

Summary:

Planning ideas, residential preferences and activity patterns in Oslo, Bergen and Trondheim

The urban development in Norway has been characterised by suburbanisation and urban sprawl during most of the post war period. In the beginning of the 90s the population growth in the outer urban areas was stabilized or reduced, while the population in the central urban areas increased. The trend changed from suburbanisation to reurbanisation. This indicated an increased interest for living in central areas, for more urban ways of living and urban lifestyles. This is part of an international trend termed gentrification, which means a change in social composition of the population in some of the central areas from working class to middle class. These new inhabitants appreciate other goods and have different attitudes about the urban way of life than people living in suburbia.

In this report three questions related to this process are addressed:

- What are the opinions of the “good city “ among different social groups in the urban areas?
- What are the relations between these attitudes and their motives for choosing residential area within the cities?
- How does location of residence influence activity- and travel patterns?

Perspectives on gentrification and the gentrification process

The debate about gentrification, which has been long and extensive, can roughly be divided into three perspectives, i.e. explanations related to economy and production, consumption and lifestyle and feminisation of the labour market.

Gentrification can be characterised as a process, with different actors and phases. We can identify the pioneers or the early gentrifiers, mechanisms that reinforce the process and new generations of gentrifiers.

In our opinion the large cohort of students in the 70s was an important group in the initial process. The housing market was difficult and the students found places to live in the central parts of the cities in cheap housing with low standards. This young group contributed by bringing into focus the insufficient renewal policy of the inner cities and by practical renewal of houses. Reduction of road traffic and reconstruction of residential areas have increased the quality of housing areas in the inner parts compared to the outer parts. This has reinforced the process.

The empirical basis

The analyses in the report are based on a comparative study from Oslo, Bergen and Trondheim (the three biggest cities in Norway), carried out in April/May 2001. The sample consists of three cohorts (30-35 years, 45-50 years, and 60-65 years), with equal size of men and women in each group. The samples in the three cities are equally divided between the inner and outer parts of the cities. The division follows the official division used by the municipalities. The study is a mail-back survey. The gross sample was about 4500 in each city. The response rate was 37 percent, varying from 39 percent in Trondheim to 35 percent in Oslo. The net sample consists of about 5000 respondents.

The questions are grouped in four main subjects: residential choice and motives for changing abode, work and work trips, included a “work trip history”, activities and travelling, opinions about urban qualities and environmental attitudes. Information about education, income, political preferences, marital status and the household are additional. In this report analyses of planning ideals, residential preferences and activity- and travel patterns are presented.

Characteristics of the population in the inner and outer parts

The inner city is the area for the well educated in all three cities. In average 38 percent of the sample have an education on university level. In the inner city 46 percent belong to his category, in the outer city the share is 30 percent.

A greater part of the manual working class lives in the outer areas than in the inner. There are differences between the cities. The share in the inner parts of Oslo is 12 percent, the outer parts 18 percent. In Bergen the numbers are respectively 14 percent and 28 percent, and Trondheim 18 and 26 percent.

The inner parts comprise more single persons than the outer areas. A greater share of married/cohabitating with children is living in the outer parts, the shares of married/cohabitating without children and singles with children are the same in the two areas of the cities.

Both the individual and the household income are higher in Oslo than in the two other cities, but the differences between inner and outer areas are small.

Access to a car varies between the urban areas. In Oslo 24 percent do not own a car, in Bergen 18 percent, and in Trondheim 13 percent. In the inner city 28 percent live without a car, in the outer parts only 9 percent are in such a situation.

Planning ideals

During the last century, there is roughly three well known urban planning ideals; the idea of the *garden city*, *functionalism*, and the *neighbourhood principle*. In recent years *neourbanism* has appeared as a reaction to functionalism and development of satellite towns.

The idea of *the garden city* was put forward by Ebenezer Howard, who wanted to combine urban qualities with the best of the rural. Ullevål Hageby in Oslo is an example of this planning idea.

The purpose of *functionalism* was to give people good, healthy and simple homes, without unnecessary ornamentation and decorations. The functionalistic architecture emphasised the industrial society's demand for rationality.

The *neighbourhood principle* had the village as a model. Lewis Mumford was one of the "founding fathers". He wanted the local community in small units as a response to the anonymity of the city.

Neourbanism is a reaction to zoning and urban sprawl. Scarcity of sites and a need for a more efficient utilization of land support this idea. Seen from an environmental perspective a stronger concentration can reduce the need for car use.

In our survey the respondents were asked to evaluate different qualities of an urban area. These are grouped in four categories, which can be associated with the four mentioned planning principles.

Conditions related to the ideal of the Garden City

In the survey this ideal comprises parks, short distance to public open air/forest areas, attractive surroundings, and quiet neighbourhoods. This planning ideal is primarily expressed by the eldest cohort and by women. It is also approved by people living in traditional nuclear families, while single persons with children do not emphasise these qualities.

