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Svein Blom

**Residential Concentration
among Immigrants in Oslo**

Documents



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Abstract: The paper sketches, on the basis of register data, the development of residential concentrations among immigrants in Oslo from the early 1970s until 1996. It is argued that a phase characterized by concentrated immigrant housing in the inner city, was superseded by a phase of dispersal, which in turn was replaced by a period of new concentration. It is shown that the degree of residential concentration vary according to the national background of immigrants, and that immigrants with a certain length of stay in Norway tend to conform to Norwegian residential patterns. Empirical evidence is presented supporting the notion that economic resources are important in creating and maintaining immigrant residential concentrations.

Keywords: Residential concentration, immigrants, housing.

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Address: Svein Blom, Statistics Norway, Social Statistics, P.O.Box 8131 Dep, N-0033 Oslo, Norway.
E-mail: sbl@ssb.no

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1. Introduction

In this paper some of the results of a study performed by Statistics Norway regarding the developments in residential concentration of Oslo's immigrants (Blom 1995) are presented. The study describes and analyse the residential patterns as of 1 January 1988 and 1 January 1993. To bring things as close as possible to the present some of the statistics are updated with figures as of 1 January 1996. Immigrants are defined as persons having two foreign-born parents. Thus both first and second generation of immigrants are included.

In the paper we sketch the development of residential concentration among immigrants in Oslo from the 1970s until 1996. The early phase of concentrated labour immigrant housing in the inner city east was superseded by a phase of dispersion and suburbanisation in the early 1980s, which in turn transformed into a phase of new concentration in the wake of the arrival of refugees at the end of the decade. We discuss the relevance of the term «ghetto» as a designation of areas in Oslo characterised by a high proportion of immigrants, and investigate whether immigrants who have resided in our country for some time tend to conform to a «Norwegian» residential pattern. Finally we pose the question about the causes of residential concentration and present an empirical test of the relative importance of economic and cultural factors.

2. Data

The analyses are mainly based on micro data of all people resident in Oslo Municipal Area as of 1 January 1988 and 1 January 1993. Each person has a record with information derived from registers about place of residence by borough and ward, country of origin, age, sex, date of first stay in Norway and citizenship. The data were collated in a combined data file containing a total of 559 502 units. 86 048 of the units only hold 1988 data, 366 131 of the units hold data from both years, and 107 323 units exclusively relate to the 1993 data. Persons who appear only in the 1988 data, have either moved out of Oslo or died, while persons who appear only in the 1993 data, have meanwhile either moved to Oslo or been born.

This (first) data file is collated with records of capital assets and income taken from the tax statistics based on records kept of ordinary tax assessments of personal taxpayers. Data on incomes and assets for fiscal 1987 are linked to the units of registered residents in Oslo in 1988, while data for fiscal 1992 are linked to the units of registered residents in Oslo in 1993. Only units in the first file with a corresponding tax report from at least one of the years were kept in the combined file. Thus 73 028 units (13 per cent of the original file) were not included in the second file. That basically affects the youngest age cohorts, as tax statistics mainly contain personal data about persons aged 13 and up. Except for age, there are, however, no other variables that are distributed significantly different in the second file from in the first file (for documentation, see Blom 1995, chapter 2).

As indicator for income for 1992 we have selected the so called «toppskattgrunnlag» which encompasses income from wages and self-employment as well as pensions and social security benefits.

By help of a serial number, all persons who actually belong to the same family from a fiscal point of view, can be discerned. The sum total of income from all persons with the same serial number is divided by an indicator of the number of consumer units in the family according to the traditional OECD-scale (where «head of family» counts 1, other adults 0.7 and children 0.5). This weighted mean sum of income is then imputed to all members of the same family. A similar procedure is used in regard to capital assets.

The data as of 1 January 1996 are basically aggregated data provided by Oslo City Administration (1996).

3. Historical retrospect¹

The first labour immigrants who came to Oslo at the end of the 1960s met a housing market that practically were closed to them. Neither the private home owner market nor the housing cooperatives had much to offer house hunters lacking both capital assets, creditworthiness and length of membership in the housing cooperatives. The only niche vacant to them was the lodger market in the inner city. Consequently it was there most of the labour immigrants settled in the beginning. Many of them found their first dwelling in vacated and shabby flats in old premises in the inner city east.

