economic activities by migrants. In theory no one can own more than one property in a co-operative but there now increasing numbers of cases of people building up extensive property portfolios.

Although there is an increasing diversity of owner of Oslo's housing stock, there does not seem to have been much interest in the cultural implications of this for the kinds of property that might be required. For example, larger families or the need of some Muslim families for separate male and female facilities. The assumption seems to be that migrants will adapt to Norwegian requirements, and analysis of the fertility rates suggest to house-builders that migrants quickly lose the desire for large families once in Norway.

Groruddalen will increasingly become the test of whether the Norwegian system can cope with and adapt to a changing population. As well is diminishing commitment to co-operative principles, there is apparently a high level of absentee landlordism emerging and a shortage of institutions to take on the role of structural and grounds maintenance. There are also (unsubstantiated) rumours that other local authorities are 'exporting' some of their 'problem families' to empty properties in Groruddalen.

Superficially, Groruddalen seems to resemble similar large modernist, high-rise housing developments on the peripheries of cities in France, Sweden and UK for example, which have become synonymous with isolation, segregation, physical dereliction and limited life-chances. But whilst Groruddalen is not short of problems within the Norwegian context, it is far removed from these other places. Through the Area Lift programme there have clearly been high levels of investment in the housing and public realm including pleasant squares and parks, libraries and youth centres.

The expert team visited the Alna and Fureset areas where the local administration has committed to a long-term process of engagement with the community. It has collected residents' opinion through mapping, workshops and door-to-door surveys in cooperation with minority advisers and field workers. Thus emerged, for example, the idea of a World Park to be designed and maintained by the residents. Consequently, the residents feel greater ownership of the regeneration process and now engage more actively in housing cooperatives and other common ventures. A sharp drop in youth crime incidence between 2008 and 2012 is also partly attributed to the increased participation and ownership.

In the Furuset area there has been a long term programme called Living Together aiming to encourage neighbours to get to know each better. Over a thousand people enrolled on a four hour course in neighbourliness. Meanwhile in nearby Lindeberg there was a perceived separation between a large settled population and an equally large group of more transient people. Here it was decided to make the playgrounds and outdoor spaces the place for action. Kids were encouraged to revive an old tradition of planting flowers in pots and outdoor space. This raised people's spirits and the administration quickly followed up with a survey of people wishes for the area. Over 190 people responded (much better than previously) and this was a trigger for engaging about other matters with them.

Young people have been the catalyst for progressive change in the area, particularly through the medium of the Furuset Sport Association. In an area once troubled by gang conflict, over 100 kids have passed through a one year sports leadership course and can now be seen throughout the district wearing prominent outfits and taking part in positive activities. This has reassured elders, and raised their credibility and established them as role models for younger kids. Organisers believe the key to success has been melting the bureaucratic walls between different professional groups active in the area, such as police, housing officials and youth workers, and through involving parents. In 2012 the King visited Groruddalen on several high profile occasions, during the period of the Breivik trials, to show his personal commitment to the image of a youthful and diverse Norway which Groruddalen exemplifies.

In conclusion, there is a short-term concern that continuing white flight is continuing to exacerbate the ethnic distinctiveness of Groruddalen from the rest of Oslo. However, there seems to be a confident belief that, in the longer term, a combination of demographic growth and the maintenance of high quality standards will make it inevitable that white Norwegians will move back into the area.

8. Civil Society

There is a large and very active voluntary sector concerned with diversity in Oslo and it plays a vital role in many things from combating racism and discrimination to the delivery of mainstream public services.

