

# Desegregating through densification?

## Potential and limitations in the case of Oslo

AESOP 2025, Istanbul

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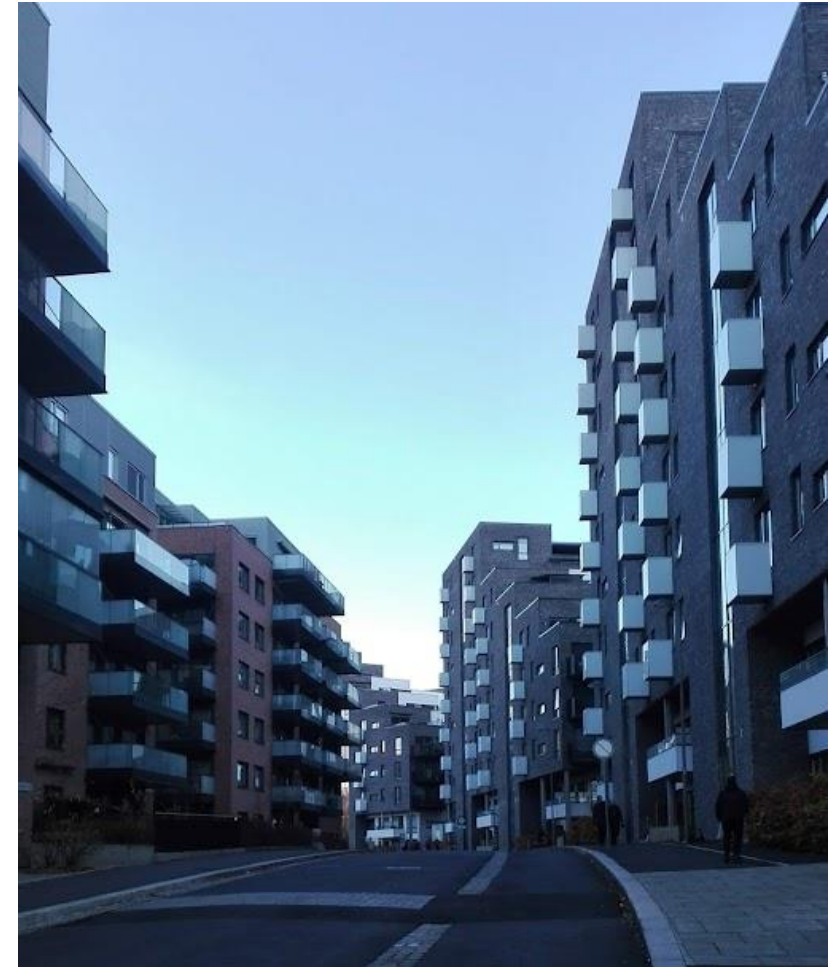
Roberta Cucca, NMBU



# Introduction and background

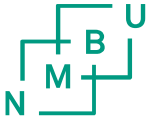
This article explores the **multifaceted connections between urban densification strategies and their sociospatial consequences**, particularly in terms of residential segregation or desegregation.

It focuses on **Oslo**, analyzing whether densification **is contributing to decreasing historically rooted segregation**.



Oslo. Kværnerbyen. Picture: Rebecca Cavicchia

# What are the implications of densification on segregation dynamics? Insights from the literature



Oslo. Ensjø. Picture: Rebecca Cavicchia

- **Social Mixing & Cohesion:** Dense cities are seen as models for social diversity (Bricocoli & Cucca, 2016).
- **Economic Vitality:** Density fosters economic vibrancy, attracting creative classes (Jacobs, 1961; Florida, 2019).
- **Housing Diversity:** Offers varied housing options compared to low-density development (Aurand, 2010).

