



OSLO

NORWAY

KEY FEATURES OF THE CITY

Demographic Facts

- Over 600.000 inhabitants in the city
- About 1 million inhabitants in the greater Oslo region

Urban Figures

- Old Oslo, the medieval portion
- Christiania, built in the 17th century
- The Industrial harbor
- The expansion of the Norwegian welfare state

Heritage

- Preserved by the Nordic World Heritage Foundation

EXISTING GOVERNANCE MECHANISMS

Development and Management Plans

- Urban Ecology Program
- Fjord City Strategy
- Municipal Masterplan 2008
- Revised Strategic Plan for the Port of Oslo 2003-2011

Responsible Authorities

- Oslo Municipality: City County and City Government
- Oslo Municipality: Oslo Waterfront Planning Office
- Oslo Port Authority

Legislation for the protection and management

- Building Act 1965
- New Planning and Building Act of 1985

MAIN ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

- Balance between flagship projects and heritage authenticity in city branding
- Balance between westward and eastward transformations
- Balance between public and private funding

KEY ASPECTS OF THE CULTURE-BASED REGENERATION STRATEGIES

- Bjørvika district and the new Oslo Opera House
- Westward transformations, Aker Brygge and Tjuvholmen
- Eastward transformations, Grünerløkka district

OUTCOMES AND LESSONS LEARNT

- Reconnection the city and its natural environment
- Art as catalyst for urban regeneration
- City branding as a tool for urban regeneration
- Reinterpretation of heritage



9.6 Oslo

Oslo is the capital of the Kingdom of Norway and the oldest of the Scandinavian capitals, with a history that dates back to 1.000 years ago, when the first settlements were built. Despite the position of the city — at the inner reach of the Fjord — commercial and transport-related use of the waterfront areas have long separated the city from water. In recent decades, important steps have been undergone to alter the physical landscape to remove the barrier to the sea and to relate the city directly to its natural environment. Oslo represents an interesting case-study as the counterpart of its main urban features — a relatively early developed and recently urbanized context, less densely populated, and characterized by a less durable building technology, mainly based on wooden structures — is a well established preservation system.



9.6.1 Key features of the city

The spatial configuration of the city — morphologically arranged on the eastern and western sides of the Akerselva river, running through the city from north to south — reflects the complex vicissitudes undergone by the city.

Some key transformations may be identified in three main events: the Great Fire that destroyed it in 1624 to the rebuilding of the Christiania; the town's developments of the 17th and 18th centuries and political upswing in the 19th century, when the town once again became Norway's capital and the nation entered into union with Sweden; the further greater growth brought by the industrial revolution in the late 19th century, especially in the eastern portion of the town and northwards along the banks of the Akerselva river.