One of the most interesting from an intercultural perspective is OMOD - Organisasjon mot offentlig diskriminering (Organization against Institutional Discrimination). They provide information, advice, and assistance to organisations in the area of race relations, serving as an ombudsman against institutional discrimination and alleged breaches of civil and human rights in Norway. They also scrutinize the central and local government's rules and policies and their implementation in relationship to minorities and immigrants. Whilst this in itself is an important but rather commonplace set of functions, the way OMOD perceives itself is as an opportunity to appraise public service 'through an intercultural lens'. They pose a challenge to Norwegian society by arguing that integration is not simply an issue for migrants but for all. They take this challenge to key institutions such as the police, and make a comprehensive reappraisal of how services should be designed and delivered and how the mindsets of established professionals can be changed. For example, this has involved senior managers and policy-makers to meet multi-racial police services in New York and London and debating the outcomes. They have tried to move their activities beyond the level of identifying and combating racism to tackling more unconscious and routinised forms of discrimination. They try to do this through encouragement and the dissemination of best practice.

Youth work and the arts are given a high priority in the city strategy. This is partly because of a need to move beyond the stereotype of young migrants as vulnerable or unstable new arrivals to them being seen as normal members of society; and also because the arts and media remain one of the most segregated areas of Norwegian life. The X-Ray Youth Culture House and the Nordic Black Theatre are good examples of new intercultural spaces where a new hybridised Oslo youth culture is being forged. Youngsters who started with these projects are now starting to make their mark on mainstream Norwegian society through achieving positions in the mainstream media and arts worlds, and they in turn act as role models for future generations.

There are some very strong mono-ethnic organisations in the city. The Tamil community is presented as the paragon in this regard. It is a highly organised community of about 12,000 in Norway with two thirds based in Oslo, with a high level of mutual communication and support. It has purchased large premises from which it operated a comprehensive array of social, cultural and educational functions. Its managing group takes a high profile role in community relations, intervening quickly and decisively in cases of potential problems and maintaining close links with local politicians. Whilst this is highly appreciated by public agencies it is sometimes resented as social control by younger members of the community. The group concedes that whilst it cultivates close relations with ethnic Norwegians it is less closely integrated with other minority groups. There were critical suggestions in some quarters that the Council operates a 'divide and rule' policy by encouraging monocultural groups to integrate vertically into a form of client status but not to integrate horizontally.

It is notable that there was a distinctly negative tone expressed during our 2012 discussions with civil society organisations. The general claim was that beneath the positive sheen created by a buoyant economy and a dynamic stance from policy-makers, there were many unresolved and over-looked problems regarding inter-ethnic relations and the conditions of migrants in Oslo. Those working with young people suggested the steady drip of negative coverage of minorities by the media was creating an identity of low self-esteem and alienation among many second generation people, manifesting particularly in the late teens, with many Oslo-born kids self-identifying as foreigners. Meanwhile, prosperous white middle class kids were developing a dualistic lifestyle of increasing overseas travel and a cosmopolitan outlook to the outside world, whilst developing few intercultural skills or curiosity to explore the culturally diverse neighbourhoods and communities within their own city.

There was an expression of frustration in regard to language. It was claimed that when, a few years ago, the largest groups of immigrants were from Africa and Asia, there was a noisy demand from Norwegian society that Norsk language must be strictly taught and learned. Now however there are higher numbers of white Europeans living in Oslo and their common tongue is not Norsk but English, and most Norwegian seem accepting of this. This seems like double standards to some people.

A final point referred to the aftermath of the Breivik atrocities. It was claimed that Norwegian society has found it very difficult to talk about its feeling and has failed to have a proper discussion of the implications for the future of a multi-ethnic Norway. During the trial, there was a widespread discussion that Breivik's actions had been motivated by mental illness rather than extremist xenophobic and islamophobic ideology and this distracted the public from a proper inspection of its own conscience. It is said this is out of a misplaced belief that it is easier to build social harmony by suppressing contentious issues, rather than by bringing them out into the open and debating them.

Although the tone and content of the discussion with civil society differed markedly from that with the business people, there was one point that emerged strongly in both. Norway's (and Oslo's) awareness of itself as a richly and irredeemably multi-ethnic place was still seriously low. There was a common concern that the longer it takes for Norway to realise and acknowledge this, the greater will be the obstacle to a sustainable integration.