The labour immigrants were usually single men who planned to return to their native country after some years of work abroad. To invest capital in an own dwelling in Oslo was therefore of little present interest to them. Well into the 1970s more and more immigrants, nevertheless, opted for a more permanent way of life in Norway. The ban on unqualified labour immigration that was introduced in 1975, did not exclude the possibility to reunify with close family members. Many of the labour immigrants seized that opportunity. This gave in turn rise to a need for better and more spacious housing. Immigrants with a steady income could sometimes get a loan to finance the deposit on a flat in a housing cooperative. Most of the vacant flats to be obtained were situated in the new suburban dormitory towns under construction.

However, many immigrants faced huge problems on the housing market. At the middle of the 1970s local and central authorities finally took responsibility for improving the housing conditions for this group of people. The central government established a special company (called SIBO - the Company for immigrant housing) that succeeded to rehabilitate and build new houses for immigrants and offer financing on favourable terms. Many of the dwellings were built in boroughs that previously had few immigrants. A couple of years later a similar company was established to provide housing for refugees. The municipal housing agency also made changes in their statutes so that immigrants got a fair chance to compete with the native population for social housing assistance. The municipal authorities took hold of quota of new flats in recently completed housing cooperatives and offered a service to exchange new flats against well-preserved, but cheaper, second-hand flats. Many of these flats were distributed to vulnerable groups and families in need of housing to substitute for dwellings lost in the inner city urban renewal. Immigrants constituted a sizable proportion of both of these two groups.

In this way, immigrants got access to the new suburban dormitory towns northeast and south of the city centre. The older suburban dormitory towns erected in the 1950s and 1960s, received fewer immigrants because they were already inhabited by a stable group of inmates.²

4. Decreasing immigrant concentration from 1980 to 1984

As indicated above, there was a certain «spread» of immigrants to the outer suburban towns at the beginning of the 1980s. Register data of Oslo City Administration (1985) confirm that the level of residential concentration among citizens from Yugoslavia, Turkey, Pakistan, India and Morocco decreased for all five groups from 1980 to 1984. For Yugoslavs and Turks the share of citizens who would have to move to another borough in order to be distributed between the boroughs as Norwegian citizens fell by 8 percentage points. For the other nationalities there was a decrease in the level of residential concentration by about 4 or 3 percentage points (Table 1).

¹ This passage is partly based on qualitative interviews with persons professionally involved in the housing of immigrants and refugees in Oslo over the years, cf. chapter 8 in Blom 1995.

² *New suburban dormitory towns*=Søndre Nordstrand, Hellerud, Furuset, Stovner and Romsås. *Old suburban dormitory towns*=Lambertseter, Bøler, Manglerud, Østensjø, Helsefyr/Sinsen, Grorud and Bjerke (cf. Appendix).

Table 1. Dissimilarity index of citizens from Yugoslavia, Turkey, Pakistan, India and Morocco versus Norwegian citizens resident in Oslo at 1 January 1980 and 1 January 1984, broken down by citizenship and year.¹

Citizenship	1980	1984
Yugoslavia	38,5	29,8
Turkey	41,6	33,1
Pakistan	41,0	36,6
India	34,6	31,7
Morocco	42,3	39,2

¹ The index shows how large a proportion of foreign citizens would have to move to another borough to be distributed between the boroughs as Norwegian citizens. Based on 35 boroughs.

Source: Oslo City Administration 1985, Table 13

5. Increasing immigrant concentration from 1988 to 1996

From the end of the 1980s and onwards further growth in the immigrant population was most pronounced in the boroughs where the proportion of immigrants already was high (cf. Figure 1). The share of non-western³ immigrants in Gamle Oslo actually doubled between 1988 and 1996.

This led to increasing residential concentration among non-western immigrants. The level of residential concentration can be estimated by an index showing how large a proportion of a population group has to move if the group is to spread itself among the boroughs in the same pattern as some other population group.⁴ This is the same measure as was used in Table 1. Table 2 displays the values of the dissimilarity index for the years 1988, 1993 and 1996 for both western and non-western immigrants versus Norwegians.⁵

Table 2. Dissimilarity index of immigrants versus Norwegians resident in Oslo at 1 January 1988, 1 January 1993 and 1 January 1996, broken down by country of origin and year.¹

Country of origin	1988	1993	1996
Western	18,7	18,5	17,6
Non-western	27,0	29,9	31,8

¹ The index shows how large a proportion of immigrants would have to move to another borough to be distributed between the boroughs as Norwegians. Based on 27 boroughs (i.e. including Sentrum and Marka). Residents whose borough is unknown are excluded.