Demographic facts

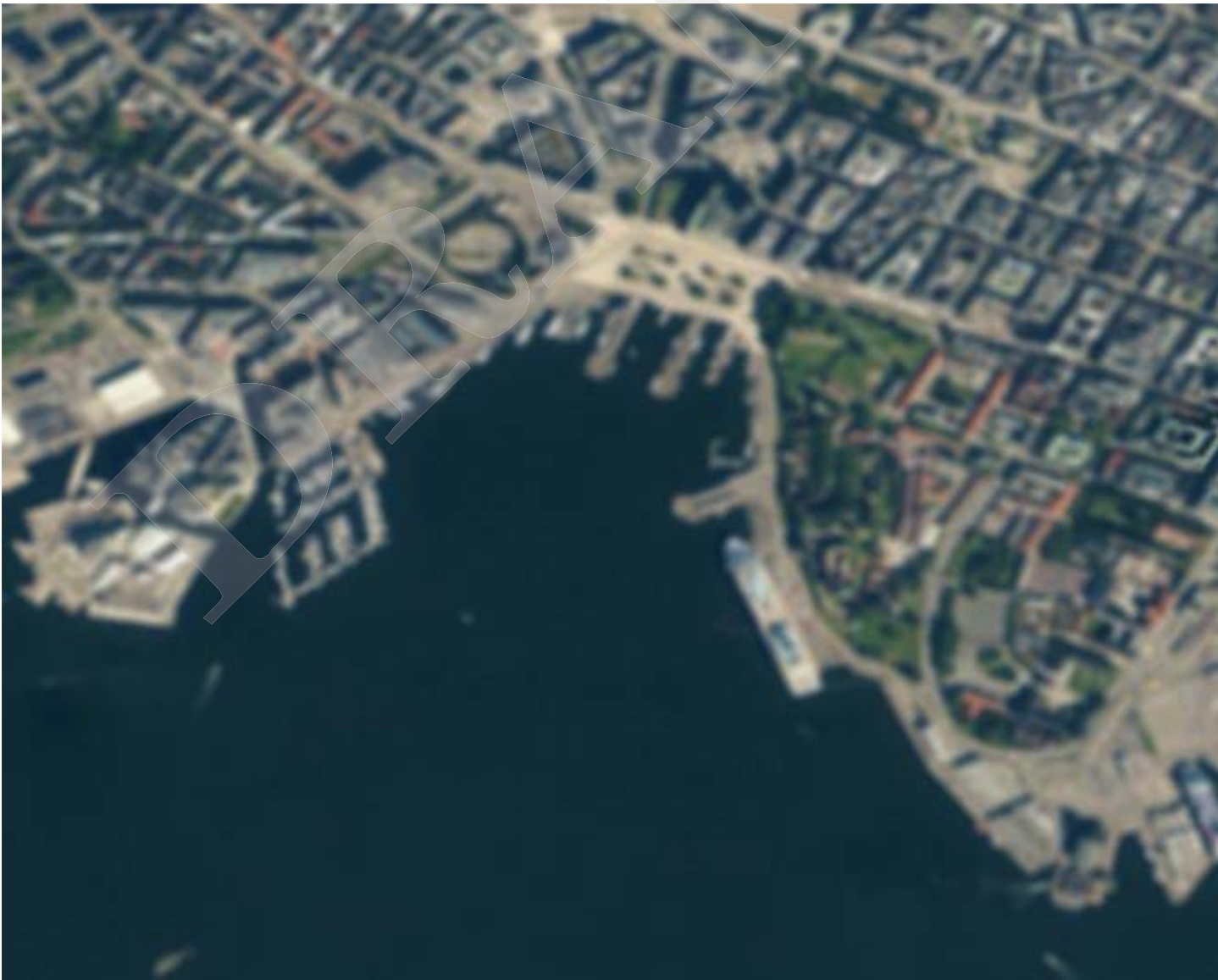
Oslo is the most populous city in Norway — constituting both a county and a municipality — with over 600.000 inhabitants in the city and about one million inhabitants in the greater Oslo region (nearly one quarter of all the people living in Norway), including the suburban municipalities in the county of Akershus.



Urban figures

The urban arrangement of the city can be conceived as the overlapping of various historic and socio-material layers that reflect the evolution of the Norwegian city planning.

The city structure thus results as the comprising five layers: **Old Oslo**, namely the medieval portion deriving from the city's founding, emerging in the street layout and in the traces of religious buildings in the east side; **Christiania**, built in the 17th century after the great fire destruction of the old town, based on an orderly grid of streets under the walls of Akershus Fortress, together with the westward expansion of the city that extended the Baroque concept, and with the area of the 20th-century City Hall; the **Industrial harbor**, as the extension of the city to accommodate shipping and manufacturing activities on the riverbanks as well as the middle class housing in the west and working class housing in the east, wholly consolidated into the unified plan of 1930; the **expansion of the Norwegian welfare state**, whose structure of social democracy and comprehensive strategies linked to national economic goals influenced urban development, with its concentric growth in the second half of the XXth century.