# What are the implications of densification on segregation dynamics? Insights from the literature



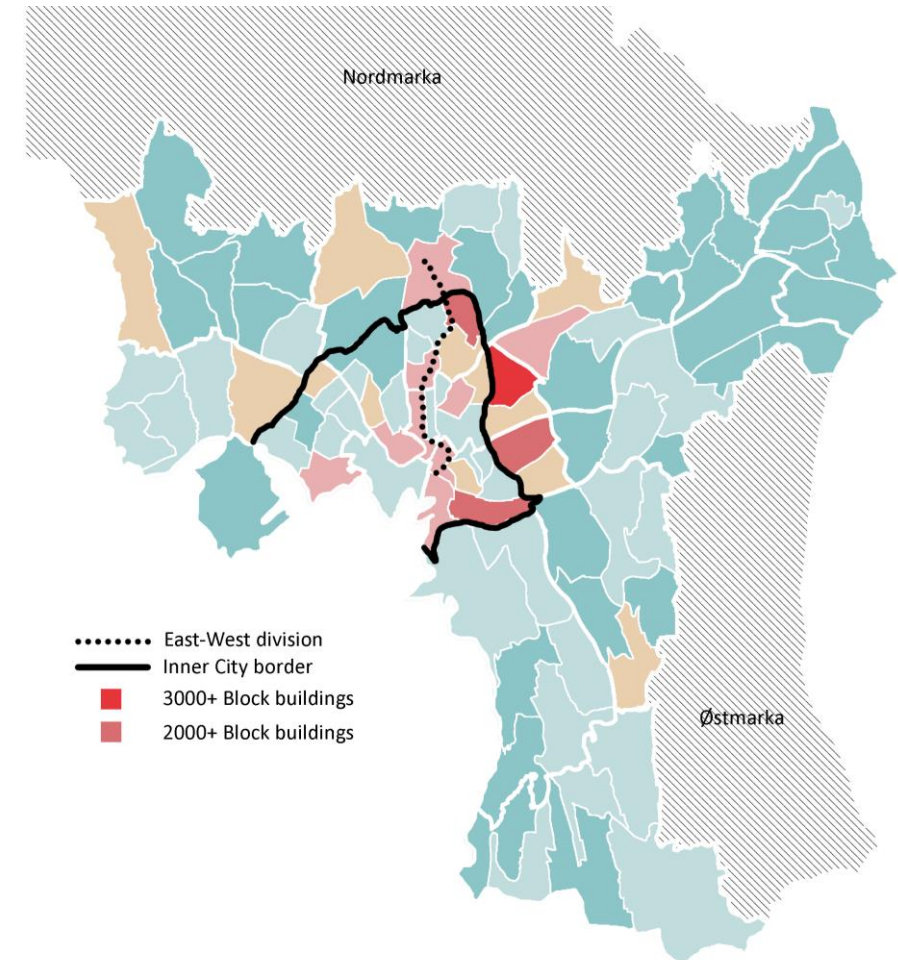
Oslo. Løren. Picture: Rebecca Cavicchia

- Risk of gentrification in low-income areas (Bridge et al. 2011) and *new build gentrification* (Davidson & Lees, 2005; Rerat, 2012)
- Weak capacity of rebalancing macro-scale segregation dynamics (Rousseau, 2015)
- Risk of high-income groups segregation in privileged areas and locations (e.g. waterfront redevelopment interventions, see Andersen and Røe, 2017)



# Segregation and densification in Oslo

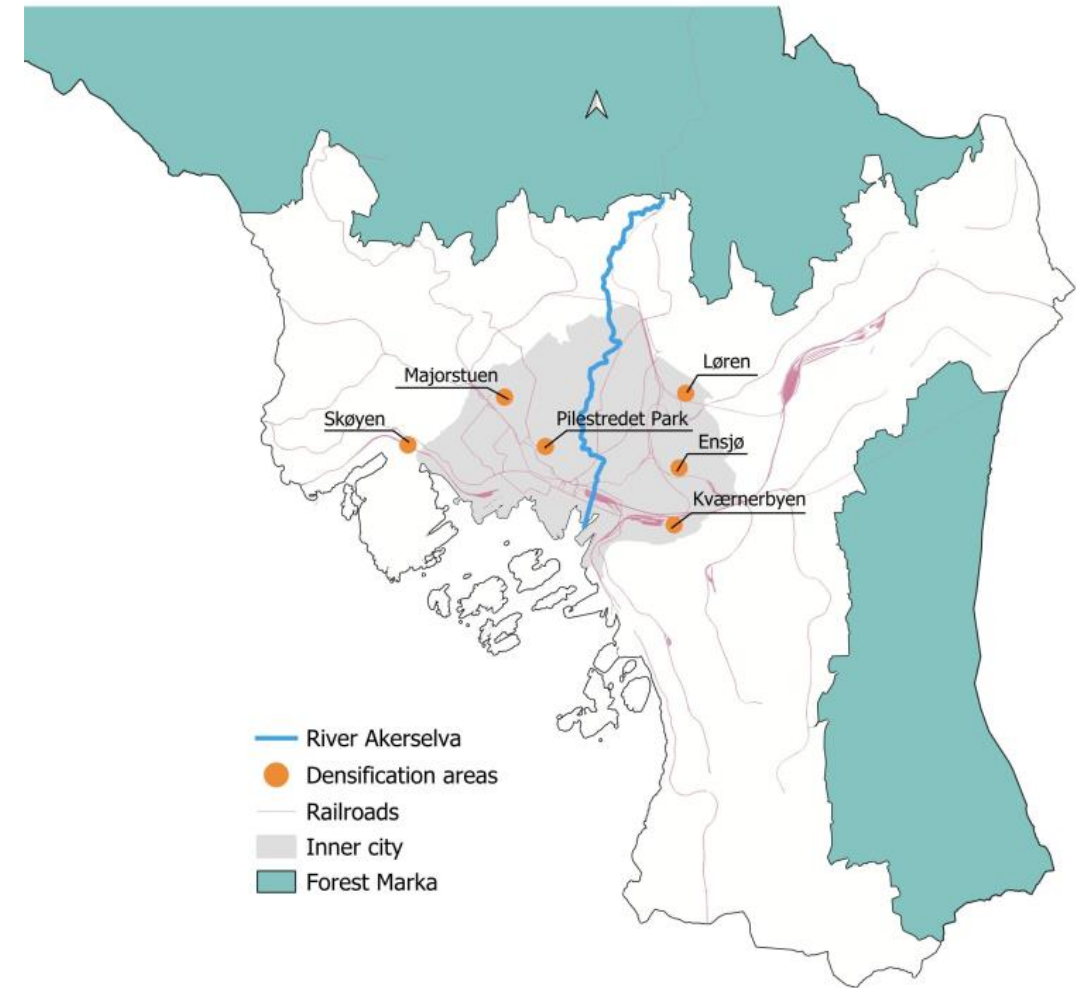
- Historically segregated city with strong east-west division (Wessel, 2015)
- Densification implemented since the 1980s, hegemonic discourses (Næss, 2011)
- Potential of rebalancing the east-west division addressed in municipal plans (Andersen and Skrede, 2017)



