

# Neighborhood, Neighboring and Shopping: A View from Oslo

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**Abstract:**

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The paper addresses implications of shopping and gentrification for the formation of neighborhood in relation to its different meanings. Through interviews with residents and shopkeepers, the forms that shopping takes, the way both residents and shopkeepers perceive the socio-spatial practices associated with shopping and its implications in the formation of the neighborhood is examined in Grünerløkka, Oslo. The author argues that the socio-spatial practices associated with gentrification necessitate a market that moves beyond the immediate neighborhood and relies on internal tourism. As a result the socio-spatial practices associated with neighborhood are thwarted and are replaced by new forms of relationships that generate parallel social worlds even as the neighborhood conceptually remains important. This creates what is called "a neighborhood without neighboring."

**Key words:**

Neighborhood, socio-spatial practices, gentrification, shopping

Consumption, both local and global, increasingly has become a major issue in discussions about the nature of urban transformation in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Whether as part of a larger discourse on the processes of urban development such as gentrification (Smith, Ley, Lees) or a discussion of the relation of consumption practices to urbanism (Clarke, Miles), the influence of consumption as a global structure or a set of local practices has a central place in the discourse about the city. These discussions revolve around the effect of various logics and forms of consumption on the nature of urban form, urban practices and urban culture. Questions range from the more structural; Is urban development the result of consumption as a larger process of generating urban infrastructure (housing, schools, roads etc.), to the more social; How do changes in lifestyle affect the form and culture of the city?

It could be argued that attributes of consumption are at the core of the way emerging gentrified and immigrant neighborhoods are often viewed and described. As Robert Bureaugarde has pointed out, journalistic accounts of gen-

trification usually are associated with images of urban pioneers changing what was once a lawless and rotting state of nature into stable and healthy new communities. Central to this is a picture of trendy stylish neighborhoods, new boutiques and upscale restaurants. In a similar fashion, often when reads about ethnic or immigrant neighborhoods in newspapers or popular magazines, an essential feature of these reports are the various immigrant food stores, cafes and restaurants that for the press and for the public are the defining reality of these neighborhoods. In the work that emanated from a project<sup>1</sup> that focused on the affects of gentrification and immigration on the social forms and social practices of a series of loosely defined neighborhoods in Oslo, the project team did not initially focus on nor was it concerned with issues of consumption – neither as a structural phenomenon nor in terms of lifestyle. Yet in my own work on the social implications of gentrification and immigration on the issue of neighborhood, the critical presence of consumption made manifest through the influence of stores, cafes, restaurants and other establishments that accompanied gentrification especially, but also immigration, could not be ignored. Indeed, after three years of research it became apparent that in the neighborhoods of Oslo that we studied, consumption in the form of shopping and leisure activities were important attributes of the spatial formation and social practices associated with neighborhood. Shopping, I found, had a profound influence on the social definition of the neighborhood even as it appeared to play a crucial role in the destruction of what we so critically associate with it; that is, neighboring.

In his study of neighborhood, Pierre Mayol argues that the neighborhood is the place where we begin the move from the public domain to the private: it is a kind of intermediary space. It is the space that increasingly becomes more comfortably social and more private as we move through it to home. We move easily and openly, to extrapolate from Mayol, because the familiar surrounds us, be it neighbors or the shops and other commercial establishments where we are clientele. Such familiarity signals that we are coming to our abode. The neighborhood provides comfort because it is, to use a neologism, “monogeneous;” it is a constant without surprises and although vibrant, it is a vibrancy that is generated by familiarity and that eschews difference.

Two institutions that are central to the neighborhood as he describes it are the local store and local café where people go not just to shop or drink but to meet their neighbors, catch up on local news and gossip, and also through the use of humor express concerns about and issues with those of the neighborhood. Shopkeepers are not only the purveyors of goods and services, they are also the overseers of the neighborhood’s security, the spaces of social integration, the minders of social interchanges that range from individuals expressing everything from support to dismay to anger about their neighbors as well as providing the space for expressions of everything from neighborly support or chastisement. Extrapolating from Mayol, we might argue that these establishments of public consumption become the places where the private and the public intersect comfortably and indeed become part of what, in the traditional sense, define what a neighborhood and neighboring are.