Heritage

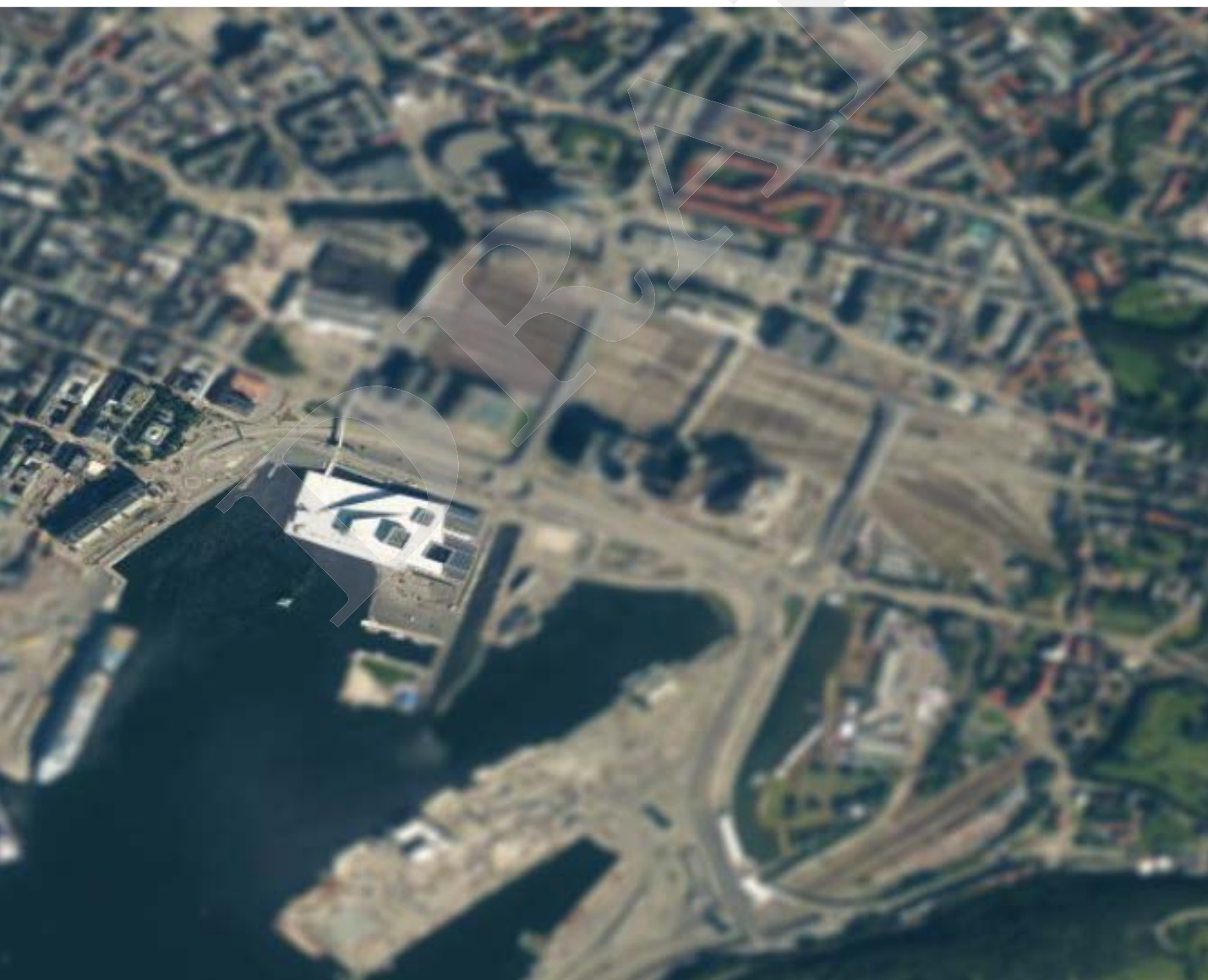
Though the UNESCO World Heritage List does not include any site within the city of Oslo, a very peculiar notion of heritage can be identified in relation to the Norwegian capital and thus the **Nordic World Heritage Foundation** has been entrusted with a relevant position in the existing mechanisms of preservation and regeneration of the existing heritage.

