

Urban attractiveness and competitive policies in Oslo and Marseille. The waterfront as object of restructuring, culture-led redevelopment and negotiation. Heidi Bergsli, *Scientific summary*

Objective and research questions

The study sets out to enquire socio-spatial dimensions and implications of culture-led urban redevelopment policies and processes in Oslo and Marseille, by a comparative study of the redevelopment projects Fjordbyen and Euroméditerranée. Three research questions are addressed: (i) What are the aims of the redevelopment projects, and which role do the projects play in the territorial restructuring of the cities? (ii) How are culture-led urban redevelopment strategies socio-spatially embedded and targeted? (iii) How are the waterfronts projects governed and negotiated?

Theoretical perspective

The thesis is informed by the perspective of *cultural political economy*, which encourages theoretical pluralism, thus allowing the combination of economic and cultural explanations in the investigation of culture-led urban redevelopment. The production of landscape and place through waterfront projects and the role of social cohesion in competitive policies are investigated in the context of the welfare state.

Methodological approach

The waterfront projects were approached by a comparative case study design, in which the investigation was made by a triangulation of document, interview and observation data principally collected between 2007 and 2010. The document data consist of planning and policy documents and promotional material. 58 semi-structured interviews were conducted with politicians, developers, planners, consultants, state officials, artists, architects, directors of cultural institutions and representatives of local associations. Participation at public and political meetings, organised excursions, observation of the evolvement of the redevelopment processes and the uses of the areas have complemented the analysis.

Findings

Despite great differences between Oslo and Marseille, their waterfront projects are developed with similar competitive rationales and entrepreneurial strategies. The waterfronts are central to the restructuring of the cities into “knowledge societies”, whereby the knowledge-based economy is stimulated, in combination with cultural strategies aimed to make the cities attractive and the seaside universally accessible.

These rationales imply that the waterfronts are part of the reconfiguration of the inner cities in the cities’ upscaling into “capital cities”. Herein, cultural institutions play a role in urban policies, as flagships putting the cities on the map, but also as part of creating public arenas in the multi-functional areas, which otherwise are largely characterised by the development of exclusive offers.

In both Norway and France, the welfare states include *universal* measures that are still more important than *targeted* ones, as characterise liberalised welfare state models. Yet, in the domain of urban redevelopment, there tends to be a shift toward targeted measures by the use of neoliberal policies catered to the creative class in Oslo’s case. In the case of Marseille, however, Keynesian measures still negotiate the strategies targeting the transnational social class. In France, social housing, creation of broad arenas for the enactment of citizenship, as well as public development and financing of functions are observed. This means that the right to stay put in the city is more prevalent in the case of Marseille, where the urban society is

addressed in terms of a cosmopolitan outlook. Cosmopolitan urban society is rather uncommunicated in the case of Oslo.

The governance models selected in the respective cities contribute to the different nature of their strategies for universal access. The City of Oslo is in charge of Fjordbyen, but it takes on a coordinative and facilitative role, with the development of landscape principles and public space as a central responsibility. Publicly and privately owned companies develop the functions. This means that public, outdoor spaces seem to constitute the main field in which actual social inclusion can take place, if design elements do not create symbolic barriers. Euroméditerranée is developed by a public coalition and administrative board consisting of a range of public authorities, with the central state in the lead. This coalition is politically accountable for the project, which is developed by use of significant public resources and a larger political negotiation of the redevelopment process, compared to what tends to be the case in Oslo.

I argue that aesthetic cohesion has replaced socio-spatial cohesion as an aim in urban planning. In both cities, urban landscapes and places are produced to provide structured coherence to the knowledge-based economy, which in the urban context is narrated as “the creative city” and “the city of culture”.

The thesis research illustrates how the city’s diversity, creativities and urban cultures are paradoxically suppressed in culture-led urban redevelopment, despite attention to these virtues to make the city distinctive. On this basis, the study recommends that the city’s local characteristics, actors and practices are better included in urban redevelopment, and that creativity in the cities can be expressed also through disorder, everyday life practices and actual inclusion of the local population, as an urban society developed for social diversity.