9. Interfaith Dialogue

Religious education in school since 1997 has been oriented towards teaching about different religions, ethics and 'lifestance', and undertaken by ordinary teachers, not Church people.

The official policy of the Church of Norway is for Ministers to be given freedom to act at their own discretion on inter-religious dialogue in their locality. In Oslo the Church's orientation towards

dialogue is very strong. There is long tradition of interfaith activity in Oslo, particularly in Grønland and Grünerlokka which has the Emmaus Dialogue Centre where Church of Norway ministers work closely with leaders of other religions. It is said this is one reason why the Danish 'Cartoons Crisis' did not cause significant disruption in Norway. Representative of Islam and Christianity already had clear lines of dialogue and were able to come together quickly to disarm any emerging problems.

In Norway, a prerequisite of state funding of religious bodies is the setting up of umbrella organisations. There is an Islamic council representing 75% of Muslims and an even higher proportion of those in Oslo, which is exceptional in comparison to much of the rest of Europe. By contrast in Sweden there are three separate umbrella bodies for Muslims, which makes dialogue much harder to achieve. Similarly the humanists have organised themselves into a federation and they are widely consulted also.

There is agreement that inter-religious dialogue should not be explicitly about social integration but should serve to understand other religions. However at the local level discussion about religion is mixed with issues of ethnic culture, family matters etc, so it becomes an extensive dialogue. As such there is a properly religious aspect of dialogue (praying together, talking about the content of religion), and a social dialogue involving religious communities (youth work, feasts etc.).

Most Oslo Muslim leaders are sympathetic with the ideas of Tariq Ramadan that it is necessary to develop a new western form of Islam, and indeed that a specifically Norwegian form should also be encouraged. There is a high level of co-operation with Muslims in other European countries who share these views.

There has been some concern recently following a article in Aftenposten claiming the emergence of Muslim 'moral police' in parts of Oslo. It claims that young Pakistani men are patrolling areas to impose standards of behaviour and dress on young women and to threaten gay people. Apparently Senaid Kobiloica of the Norwegian Islamic Council has agreed that such people do exist and has condemned them but has also added that they wield far less power than the newspaper might have suggested.

One of the main issues for discussion is the extent to which interfaith dialogue should draw upon public subsidy. Institutionalised dialogue was originally based on voluntary work, the Church of Norway has increasingly put resources in it as well. But to be able to continue and extend the dialogue to the grassroots and empower more people, the increased involvement of the city and the state may be required. However this will open new debates. The national laws on equality exempt religious institutions and there is currently a major discussion on whether this should change in return for public funding.

Local religious leaders think it is very important to create a self-governing body with journalists, police etc. to act as an intercultural sounding board. They have been looking at models in other cities, for example in Leicester.

The city's Intercultural Museum, which is located in the refurbished old police station known as Grønland Culture Station, makes an impressive contribution to interfaith dialogue. It provides a permanent exhibition of all the major faiths of the city is keeps strong connections with all the faith groups. Its main client is a constant stream of school visits but it is also open to the public and initiates project aimed at all sections of society.

10. The media

Norway is one of the most media-saturated countries in the world with a large number of newspapers, radio and TV channels with very large reader/listenerships. It is not surprising therefore that there have been good opportunities for ethnic minorities to establish a foothold. In the mainstream there is Migrapolis[14] a weekly magazine programme about minorities interacting with the majority, appearing on prime time TV and radio since 1997. It has taken the lead in teaching Norwegians about how their society is changing. It was founded by 6 minority journalists.