9.6.2 Existing governance mechanisms

Development and management plans

The main plans for the city relates to three key strands of development and regeneration, primarily addressing port-related and sustainability-related issues.

Urban Ecology Program. The Municipality of Oslo has settled the Urban Ecology Program (Bykologisk Programme) as the Local Agenda 21 Plan for Oslo, aimed towards a “sustainable” city form through a “blue-green planning”. Based on frameworks developed under the European Union, the Programs aimed at guiding all city action, by addressing both public and private activities through the involvement of citizens, with their changing values and interests. The integrated plan has led to the organization of two main initiatives: “Oslo



Sustainable Oslo Sustainable City” and “Oslo, Environmental Status 2003 Web Report”. Through a 12 year framework — periodically revised — the Urban Ecology Program defines environmental policies and guidelines for the city’s built environment through the creation of areas of emphasis. The 2003 European Sustainable City Award represents one of the acknowledgments resulting from this strategy, which acted through integrated actions on the transportation system as well as the architectural heritage of the city (Klosterenga, Pilestredet Park, City Hall Open Space).

Fjord City Strategy. In 2000 the City Council passed “the Fjord City Strategy” — an urban renewal project for the waterfront area — linked to a regional strategy based on outsourcing the industrial port and aimed at the redevelopment of the freed central port areas for residential, business and recreational use. At the same time, the identity of the city as an harbor-machine has been preserved by keeping passenger ship traffic and wet-and-dry-bulk cargo ship traffic within the city centre, addressed also through a work focused on the docking system for large cruise ships to save the direct relation between tourism and the waterfront.

Municipal Masterplan. In 2008, the Municipality defined the guidelines for the planning and development process, particularly addressing the needs of the city to respect the physical limits set by the orography of the territory as a green belt.

Revised Strategic Plan for the Port of Oslo 2003-2011 — by the Oslo Port Authority — represented a concrete action to address the aimed goals of the Fjord City Strategy, by providing temporary solutions, such as the diverting of the cargo traffic.

Responsible authorities

In the context of the welfare state that characterizes the organization of the city — and in relation to the highly supported concept of the “good to the public” — a fundamental role is held by **Oslo Municipality**. Oslo’s parliamentary system of local government — established in 1986 — is based on the **City Council** (responsible of the “Fjord City Strategy”)and its executive body, the **City Government**. Within the structure of the Municipality, in 2002 the Oslo Waterfront Planning Office has been as the responsible office for a whole set of activities related to the dissemination and support on specific issues within the waterfront area. Additionally, the **Oslo Port Authority is responsible of** the “Revised strategic plan for the Port of Oslo, 2003-2011” — by the **Oslo Port Authority** — represented a concrete action to address the aimed goals, by providing temporary solutions for diverting the cargo traffic.

Each of the **25 districts** of the city — defined in 1988 — consists of a **district council** and a **district administration** under the direction of a district director. In addition, a number of agencies and enterprises is involved in running the municipality.

Legislation for the protection and management

In Norway, the **Building Act of 1965** updated previous legislation in the field of planning, and particularly the 1924 law about the definition of building districts and building municipalities. While the urban planning law of 1924 provided a list of the Norwegian municipalities which required the following of specific rules for the definition of the urban plan, outside of these listed cities it was possible to build without permission. The 1965 Act integrated planning tradition with new economic concepts.

The **New Planning and Building Act of 1985** turned the emphasis on the necessity for master planning into the awareness of the need for less comprehensive plans, also in order

to pay more attention at the preservation of the natural and built environment, as well as to public participation (Fiskaa, 2005).