In my own experience, the traditional neighborhood had many of the characteristics that Mayol ascribes to the role of the local store, café and bar. Growing up in a middle-class neighborhood in Brooklyn that epitomizes the neighborhood-based community for which many contemporary planners have longed, local commercial establishments played an important role in maintaining the fabric of neighborhood life. At one end of the neighborhood was an important shopping street, with its butchers, grocers, cleaners, restaurants, pub-like bars and Cafes, and heavy pedestrian traffic. These establishments served as gathering places for people in the immediate neighborhood for conversation, for exchange of information and for gossip. Merchants (whether storekeepers or owners of bars or cafes) not only served as conduits of information, persons with whom to leave packages and other things for pick-up, they also acted as eyes on the street to make sure that the children and older people were safe. I remember merchants calling to me as I walked home from school or play, stopping me and giving me packages to take home because they knew my mother worked and would not be able to pick up food for dinner before the store closed. If I had misbehaved merchants as well as neighbors would yell at me to stop. Commercial establishments, in essence, were places of social exchange through the familiarity of the clientele with the shop keeper and each other.

In the discussions about gentrification, shopping also plays an important role. It is not only the return of middle

and upper middle class residents to an area that defines gentrification, but as so many point out it is also about a particular lifestyle rooted in new forms of cultural consumption. (Harvey, Caulfield) As Brett Williams argues for the community he studied in Washington, D.C, gentrifiers wanted good restaurants, cafes and to be near good stores. For them, the older working class stores were reminders of the bad times in the neighborhood and new stores confirmation of that they had made the right choice in moving to the neighborhood.

In my study of gentrification and immigration I found that stores, bars, cafes and restaurants still play an important role in framing and defining neighborhood. But, it is a different role that results in a different outcome.<sup>2</sup> Thus, we need to ask what role does lifestyle consumption play in Grünerløkka?

### Shopping/Eating/Drinking in Grünerløkka

When one visits Grünerløkka especially on Thorvald Meyersgate and Markveien from the Akerselva on the South to Sannergata on the North, and on the sides streets that either connect these streets or abut them, it is clear that the area is a major destination for shopping. Along these streets, one finds trendy clothing shops, shoe shops, florists, stores that sell kitchenware, ceramics and other artsy goods. Cafes, restaurants and bars also abound. On during the day and at night the streets are active with people mostly young from both the area and from elsewhere in Oslo shopping, eating and drinking. It is as many of the store keepers interviewed suggested an important trendy area for shopping. Along another street Trondheimsveien, a southern edge of Grünerløkka, one also finds a raft of stores and cafes, bars and restaurants but these with a few exceptions are not so trendy nor do they appear to serve the same people.

The number of establishments and their density raise questions about who these establishments serve and what role they play in Grünerløkka. Overall owners or managers of 41 stores in Bydel Grünerløkka were interviewed in regard to: 1) their type of business; 2) when, where and why they located the establishment where it is; 3) who designed the establishment and why it was designed as it was; 4) who their clientele is; 5) how they publicize their establishment; 6) how they perceive the area in which they are located; 7) are they members of any business network; and. 8) their business costs.



Stores, Cafes and Restaurants Grünerløkka

Of the businesses interviewed, 15 were either cafes, bars or restaurants; 13 were clothing stores, 2 were kiosks, 3 sold kitchenware of some sort, several were gift shops, and the others varied from a sewing machine shop to an Army/Navy store. What is of note – and we will return to this later – is that of the stores whose opening dates spanned from 1968–2004 some 24 were opened in period 2000–2004 which is a dynamic period of gentrification in the area. As one store owner said

It used to be slow and quiet here, but now (with gentrification) people are always opening new stores around here. The area is expanding.