However, the exposure Migrapolis receives is tiny compared to the influence which the mainstream media has upon public opinion about integration. When in 2009 a national survey found that half of Norwegians thought integration was a failure, the government Directorate for Integration and Diversity (IMDi) commissioned a report into *Immigrants in the Norwegian Media* (2009)[15], which gives a good idea of who it felt was the principal cause of this. The report found that:

> *Articles about immigration and integration focus much more on problems than on resources. Of all the stories that had immigration or integration as their main topic, 71 per cent are considered to be problem-oriented and 18 per cent to be resource-oriented, while only 11 per cent of the stories are considered to be neutral. Crime was the topic most covered in all the newspaper articles about immigrants and refugees.*
>
> *The review of press coverage shows that the media's focus on conflict, drama and sensation applies here as in other areas of society: most news stories focus on problems. Some groups, such as Somalis and Muslims, get more attention – and negative focus – than others. Stories about Islam/Muslims dominate the media.*
>
> *Focusing on problems is positive and can contribute to progress being made in areas where the integration of immigrants is particularly challenging. The media play an important role here. It becomes a challenge, however, if the sum of the media coverage creates a picture of immigrants that primarily focuses on problems.*

The media has not been a topic of attention during the last two expert visits to Oslo, and yet it was mentioned as a cause for concern by several of the people we encountered. We accept that it is difficult for any city, even one as powerful as Oslo, to significantly change the attitude and behaviour of national media organs. We also note that IMDi has recently commented that the media conducted a review of its practice after the terrorist attacks of July 22nd 2011, and has subsequently been taking a more positive and responsible role. However, this remains one of the greatest challenges to Oslo becoming an intercultural city. Presumably it aims to address this through its commitment to great profiling and documentation in the new Government Decision.

11. Conclusions

There is no doubt that in the policies it makes and the resources it allocates, the City Council of Oslo is doing much to become an intercultural city, and well merits its place near the top of the ICC Index. With an extensive civil society and growing numbers in the private sector who share its intercultural aspirations it has a strong momentum and a sense of purpose, all given structure by the continued vigour of the OXLO campaign. Whilst in other countries, politicians have shied away from issues of diversity, unless it is to demonstrate their strength and ruthlessness in the face of illegal immigration

[14] http://www.nrk.no/migrapolis/
[15] http://www.imdi.no/en/Sprak/English/Overview-2009-Immigrants-in-the-Norwegian-media/

or terror threats, Oslo's political leadership has kept a long-term commitment to legislation and action in the mundane but very important issues that enable a city to integrate. The new Government Decision 152/12 maintains the speed and direction of travel. Clearly the strength of the economy helps to give politicians the confidence that seems so lacking elsewhere, and some of the fortunate consequences of the unfortunate Breivik case have created a bubble of tolerance and empathy which have sustained an intercultural spirit. Of course unlimited economic growth may bring with it its own threats, leading to the growing hubris and social polarisation that accompanied the boom in other western countries. The challenge will be for Norway's admired classless society and welfare system to ameliorate the stresses and strains inherent in such a period of rapid change. However, it must do it not against a background of a largely homogenous mono-ethnic population but one which is diverse, and demanding the right to be even more so.

There are still one or two areas that remain a mystery, even after three visits to the city. For example, what role does the police service play in making Oslo intercultural? Norwegian police in general play a very low profile part in urban life compared to most international counterparts, so it is not easy to perceive an influence whether for good or ill. Recently the police force has faced a storm of criticism for its apparent unpreparedness for the Breivik attacks, but perhaps this low-key, non-militarised style of policing was what Norwegians wanted in the past. How the police force will evolve, under the glare of public scrutiny, both in response to Breivik and to the more general changes in Norwegian society will remain to be seen.

The media is a rather distant but extremely influential phenomenon. We have noted the media's changing stance towards diversity either side of 22 July 2011, and also the City Council's commitment under the new Government Decision to engage more directly in promoting the OXLO programme, but we wonder whether this is enough. Clearly in Norway there is a rather strict separation between politics and media, with the latter jealously guarding its freedom to be objective and to 'speak truth to power'. However, some of the Norwegian media's coverage of migration and diversity over recent years has been at best irresponsible and at worst mendacious and rabble-rousing. As such, it may be necessary for the city to break past conventions and engage in a more direct scrutiny of the press. We would recommend taking a look at the Barcelona anti-Rumour Campaign for inspiration.