Densification in Oslo 2004-2018. Map made by authors

# Methods and case studies

- **6 newly developed densification areas** (3 in the western side and 3 in the eastern side)
- Census tract-level data provided from Statistics Norway (2005 and 2018)
- Analyzed variables: median income, household composition, ethnic background, tenure structure, age structure and education level
- Comparison of the social composition of the densification areas with the administrative district and with the whole municipality



Selected case studies. Map made by authors.

Eastern Densification Areas																		
Areas	Løren		Løren/District		Løren/Oslo		Ensjø		Ensjø/District		Ensjø/Oslo		Kværner-byen		Kværner-byen/District		Kværner-byen/Oslo	
Years	2005	2018	2005	2018	2005	2018	2005	2018	2005	2018	2005	2018	2005	2018	2005	2018	2005	2018
Household composition																		
Single household	76,8%	65,5%	7,4%	-12,2%	9,6%	-2,6%	76,6%	65,5%	0,2%	-8,7%	9,3%	-2,7%	71,0%	74,6%	-7,1%	3,8%	1,3%	9,7%
Households with children	12,5%	25,0%	-41,5%	65,1%	-41,5%	16,7%	15,6%	24,3%	-7,9%	36,9%	-27,2%	13,4%	19,4%	15,9%	14,5%	-	-9,4%	-34,4%
Income level																		
Household median income (in NOK)	324177	548796	17,8%	21,7%	8,5%	15,5%	250427	473743,5	0,2%	10,2%	-11,8%	-0,3%	240932	465381,9	-44,0%	8,2%	-15,2%	-2,0%
Country background																		
Norwegian	57,9%	61,4%	-21,5%	-6,0%	-25,4%	-8,3%	75,2%	62,6%	12,2%	3,2%	-3,2%	-6,5%	66,6%	64,3%	-0,6%	6,1%	-14,3%	-3,9%
Western	5,4%	5,4%	13,6%	-29,9%	30,3%	-7,2%	3,2%	5,5%	-25,4%	-19,4%	-24,0%	-6,0%	3,1%	5,8%	-28,1%	15,3%	-26,8%	-1,2%
East EU	7,4%	5,7%	592,6%	4,0%	640,4%	29,3%	1,0%	4,9%	-19,2%	19,0%	-0,2%	12,2%	1,5%	4,3%	23,5%	3,3%	52,6%	-2,5%
Non-western	29,2%	27,5%	43,7%	28,0%	70,3%	20,5%	20,7%	27,0%	-24,9%	-4,9%	20,5%	18,2%	28,8%	25,6%	4,8%	-9,8%	68,1%	12,1%
Education level																		
Highly educated	34,4%	54,1%	-17,1%	-5,6%	-10,0%	6,2%	31,8%	50,6%	-14,2%	-4,6%	-17,0%	-0,5%	25,2%	52,5%	-31,9%	-1,1%	-34,1%	3,1%
Age																		
0-19	-	21,1%	-	36,3%	-	-1,7%	-	21,3%	-	15,8%	-	-0,9%	-	14,9%	-	-	-	-30,6%
20-29	-	22,3%	-	-19,5%	-	25,8%	-	18,8%	-	-10,1%	-	6,2%	-	28,5%	-	36,2%	-	61,1%
30-49	-	40,3%	-	0,0%	-	22,7%	-	41,3%	-	1,2%	-	25,8%	-	41,0%	-	0,4%	-	24,8%
50+	-	16,3%	-	-1,4%	-	-41,7%	-	18,6%	-	-6,4%	-	-33,6%	-	15,6%	-	21,5%	-	-44,3%