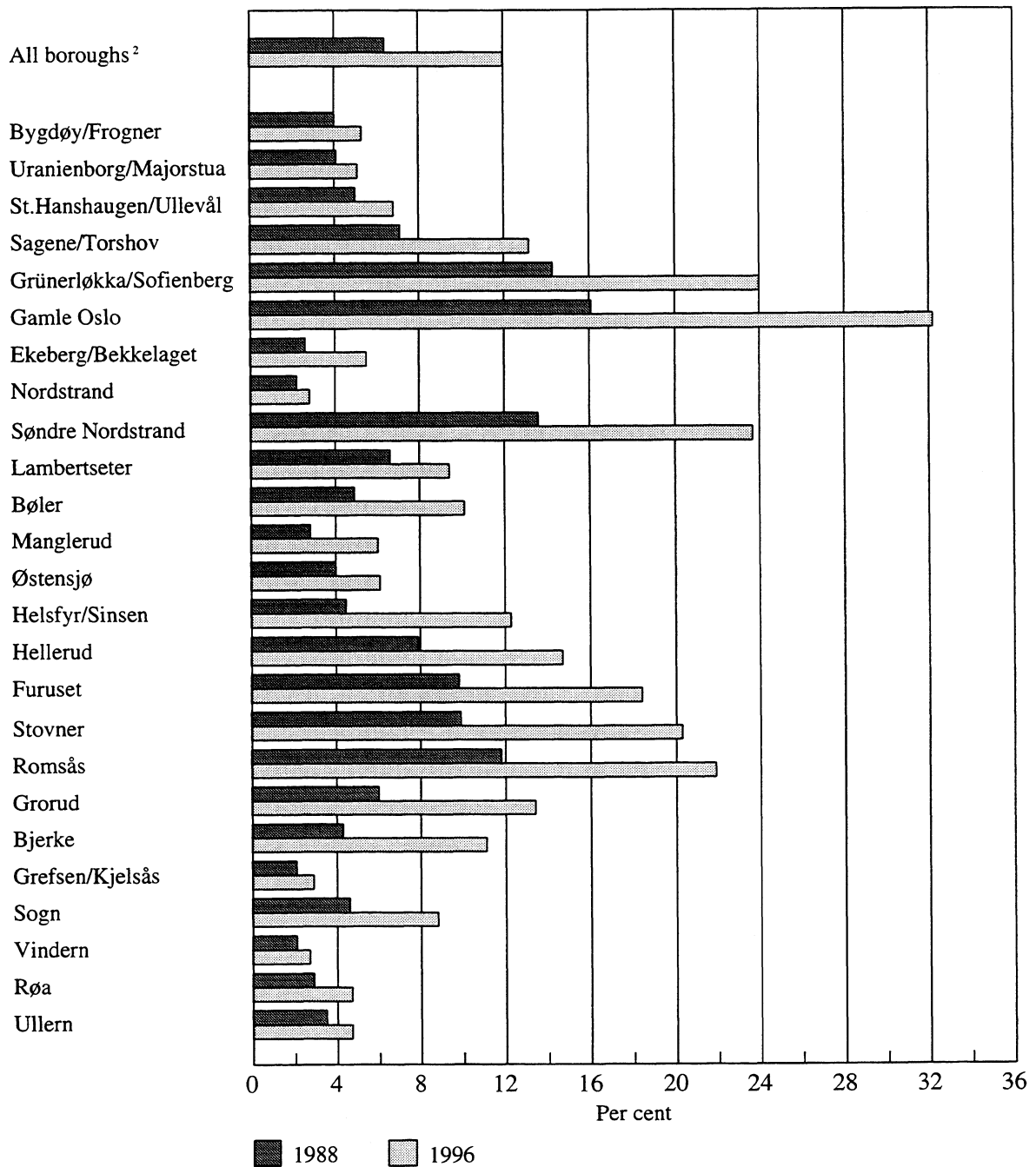
³ Non-western immigrants embrace immigrants from Eastern Europe, Asia (including Turkey), Africa and South and Central America. Other immigrants count as western.

⁴ The dissimilarity index is found from the following formula: $D = \frac{\sum |p_i^1 - p_i^2|}{2} \times 100$

where p_i^1 = Proportion of all persons in population group 1 living in incremental area i, and p_i^2 = Proportion of all persons in population group 2 living in incremental area i (Duncan and Duncan 1955).