Several related challenges were identified in the business and neighbourhood sectors. Representatives of both underlined the need to foster the intercultural competence of staff, including social workers, managers, human resource professionals and headhunting agencies. The business representatives also pointed out the persistence of discrimination in recruitment against people with 'non-Norwegian' names. Also we noted the need to accredit foreign qualifications and to reflect diversity at top managerial levels, in particular in small companies, which are so important in Norway. It would also be advisable to encourage minority-owned businesses to enter the mainstream economy and value-added sectors.

Finally, the neighbourhood services sector acknowledges it needs to do even more to identify service needs in highly diverse and rapidly-changing districts; and the need to better share experience and good practice around the city. Thus, mixing and knowledge-exchange between neighbourhoods should become pivotal to Oslo's intercultural strategy.

Finally, one of the questions arising is that whilst Oslo's policy framework says the city is intercultural, does the city feel intercultural to the people who live there on a daily basis? This is a largely subjective phenomenon and thus difficult to verify. However, we can turn to the public opinion surveys such as the Integration Barometer, which is conducted biennially by the Norwegian government (albeit for the country as a whole rather than Oslo specifically). In general the

Barometer tells of a complex and mixed picture with considerable dissatisfaction with the government's handling of integration. Nevertheless there has been a notable growth over recent years in the extent of contact between ethnic Norwegians and people of migrant background, and Contact Theory suggests that greater contact leads to better relations. Nationally over 40% of the majority community now have frequent contact with minorities (and one can assume the proportion to be much higher in Oslo), and half the population look favourably on the possibility of getting a family member with a different ethnic background. Also, despite their current scepticism, two thirds of Norwegians believe inter-ethnic relations will improve as time goes on.

It will be vital for the City Council and its partner agencies in business and civil society to capture this mood of hope and to build upon it now, in this window of opportunity that circumstances have created.

Agenda for ICC expert visit to Oslo

29 October 2012

Meeting with NGOs at the Anti-Racist Centre

Participants:

- Norwegian Centre against Racism: Ms. Kari Helene Partapuoli; Mr. Shoaib Sultan; Ms. Mari Linbekken
- Mr. Håvard Elllingsen, Red Cross Centre Grorud
- Mr. Aki de Leon, Organisation against Discrimination
- Ms. Anita Rathore, National Board for Immigrants and the Authorities
- Ms. Mona Mauseth Evensen, JobbX
- Mr. Henrik C Cenar, Directorate of Integration and Diversity
- Mr. Jon Grimsby, Refugee Foundation
- Mr. Toralv Moe, Department of Cultural Affairs and Business Development, Oslo City

30 October 2012

Meeting with representatives of business and the labour market

- Global Future: Ms. Torhild Hallre, Ms. Fahrat Khan
- Ms. Nirmala Eidsgård, Programme Diversity in Academia (Mifa), University of Oslo
- Ms. Dilek Ayhan, Alarga (company linking people with diverse background to potential employers)
- Ms. Lisa Cooper, Diversity in the Workplace
- Mr. Marius Sandvik, Agency for Business Development
- Ms. Karen Bøhle Aarhus, Ms. Mona Mauseth Evensen, JobbX (job centre for youth)
- Oslo City, Department of Cultural Affairs and Business Development: Mr. Toralv Moe, Ms. Tone Skodvin, Mr. Jan Fredrik Lockert

Alna District, Groruddalen

- District of Alna: Ms. Biljana Lauvstad, Mr. Nisar Bhagat (Husbanken and also Pakistani family network leader), Ms. Solveig Sommer Holm
- Ms. Hanne Marie Sønstegaard, Area boost, Furuset
- Ms. Lone Singstad Pålshaugen, Area boost, Lindeberg
- Project for Job search Groruddalen: Mr. Arne Johansen, Mr. Jarle Stave Botnen, Ms. Cathrine

Fochsen

- Mr. Rune Gjelberg, Alnaskolen, the Alna project
- Mr. Toralv Moe
- Ms. Tone Skodvin