"Functionalism" – private life with a car

The indicators of this planning ideal are easy access by car, good parking conditions, privacy, not to be seen by the neighbours, direct access to a balcony/veranda. It is people living in the outer parts of the cities who primarily appreciate these qualities. Elderly people, people with low education, women and couples also have the opinion that these are good qualities.

The neighbourhood principle – consideration of children

This ideal comprises short distance to school, kindergarten, playgrounds and sport facilities in the vicinity, and that it is safe for children to play outside their home.

The groups who emphasise these qualities are families with children, women, people living in the outer parts and people with low income.

The new urbanism

This planning ideal comprises short distance to work, cafes and restaurants, cinemas and theatres, a varied supply of shops and services. These qualities are all appreciated by people living in the inner parts of the city, by women more than men. Age has no impact on the wish to live in the vicinity of cultural institutions.

Proximity to cafes and restaurants is more important to the two youngest cohorts, while the eldest cohort appreciates shops and other services in the vicinity.

Preferences of residence

The respondents in the survey were asked to give information about the reasons for their residential choices. The answers are grouped in two categories: urban qualities/urbanism and neighbourhood/conditions for children.

Urban qualities/urbanism are first of all preferred by people living in the inner parts of the city. Women say more often than men that their choice of residence is motivated by their preferences of urban qualities. People with high education emphasise the possibility to walk or cycle to daily activities, to live near the central parts of the city and to have easy access to culture and entertainment. The preferences for urban qualities are not related to age.

People living in the outer parts of the cities emphasise good conditions for children and reduction in traffic and environmental problems for their residential choices more than people in the inner parts do. Families with children and the eldest cohort also emphasise these factors. The quality of public transport supply as motive for changing residential area is mentioned more often by the inhabitants of Oslo, irrespective of where they live, than by inhabitants of the two other cities.

Activity patterns

There are three types of activities related to the different parts of city; activities carried out independent of the residential location, activities typical for the outer parts and activities done more in the inner than in the outer parts.

The first group comprises courses, music and hobbies, in-door training, visiting friends and relatives, and attending sports arrangements. Attending courses, playing music, singing in choir and doing other hobbies are most common among people with high education. In-door training etc is more typical for women than for men, for the two youngest cohorts, among people with education on medium or high level, singles, and this type of activity increase with income.

Visiting friends and relatives are more frequent among women, while watching football games etc are more often done by men than by women.

Apart from some types of in-door training, which can be said to have an individual orientation, these are activities with long traditions, like being a member of a choir or a (school)band, or they are related to collective experiences, like being a supporter on a football match or visiting friends and relatives.

The activities typical for the outer parts of the city have also this orientation, it is organisation- and club/committee work and out-door life. The oldest cohort, people in families and those with high education participate most frequently in organisational work. Out-door life has long traditions in Norway. This type of activity is more common in Bergen and Trondheim and the frequency increases with education and income.

The “activity - profile” for people living in the inner parts of the city is characterised by more individual oriented activities than the profile for people in the outer parts. Visiting cinemas and theatres, eating out and waking in the parks are related to the inner parts of the city. Women have the highest activity level. Younger people and those with high education also attend these activities relatively frequent.

Travel pattern in different residential areas

The inhabitants in the inner parts of the cities carry out 70 percent of their activities within their local areas. In the outer areas the number is a little lower than 50 percent, even if these areas are significantly larger.

One of the most important reasons to live in the inner parts of the cities is the possibility to walk or cycle to daily activities. The analysis shows that people act in accordance to what they say. The inner city inhabitants walk to more than half of their activities, while they use their car for about 20 percent. The corresponding numbers for the inhabitants in the outer city are the other way around.

Ownership and use of the cottage

In average about 30 percent in Norway own or have access to a summer house or a cottage. In this particular sample about 50 percent own or have access to a cottage. The differences in ownership between people living in inner and outer parts of the cities are very small. The distance to the cottage is about 200 km, a little longer for the inner city residents. The use of the cottage is almost the same. One third of the sample say they use it several times a month, and less than one in five use it less than once in a six-month period.

The typical cottage owner lives in Trondheim, is married/cohabitating, aged 60-65 years, is professional or owner of a business, and has relatively high income. The most frequent user also lives in Trondheim, the same age and marital status, but income and occupation do not have any impact.

Different challenges for inner and outer parts of the cities

The analyses in this report show that the attraction of the inner city as residential area has positive traffic and environmental consequences. Earlier the tendency was that people left the central parts of the city when they got children. Renewal of the inner parts together with traffic schemes have made these areas more attractive also for families with children, but still they are a minority in the inner areas compared to the outer.

This study has shown that young, highly educated women appreciate the urban qualities most. To keep them as inner city residents, also when they get children, the areas have to provide good conditions for children, both to improve the quality of kindergartens and schools and to offer a variety of leisure activities for children.

On the other hand the study shows that inhabitant in the outer areas have less (urban) offers, longer distance to work and other services needed in everyday life. They have to travel out of their local areas, and some times a rather long way to carry out their daily activities. More than half of this travelling is done by car, which creates environmental problems for most of the city. To make these areas more “complete”, can simplify organising everyday life for the residents and reduce the extensive car use for these population groups.