There are two basic reasons for those locating in the area. First, especially for those who located in Grünerløkka before 2000, shop keepers argue that the rents were cheaper than elsewhere in Oslo especially the area around Majorstuen. Some decided to go to places like lower Markveien as early as 1995 with trendy boutiques because not only was the price right but there was a clear sense that the area

would grow in pedestrian activity. As one owner put it, "We opened in 1995 and felt something was about to happen" Another boutique owner put it succinctly, "We started before anything was here in 1998. We went to lower Markveien because we got a good deal." But she went on to say that now the area is much livelier but that was something she thought would happen. She went on to add that she also located in Grünerløkka because it had "the atmosphere of a real neighborhood." As noted above, the physical landscape of Grünerløkka is such that the stores and cafes, restaurants and bars are much more closely integrated with residences and public spaces like parks than in areas like Majorstuen.

Rents today are still less expensive, a number of shop keepers aver; if one wants to locate in an active area but one that is still less expensive than competing areas like Majorstuen. One immigrant store owner indeed argued that "the rents are cheaper for me on lower Markveien than they would have been in Grønland." Even within Grunerløkka there are distinctions as to costs. As one clothing store owner selling put it:

We wanted to locate the store away from the center and the Bogstadvegen area is too expensive. We came to lower Markveien because it is cheaper than Thorvalds Meyersgate.

He went on to say as the area grows in popularity "it is not so cheap anymore, as people come from all over to shop here." A number who have located on the streets running into either Markveien or Thorvalds Meyersgate point out that for them:

The rents are cheaper but the area even on a side street remains active and interesting even if they lose some customers who do not turn down the side streets

Of those who located before 2000, the sense that the neighborhood was becoming active and beginning to gentrify and attract a young, well heeled crowd was also given as a significant reason for locating the establishment where they did. As the owner of a sandwich bar in the area put it:

With the changes in the area (the café was located where it is in 1998), all the different cafes and restaurants, it was building a younger and wealthier crowd with people on the streets.

Another put it equally as succinctly:

I knew that Grünerløkka would become 'pop' and trendy and when we came here it was still cheap to rent here. So we were looking ahead. The change in the area has meant though we have had to change and upscale our brands. When we first opened our customer group was local but we knew it would expand to include people from all over the city.

For those who have located since 2000, while a few as noted above point out that Grunerløkka is still cheaper than the center or the Majorstua area; "it is good to be here because the area is known as cool but the rents are not as high as Hegdehaugsvegen" as one shop keeper put it. It is also because of the particular social characteristics of the neighborhood and the people who not only live there but also visit there that was the primary factor in locating in the area. Comments such as "the street (Thorvald Meyersgate) was gaining momentum as a café-street at the time" for a shop that opened in 2000, to comments that allude to wanting to be on a trendy street as a number of owners put it and because as one restaurant owner who opened in 2003 averred:

I like the area (on Olav Ryes plas) because not only do I like the building I am in, this is clearly a place where people come from all over town.

One café manager argued that although

When we located here the rent was cheap but not (even with the rents rising) it is good because the area is so busy.

A few places suggest that they are located in Grünerløkka because as one person put it with a specialty shop for pregnant women, "there are a lot of young couples here with infants and pregnant women." Similarly for a store dealing in children's clothes and another store dealing in educational toys, they like the area because of the particular demography of the area with its educated young and trendy middle class residents.

There are some exceptions to this notion of hip and trendy. Those located on the margins of Grünerløkka, on Trondheimsveien for example, talk mainly about the price or point to a particular clientele as reasons for locating or remaining on the street. For one at least there is a hope that as the "the first to open a place that served as a café lunch bar on the street" they would succeed. For others

there is a sense that the part of Trondheimsveien they are on, though not really participating, is in the process of gentrification; as one visits the area, there is evidence gentrification is beginning to happen – witness the new restaurant catering to a middle class and “hip” clientele on the corner of Trondheimsveien near Nybrua. This may be so but most feel as one shop keeper bemoaned:

The street doesn't change much even though shops come and go all the time. We are not really a part of Grünerløkka

by which they mean the process of gentrification.