⁵ Norwegians is the term used here to denote anyone not belonging to the immigrant population, i.e. Norwegians are people with minimum one parent born in Norway.

Figure 1. Proportion of non-western immigrants¹ in Oslo's population at 1 January 1988 and 1 January 1996, broken down by borough.



¹ Non-western immigrants embrace persons with two foreign-born parents from Eastern Europe, Asia (including Turkey), Africa or South and Central America

² Includes residents in Sentrum, Marka and whose borough is unknown

According to Table 2, the level of residential concentration among non-western immigrants increased by short of 5 percentage points from 1988 to 1996. This should be considered a moderate increase. The index for the western immigrants fell with 1 percentage points in the same period. More than three out of ten non-western immigrants and less than two out of ten western immigrants in 1996 would have to move to another borough in order to be spatially distributed like Norwegians.

Unfortunately it is difficult to compare the level of residential concentration among immigrants at the beginning and at the end of the 1980s because the number of boroughs in the meantime was altered. The absolute level of the dissimilarity index actually depends on the number of boroughs reflected in the calculations. However, Wessel (1996) has calculated the level of residential concentration in 1995 based upon the previous division of the city into 35 boroughs. He finds that the propensity to live spatially separated from the native population was higher for Yugoslavs, Turks, Pakistanis and Moroccans, viewed as a single category, in 1995 than in 1984, but lower in 1995 than in 1980 (Table 3).

Table 3. Dissimilarity index of citizens from Yugoslavia, Turkey, Pakistan and Morocco versus Norwegian citizens resident in Oslo at 1 January 1980, 1 January 1984 and 1 January 1995.¹

Country of origin	1980	1984	1995
Yugoslavia, Turkey, Pakistan, Morocco	40,4	35,1	37,5

¹ See note to Table 1.

Source: Wessel 1996, Table 5.

6. The greater cultural distance, the higher residential concentration

Table 4 shows the level of residential concentration in 1996 for immigrants from different countries. The countries are presented according to the degree of concentration.

Danish immigrants live least spatially separated from Norwegians, followed by Swedes and Germans. Immigrants from non-western countries appear in the last half of the table. The highest levels of residential concentration are calculated for immigrants from Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Vietnam (more than 40 points on the index). The level of residential concentration seems to be higher the wider the cultural gap between the immigrant group and the majority population supposedly is. This has been noted also in other studies (Andersson-Brolin 1984, Djuve and Hagen 1995).

Immigrants from France stand out with a degree of residential concentration at almost the same level as immigrants from India. Immigrants from these two countries, however, reside at widely different places in the city. While Indians live in the inner city east and the new suburban dormitory towns, the French live in inner city west and outer suburban west.⁶

⁶ *Inner city east*=Sagene/Torshov, Grünerløkka/Sofienberg and Gamle Oslo. *Inner city west*=Bygdøy/Frogner, Uranienborg/Majorstua and St.Hanshaugen/Ullevål. *Outer suburban west*=Ekeberg/Bekkelaget, Nordstrand, Grefsen/Kjelsås, Sogn, Vindern, Røa and Ullern (cf. Appendix).

Table 4. Dissimilarity index of different groups of immigrants versus Norwegians resident in Oslo at 1 January 1996, broken down by country of origin.¹

Country of origin	1996
Denmark	10,5
Sweden	20,0
Germany	20,2
Great Britain	23,4
USA/Canada	26,9
Chile	31,3
France	35,8
India	37,0
Turkey	39,4
Pakistan	43,7
Sri Lanka	48,7
Vietnam	49,3