# Eastern densification areas. Supporting gentrification?



- Densification areas linked to **higher income and homeownership** compared to their administrative districts (e.g. ~23% in Løren).
- **Lower levels of non-western immigrants** – about 5/10% - (exception of Løren where, however, these households have relatively high income)
- **Higher share of family households** in 2 of the areas.



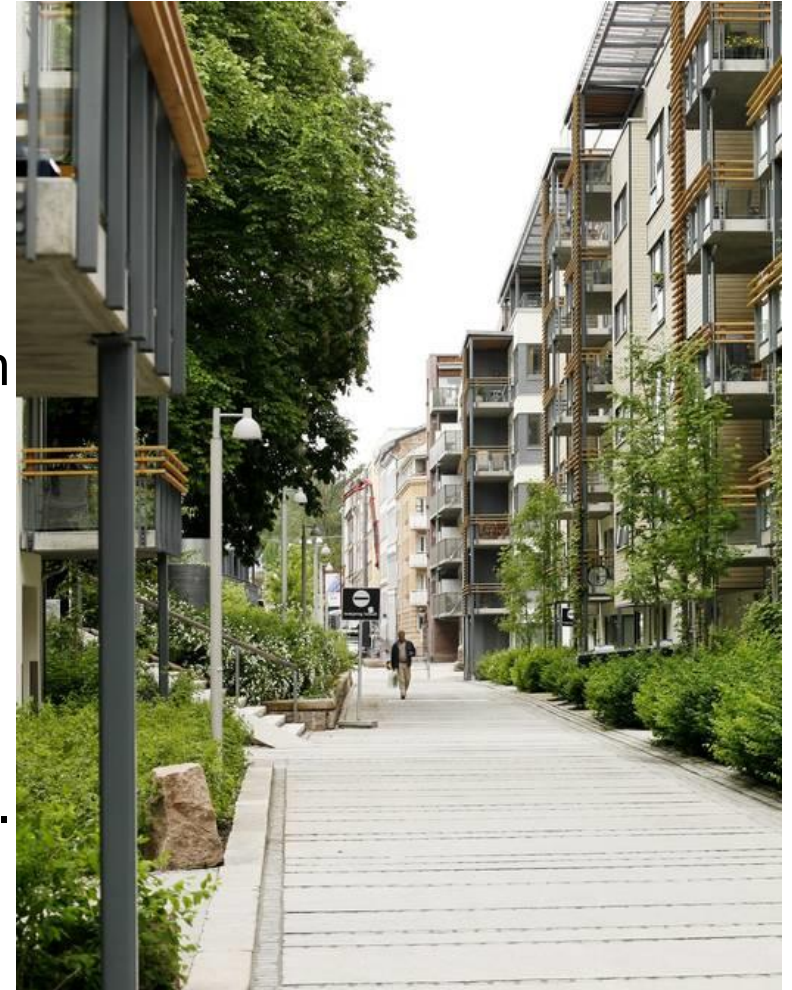
Oslo. Løren. Picture: Rebecca Cavicchia



# Western densification areas. Supporting social mix?



- 75%-85% of households in these areas are **without children** (about 20% higher than their administrative districts).
- **Lower income levels compared to both the districts and the municipality level** (e.g. about 39% in Majorstuen compared to Oslo average)
- **Overrepresentation of Norwegian and Western immigrants** compared to the municipal level.
- **High proportion of small apartments** attracts singles/couples without children, leading to more renters.
- **High rental costs and lower income levels** suggest the need to investigate housing cost burdens.



Oslo. Pilestredet Park Picture: Rebecca Cavicchia

# Limiting the east-west divide? Potentials and limitations



- **Densification areas are less homogeneous** than their surrounding districts
- The only variable that seems to follow the historical east-west pattern is represented by the higher levels of non-western immigrants in the east and higher level of Norwegians and western immigrants in the west (compared to the municipal average)

However..

- **West: Fewer densification areas** due to limited brownfields and opposition to development.
- **East: Risk of gentrification/exclusionary pressure**, with exclusionary impacts on lower-income residents (Cavicchia, 2022).

# Thank you for listening!

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