Whatever the reasons for coming, commercial establishments still keep popping up in Grünerløkka and streets such as Thorvald Meyersgate, and Markveien remain dynamic with, at least since 2001 when the project began, a constant process of change and transformation; a constant growth in the number of places attempting to appeal to a lifestyle most often associated with gentrification.

In the discussions of the traditional neighborhood, most specifically Mayol, and indeed in my own experience, the role of the ‘shop’ did play a critical role in helping to bind neighborhood residents and to create the basis for shared interactions. The traditional neighborhood shop serving, as it does, the whole of a neighborhood is most often a center for contact and communication. Shop owners serve as intermediaries between neighbors sharing information and gossip and helping to create a sense of and shared intimacy. But this set of social practices assumes a mostly local clientele that is loyal to the neighborhood shops and is also able to support the shop economically.

The type of clientele those who own stores and eating and drinking places in the study area desire varies. Many of the owners of kiosks, smaller cafes and food stores seek a local market and customer base. But for the most part the customer base that is diverse and often the reason for locating in Grünerløkka is that it is a destination point and provides a customer base that derives from the whole city and indeed metropolitan area.

To support the number and variety of shops in the Grünerløkka area it becomes imperative for many of these shops to find a clientele that derives as much from the neighborhood as the metropolitan region. Shops thus come to be used as much, in many instances, by internal tourists as they do by local residents. As one storeowner noted, when asked

about whether there were more internal tourists shopping in the area:

Grünerløkka has become a lot more beautiful. There are a LOT (respondents emphasis) more people coming here to shop now. All the design stores draw people here.

Or as another put it:

A lot of our customers live in Oslo and they come here from Vestkanten in particular. That is another thing that has changed since we started up (ed. in 1995). Today more and more people who shop here are from the Vestkant.

Unlike the situation often described for traditional neighborhoods, the number and range of shops makes it less likely that any one shop or even two shops of any kind; e.g., food, clothing, sundries, will serve as a central social node for residents or be exclusively used by them. Thus it is not surprising to find that residents appear to have no strong ties to particular shops or shopkeepers and, in turn, many of the shopkeepers themselves appear less driven by the needs of local residents than the larger Oslo region.

In responses from residents of Grünerløkka, gentrifiers and immigrants, over three-fourths expressed no strong loyalty to one or another shop whether it be for food or for clothing. In buying fruits and vegetables while about half of the gentrifiers said that they had at one time or another shopped at one particular store located in the center of Grünerløkka near Olav Ryes plass, a good fifth said they shopped outside the neighborhood for their fruits and vegetables. Most provided names of more than one store where they shopped. Overall seven different shops were noted as places where the respondents shopped for their fruits and vegetables. When shopping for groceries other than food, gentrifiers mostly used a number of different supermarkets in the area with none stating a strong preference for one or another market.

Immigrants too expressed few strong loyalties toward any given shop. They are to a great extent less specific about what stores they used and tended only to answer about fruit and vegetables, meat and fish as well as clothing. If they were specific about a store it was, unlike most gentrifiers, to identify its ethnic association. If there is much that is common in the shopping patterns of immigrants and gentrifiers, there is one significant difference: gentrifiers appear



not to use halal meat shops even while using other types of stores run by immigrants. Halal shops are in many ways the most clearly immigrant in nature. Most other immigrant shops tend to have what respondents labeled, Norwegian, by which they meant conventionally European goods.