¹ See note to Table 2

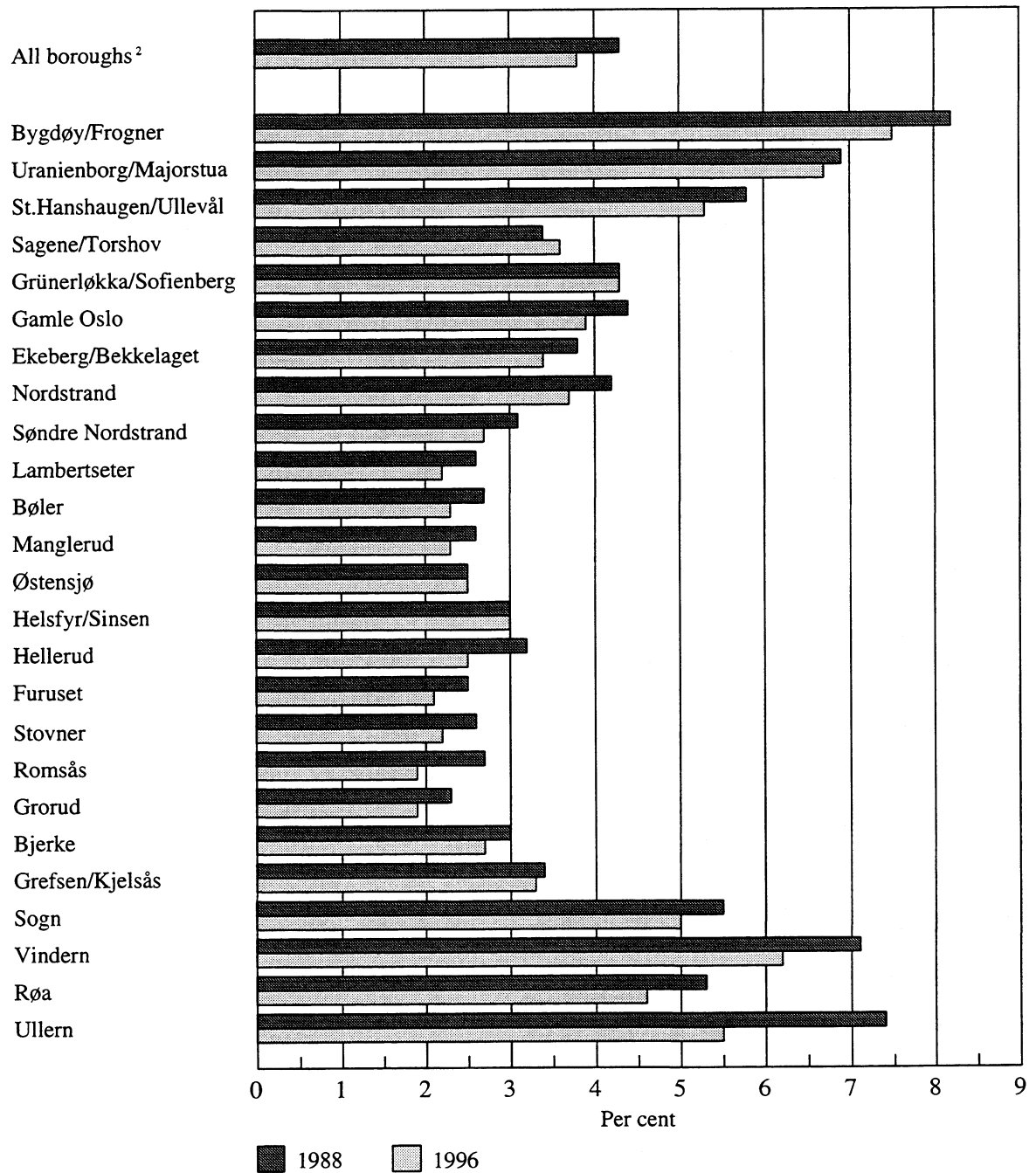
7. Where do the immigrants reside today?

The grey bars in Figure 1 and 2 illustrate the proportion of non-western and western immigrants in the boroughs of Oslo as of 1 January 1996. The proportion of non-western immigrants is 12.0 per cent for the city as a whole (in all of Norway: 3.3 per cent). The highest proportions are to be found in inner city east and the new suburban dormitory towns in the northeast and south (cf. map of Oslo in the Appendix).

In Gamle Oslo and Grünerløkka/Sofienberg in inner city east the proportion of non-western immigrants are 32.2 and 24.0 per cent respectively. In the new suburban dormitory towns Søndre Nordstrand, Romsås, Stovner, Furuset and Hellerud the proportions of non-western immigrants are 23.7, 21.9, 20.3, 18.4 and 14.7 per cent, respectively.

For Oslo as a whole the proportion of western immigrants is 3.8 per cent (1.9 per cent in all of Norway). Western immigrants have an entirely other distribution profile than the non-western (Figure 2, note that the scale of Figure 2 is three times that of Figure 1). Being relatively well-off economically, in some cases better than the average Norwegian (Kirkeberg 1995), many western immigrants prefer to settle in the inner city west and the outer suburban west, traditional high status areas in Oslo. The highest proportion of western immigrants is found in Bygdøy/Frogner in inner city west (7.5 per cent).