It is most intriguing that in an area full of shops for clothing, nearly half the respondents both gentrifier and immigrant said they did most of their shopping for clothing outside Grünerløkka. Equally as intriguing, is that a number of clothing store owners stated unequivocally that their clientele tended to be mostly local. Although this betokens a desire to see themselves as part of a coherent neighborhood, a number of store owners who suggested that their stores served mostly local clientele sold specialty goods such as maternity clothes. The claim; although it is difficult to believe given that such specialty stores probably could not survive on local purchases alone, is noteworthy for what it tells us about the desire for a sense of neighborhood on the part of even those whose activities might run counter to the wish.

Similarly in regard to the use of cafes and restaurants, gentrifiers living in Grünerløkka provided names for over 21 different eating places; only two of them were visited by more than one respondent. Equally as noteworthy is that a little less than half of the eating places mentioned were located outside the neighborhood in a locale filled with restaurants. Immigrant respondents, who ate out less than gentrifiers, were as likely to eat outside of Grünerløkka as they were to eat in establishments located in Grünerløkka.

It is noteworthy that the owners of a number of cafes, like a number of store owners, expressed the desire to be neighborhood oriented. As the owner of a café that had recently opened enthusiastically offered:

This café is for everyone in the street. People come here alone to read the paper and drink coffee, or they come in groups. They are comfortable with all kinds of clientele and want it to be a multitude of people. They have quite a few students from B.I. who come here in their breaks. On Fridays we have lots of Somalians coming right from the Mosque. Taxidrivers also come for a break.

But she made no claim that any of her customers were regulars. Another owner of a café stated that he did have regulars, “people who come here know each other, they

sit with each other,” as did another who spoke about the clientele as being local architects and other professionals. More common though were those who said that while they serve the neighborhood, there are few regular customers. As the manager of one the most active cafes in the center of Grünerløkka said:

We have 10 regular customers. Some of them are male, Arabic at the age 30–40 – Two of them are over 50. Ironically this is in a café where the clientele is mostly Norwegian.

the manager went on to say.

Cafes do then clearly serve a local function serving what many of the managers believed to be people who lived in the neighborhood. Like some store owners there is a perception that their establishment is primarily local. And indeed, some appear to have qualities that are associated with traditional neighborhoods. But the high number of cafes and eating places in the area suggests that even as some may serve local residents, most also need customers from a broader area.

Moreover, if one looks closely at the testimony of café owners for example the notion that they are local places may be more wishful thinking than reality. The café owner who claimed to serve locals actually describes a customer base that in part comes from attendance at a Mosque which draws people from all over Oslo and taxi drivers who also hail from all over. The café that attracts architects and such may be attracting those who work in the area as much as those who live there. And although one café has regulars it is not clear that they live in the immediate area only that they come to this café. Only one café owner suggested that he actually knew his customers personally; an attribute strongly associated with locally based establishments in traditional neighborhoods.

Overall, stores, restaurants and cafes, while clearly serving the local population, were also reliant on a greater customer based generated from the broader metropolitan region. The age range was also young; between 20–40, many being students or young professionals. Indeed the degree to which the area is dependent on what we have called “internal tourists,” mostly young, is clearly visible if one observes the very social life of the streets; these observations being bolstered by the respondents. They commented and one can see that on week-ends, on Friday nights and nights in

general there is a change in clientele from locals to internal tourists. There is also, as many respondents pointed out, a distinct difference in shopping patterns between seasons; the spring and summer being a much more active period. Street life as a result and for those who own stores a necessary condition is a constantly changing tableau; a dynamic and varied coming together of both locals and strangers.

If there are stores that have located in Grünerløkka to specifically take advantage of local residents it would be specialty shops that appeal to young professional and middle class couples either expecting a child or with very young children. The owner of one store for children pointed out that it was only in a neighborhood like Grünerløkka where you got the kind of people who would spend the money to buy the various educational toys and such that he sold that would provide a reasonable base upon which to build the business. He did though suggest they also get customers from all over Oslo. Another store catering to pregnant women, as noted earlier, said that it was good to be in the area because of all the young couples expecting children although she did attract people from all over the city.

The discussion of the customer base both actual and desired suggests that if the larger area and indeed parts of Grünerløkka is a mix of gentrifiers and immigrants; the gentrifiers and immigrants don't mix. A large number of store owners and restaurateurs stated that their primary customer base was Norwegian. Indeed a majority pointed to the fact that they rarely if ever served immigrants. Even stores owned by immigrants aim as one said to attract a Norwegian clientele and not immigrants. At least three owners of cafes and bars spoke specifically of keeping immigrants out of their establishments if they could. One indeed stated quite openly that on week-ends the bar hires door men to keep "Africans out." Another establishment was said by immigrants to try to keep them out. To be fair there are owners who speak approvingly of serving immigrants. One café spoke of the only regulars being Arabs from outside the neighborhood and another above spoke approvingly of her Somali clientele. For some shop keepers, Friday is a good day precisely because of the flow of people to the Mosque in the area for worship and then meeting and shopping. But overall, the respondents' discussion of their customer base suggests that there are stores for Norwegians and stores for immigrants with only some – mostly food shops- being

used continually by both groups.

The splits in the community are made more apparent in the store owner's replies to their sense of how the area has changed. As one owner who has been in Grünerløkka for over 30 years pointed out:

People used to be older, now they are younger, It was a typical working class neighborhood but now it is a young place and the streets are full of people from the West and Baerum

For almost all in the area that we have described as central (the area around Olav Ryes plas), the area has changed significantly from the 1990's and even as late as 2000. As another owner pointed out:

It has been a neighborhood of experimentation. There is lot of innovation here with the cafes, bars, night places growing in number and lots of new stores. Markveien and Thorvald Meyersgate have become shopping streets.

For still another respondent the area has changed:

A lot, but it is a change that does along with the changing stores and not the other way round. The area has changed so much that when I first opened people would come from the West in taxis because they were frightened of the area; it was considered dangerous by those living in the West. Now we are seen as trendy, hip, and safe Even the city services have improved.

Another in a more nostalgic mode suggested that while the changes have been mostly positive, it has its downsides:

The place has really gone up with a lot more cafes and bars. All the brown is gone and so is the clientele but I miss the old stores. There is too much nightlife and it is almost overtaking the stores, which is not good. Another sad thing is that stores that had been here a long time had to close because of the rents that have become increasingly expensive.

Yet not all in the area see the changes as an unalloyed good. It may have been:

A slum when I first got here, the streets gray with no people but it was cleaner and there were possibilities. Now it is difficult to open new types of stores, and it has gotten dirtier; the drunks throw their litter everywhere. The parks are full of drunks and at night it is just a party area.

Other store owners also point out that there is too much night life. A number of respondents complained as one said succinctly, “the area is getting better and better but there are just too many cafes.” Others point to a diminution in the variety of life on the street. As one pointed out “there used to be immigrants using the shops, my shop, but now it is too expensive and too trendy for them.” Still others point out that Grünerløkka may be losing its edge as a trendy and hip place because of all the development. As one café owner put it:

Grünerløkka is losing its hipness. It is getting more and more like other areas for entertainment like downtown. I hope it holds on to its distinctiveness.

If there is a positive feeling for change in most of Grünerløkka it is not shared, for the most part, by those who have stores on the margins. A number of respondents on Trondheimsveien voiced an attitude similar to one respondent who said: “There is not much change here and the small stores in Grünerløkka (the central area) are giving me competition.” For those on the margins they do not see themselves as part of the overall changes one sees in the more central locations in Grünerløkka. Or as another respondent put it, “It hasn’t changed much (Trondheimsveien) and so I don’t understand all this bull about big changes in Grünerløkka.”

Shopping is an important element in the social and physical definition of Grünerløkka.. Most critically it creates at least for the shop owners and for their clientele a sense that Grünerløkka is a trendy and hip place. It serves as a destination point for people coming, not only from the neighborhood proper, but from all over Oslo and even beyond as a place for trendy boutique shopping and as a center for eating and drinking. Thus it fills the streets with pedestrians both day and night – residents and internal tourists – and helps to create a vibrant and dynamic place. This dynamism is also a function of the continual turnover in the shops and cafes, restaurant and bars that continually close and reopen under new ownership with a different type of establishment and often with a new design thus changing the street landscape.