Figure 2. Proportion of western immigrants¹ in Oslo's population at 1 January 1988 and 1 January 1996, broken down by borough.



¹ Western immigrants embrace persons with two foreign-born parents from Western Europe (except Turkey), North America or Oceania

² Includes residents in Sentrum, Marka and whose borough is unknown

8. Are there immigrant ghettos in Oslo?

The further one goes in subdividing the city, the easier it becomes to find locally contained areas with a high proportion of immigrants. In exceptional cases the proportion of immigrants exceeds 50 per cent in some wards. As of 1996, that is the case e.g. in Gamle Oslo in six wards, Grünerløkka/Sofienberg in three wards and Søndre Nordstrand in one ward. Stovner and Furuset have a combined total of three wards with more than 30 per cent immigrants.

More non-western immigrants tended to move into these areas than out of them, and more Norwegians tended to move out than in, during the time period from 1988 to 1993. The net migration of Norwegians out of the typical immigrant areas in Gamle Oslo (wards with more than 30 per cent immigrants in 1993) could be observed only for pre-school children (Blom 1995, chapter 7).

It is nevertheless not justified calling these areas «ghettos», as frequently done in the media and popular debate (for documentation, see e.g. Blom 1994). A ghetto can be defined as a slum-like urban area where one separate ethnic or cultural minority is in majority. Today there are no wards in Oslo where the most numerous immigrant group, the Pakistanis, exceeds 30 per cent of the population.

9. Tendency to conform to a Norwegian residential pattern

Even though the level of residential concentration has increased from 1988 until today, there are also indications that immigrants, as time goes by, can be said to conform to a Norwegian residential pattern.

An analysis of movements between borough constellations shows that there was a net flux of non-western immigrants from the inner city east to the new suburban dormitory towns between 1988 and 1993 (Table 5). Broadly, 12.8 per cent of the non-western immigrants who lived in a different borough constellation in 1993 from what they had done in 1988, moved from the inner city east to the new suburban dormitory towns (865 persons); while 7.9 per cent moved in the opposite direction (535 persons). Likewise there was a substantial net flux of non-western immigrants from inner city east to the old suburban dormitory towns (245 persons).

Even if this partly reflects changes in the family life cycle, it also represents social mobility and an improvement of the general standard of living. Generally, somewhat fewer social problems are being reported in the new suburban dormitory towns than in the inner city east (Barstad 1997).

Similarly, naturalised immigrants are less likely to live in inner city east and more likely to live in suburban dormitory towns like Søndre Nordstrand, Stovner and Furuset than immigrants who have retained their foreign citizenship. This holds even when variation in the duration of stay in Norway is controlled (Blom 1995, chapter 9.4).

Table 5. Place of residence according to borough constellations in 1988 and 1993. Transition matrix for non-western immigrants resident at different borough constellations in Oslo at 1 January 1988 and 1 January 1993 (N=6736). Per cent

Borough constellation in 1988	Borough constellation in 1993						
	Inner city west	Inner city east	Old suburban dormitory towns	New suburban dormitory towns	Outer suburban west	Sentrum/Marka/unknown	All
Inner city west	•	6,1	3,6	4,3	1,9	0,1	15,9
Inner city east	2,4	•	9,0	12,8	2,8	0,3	27,4
Old suburban dormitory towns	1,2	5,4	•	9,1	1,6	0,2	17,5
New suburban dormitory towns	1,9	7,9	7,3	•	2,3	0,1	19,6
Outer suburban west	1,4	3,7	3,0	4,5	•	0,1	12,8
Sentrum/Marka/unknown	0,5	3,3	1,0	1,1	1,1	•	6,9
All	7,5	26,3	23,9	31,8	9,6	0,8	100,0

¹ Inner city west = Bygdøy/Frogner, Uranienborg/Majorstua, St. Hanshaugen/Ullevål

Inner city east = Sagene/Torshov, Grünerløkka/Sofienberg, Gamle Oslo

Old suburban dormitory towns = Lambertseter, Bøler, Manglerud, Østensjø, Helsefyr/Sinsen, Grorud, Bjerke

New suburban dormitory towns = Søndre Nordstrand, Hellerud, Furuset, Stovner, Romsås

Outer suburban west = Ekeberg/Bekkelaget, Nordstrand, Grefsen/Kjelsås, Sogn, Vindern, Røa, Ullern

10. Factors causing residential concentration

One factor that can be suspected to cause residential concentrations, is differences in economic resources. Relatively well-off western immigrants have probably more options regarding where to reside than non-western. Another plausible causal factor is cultural differences. Immigrants from countries culturally distant from our country, may have a stronger need for solidarity and mutual cooperation than immigrants who are more familiar with the majority culture.