Thus at its core shopping and its associated activities as it unfolds in Grünerløkka both constructs and deconstructs neighborhood at the same time and in the same place. In one sense it creates the dynamic that makes Grünerløkka

special for its residents and provides an identity to the neighborhood. At the same time, it creates its own form of neighborhood that is different from and in many ways not reliant on the residential neighborhood. The area around Olav Ryes plass and on the streets that abut it – Thorvald Meyersgate and Markveien- reaching from the river to about 4 or 5 blocks north (this keeps changing and moving) is its own world of shops, cafes, restaurants and bars.

It creates its own unique physical streetscape and social landscape that has little to do with the residential activities or the apartment blocks that are found on these shopping streets. Its physical form and its appearance at the level of the street are defined by the stores, the eating and drinking places that frame its street line. Its social landscape is made up of the shoppers, bar hoppers, coffee drinkers, partiers and those eating out.

For those who come to this “neighborhood” of Grünerløkka it is a place for meeting, for display, and for social performance; it is effectively and predominately open and public. It is a place that anyone – at least anyone with money to spend and a Norwegian as against immigrant identity – can call their own and feel that they are a part of as the streets and the various commercial establishments for the most part are there for the. In a way those who come to use this area as a destination point create the social demography of this neighborhood within the neighborhood of Grünerløkka.

Ironically even as the activities associated with shopping help to frame the neighborhood’s identity and social activities, it also generates practices that militate against the characteristics of a traditional neighborhood as described by such as Mayol. The shops serving a larger than local clientele for the most part do not serve as local places alone; they are more oriented to the larger city. Attracting a clientele from all over the city also means that the idea that as we penetrate into our the neighborhood we are entering a socially familiar and the semi-private world where we know, at least by appearance, our neighbors becomes problematic. The streets, filled with people from all over, may become as full of strangers and in a way as public and as potentially threatening as other public spaces in the city.

Outside of the building itself, we find that residents have no singular pattern of exchanges, even encounters with either the stores in the area, and even less with residents who live cheek by jowl with them. This reality is confirmed by



observing the social encounters in the parks where we find that different groups of people have little or nothing to do with each other. Add to this that gentrifiers and immigrants live in separate worlds, that different stores seek to establish different types of clientele, some internal and some external, the reliance also on much internal tourism for the area to survive economically (if the storekeepers testimony is to be believed) and what we find is from one perspective a place that mediates against a sense of neighborhood. It is a place where we find multiple and parallel social orbits.

At the same time though there is clear sense that Grünerløkka is perceived by residents and store owners alike as a “place” both as a socio-cultural space and a physical landscape. Moreover, by creating a place within a place, the shopping area of Grünerløkka defines a social reality that is



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distinct; different even from other shopping areas like those on Trondheimsveien. In creating that which is distinctive it creates within the broader residential area, a central point that provides a clear identity to the larger area even as in ways it does not serve that area and even as it suggests an identity that when walks through the rest of Grünerløkka is not really present. Shopping is not at the core of most streets in Bydel Grünerløkka but limited to key streets. For many residents this shopping district is not attractive anymore creating problems – noise, litter and the loss of control of key streets – even as it creates an identity that makes in many ways what Grünerløkka is as an attractive, hip and trendy place of gentrification. Thus in a way what the forms of consumption associated with Grünerløkka have created is what we might call “neighborhood without neighboring.”

## Notes

1. Urban transformation: urban form, gentrification and immigration – Oslo as an example of European city development funded by the Norwegian Research Council 20 01-2004
2. While our researches looked at a series of neighborhoods from Grünerløkka to Grønland to Furuset, given the length of this paper I will limit my remarks to Grünerløkka.

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