We have tried to investigate empirically the reciprocal strength of these two factors causing residential concentrations. With the help of logistic regression we have estimated the chances for persons (immigrants as well as Norwegians) to be residing in boroughs characterised by high proportions of immigrants. In the analysis economic resources appear as the most important factor. Persons in the lowest income quartile and with no capital assets have almost seven times higher chance to be situated in the borough of Gamle Oslo in 1993 than somewhere else in Oslo compared to persons in the highest income quartile and with capital assets of 130 000 or more (Table 6). The influence of national background is controlled.

Table 6. Parameter estimates from logistic regression showing the effect on the log odds of being residing in the borough Gamle Oslo in stead of other places in Oslo at 1 January 1993, depending on country of origin and economic resources¹

	Coefficient	Chi-square	Odds ratio
Country of origin		2253.6	
Western countries	0.03	0.6	1.03
Eastern Europe	0.23**	7.3	1.26
Former Yugoslavia	0.87***	152.5	2.39
Turkey	1.02***	313.4	2.77
Morocco	1.35***	637.8	3.86
Pakistan	1.12***	1252.3	3.06
Sri Lanka	0.97***	189.8	2.64
Vietnam	-0.07	0.4	0.93
Iran	0.97***	148.2	2.64
Chile	0.41***	12.6	1.51
Other countries	0.47***	164.7	1.60
Norway	0	.	1
Economic resources		2738.8	
Q1 F0	1.90***	1028.4	6.69
Q2 F0	1.74***	833.3	5.70
Q3 F0	1.62***	727.8	5.05
Q4 F0	1.46***	583.2	4.31
Q1 F1	1.60***	666.1	4.95
Q2 F1	1.33***	435.5	3.78
Q3 F1	1.02***	218.7	2.77
Q4 F1	0.73***	85.6	2.08
Q1 F2	1.01***	163.1	2.75
Q2 F2	0.75***	117.6	2.12
Q3 F2	0.26***	11.3	1.30
Q4 F2	0	.	1
Log likelihood		-70267.5	

* p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01 *** p < 0.001

¹The variable economic resources combines three levels of capital assets (F0, F1 and F2) and four levels of income (the quartiles Q1, Q2, Q3 and Q4). F0 is no assets, F1 is from 1 to 130,000 NOK, and F2 is more than 130,000 NOK.

To be an immigrant with a certain national background is, however, also very decisive for the site of residence in Oslo. Immigrants from Morocco had nearly four times as high a chance than Norwegians to be residing in Gamle Oslo than in some other place in Oslo in 1993. The effect of different economic resources is then controlled. There is, however, reason to believe that not only cultural preferences are captured by this non-economic factor. Phenomena as discrimination and incomplete knowledge of the housing market are probably also captured. A clear-cut analysis of the importance of the cultural factor, would require adequate interview data.

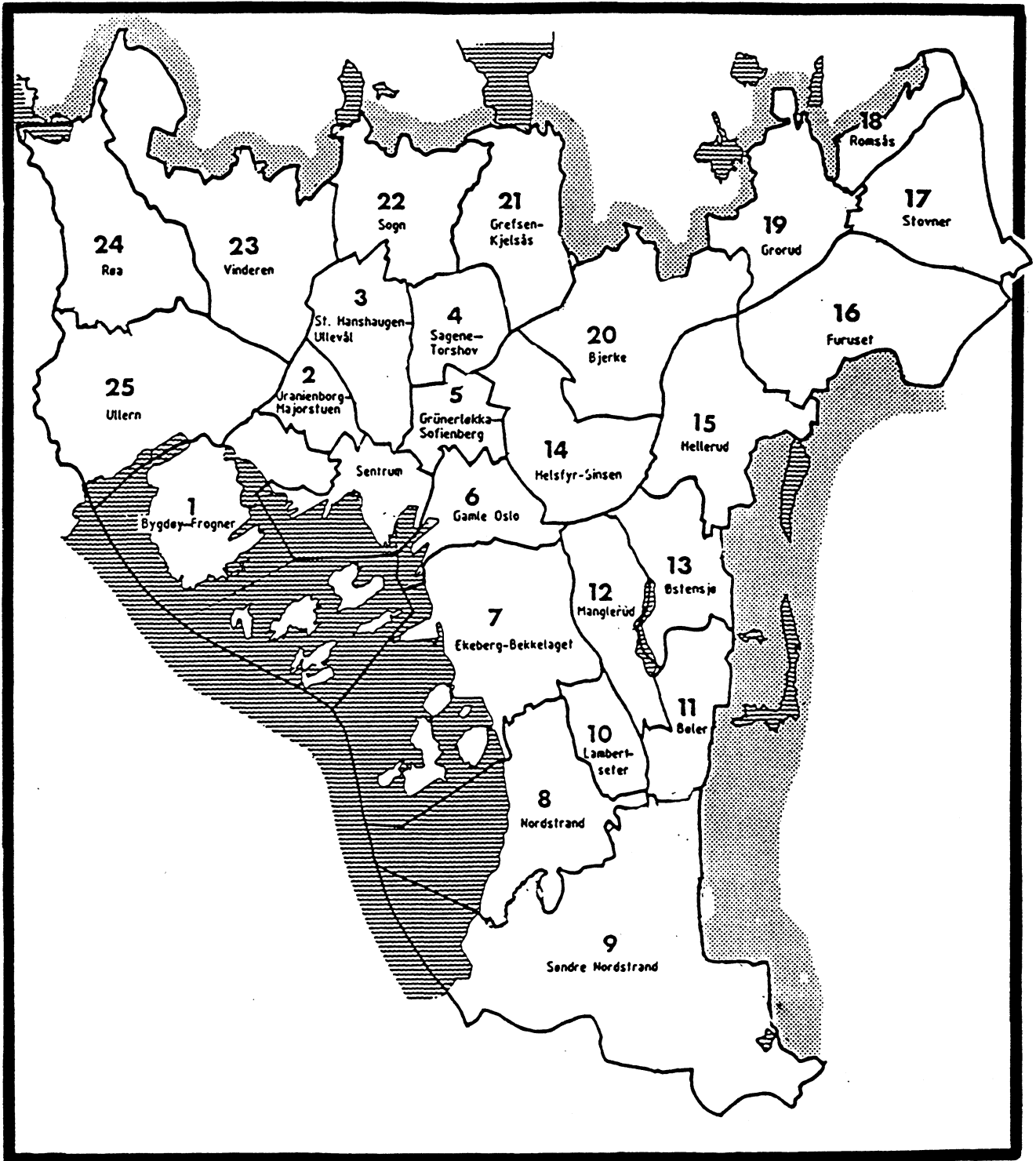
11. Social effects of residential concentration

The importance of residential patterns for immigrants' possibilities to become integrated in the host society, is not properly investigated in a European context. Initial benefits from clustering together with people of the same linguistic and cultural background are probably in the long run offset by the drawbacks of a prolonged acculturation process. A balanced composition of the population in urban areas is defined by the government to be a political goal. To achieve this goal by introducing quotas on the number of immigrants in certain housing areas, is however considered discriminating and illegal. Positive measures as urban renewal to attract new groups of inhabitants to areas with a dwindling native population, to disperse the existing social housing to a wider range of boroughs, and to offer better assistance to economically weak groups to help them expand their possibilities on the housing market, appear as better alternatives. Arrangements to channel new refugees into certain municipalities or to certain boroughs in the capital are also accepted and already practiced by central and local authorities.

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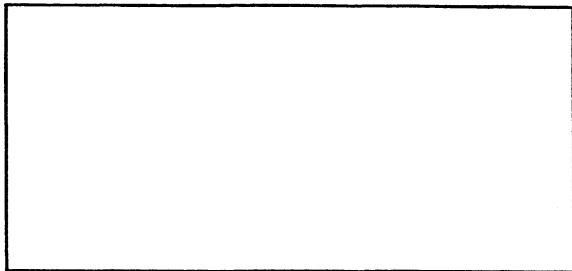
Boroughs in Oslo



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B *Returadresse:*
Statistisk sentralbyrå
Postboks 8131 Dep.
N-0033 Oslo

Statistics Norway
P.O.B. 8131 Dep.
N-0033 Oslo

Tel: +47-22 86 45 00
Fax: +47-22 86 49 73

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