9.6.3 Main issues to be addressed

Among the main issues that have been addressed in the regeneration processes for the city of Oslo — and which are still partially the object of some controversies — there main aspects can be identified in terms of needed balances between diverse components of the city's tangible and intangible structure.

Balance between flagship projects and heritage authenticity in city branding.

The widely recognized project for the new opera house, representing the iconic building of the contemporary image of Oslo is an example of the emerging necessity to reason about the role of major transformations for the integrity of the city's character. City branding related to the dense and compact quality of the city becomes an issue to be addresses in exemplar cases such as the “barcode”, new business district of high-rises in the city centre of Oslo.

Balance between westward and eastward transformations. The welfare government is entrusted with the responsibility to develop Oslo's east portion in order to overcome the traditional separation between the two parts of the city and also to allow the eastern side to regain an unprecedented relation with the sea.

Balance between public and private funding: real estate investments. Privately initiated urban projects represent potential resources for regeneration. However, the idea of projects like “events” able to trigger open and dynamic transformation processes should call into play the role of public support in the capacity of the Government to attract real estate investments.

9.6.4 Key aspects of the culture-based regeneration strategies

In Oslo, large-scale urban regeneration plans have started with flagship projects, meant at the same time as catalysts for further regeneration and ambitious place branding tools, moving from the awareness that comprehensive planning is no longer considered desirable or even possible.

Bjørvika district and the new Oslo Opera House. Placed in a strategic position — at the intersection of the east and west portion of the city — the new Oslo Opera House in Bjørvika district represents an illustrative example of this flagship projects strategy. The new national opera house — opened in 2008 — is the result of a redevelopment project for a run-down industrial area aimed at return existing areas to the citizens, in line with the overall purpose of giving the waterfront back to the city and interpreting the port as a potential public space. Promoted locally and internationally, the Opera House has thus attracted investment and gained public interest to the area, so as boosting its further development and providing benefits to the local residents in terms of improvement of public spaces as well as renovation of the existing housing stock. The opera house shows how large urban areas today are often planned and developed by way of a few symbolic structures that are expected to generate additional developments in a more or less spontaneous way.

Westward transformations, Aker Brygge and Tjuvholmen. According to this attempt to create strategies and contingency plans to intervene in, further projects have been carried out, such as the transformation of the Oslo's former western railway station into the

new Nobel Peace Center and the transportation project for the replacement of the surface motorway bisecting Bjørvika into a new tunnel — Festningstunnelen, or Fortress Tunnel — that allowed to place the motorway under Oslo City Hall and Akershus Fortress. As a matter of facts, the tunnel — financed by road tolls — was the catalyst for a variety of environmental and urban improvements, such as the City Hall pedestrian plaza, the rehabilitation of the historic square of Christiania Torg, the new street design of the City Hall area, and the renovated waterfront area in the lee of Akershus Fortress. For what concerns the redevelopment of the former wharf area of Aker Brygge — which follows this recycling strategy for former industrial or shipping areas, by favoring a large percentage of high-status residential units — it represents the portion of the city in which major efforts have been dedicated to the preservation of some authentic elements of the city structure. Further regeneration projects relate to new cultural activities and structures in the new borough of Tjuvholmen, based on the master plan by Niels Torp. The spread of art galleries and the presence of the Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art by Renzo Piano make it the art district of Oslo, whose regeneration has also been able to give the seaside back to the inhabitants of the city.

Eastward transformations and the Grünerløkka district. Located on the east side of the river — behind the old industrial buildings — the Grünerløkka district constitutes an emblematic example of Oslo's working-class culture and a well-known case of Norwegian gentrification, currently involved into an extensive transformation based on the realization of new neighborhoods and the rehabilitation of existing parts of the area.

9.6.5 Outcomes and lessons learnt

Although Oslo's size, economic power and cultural influence are unrivalled within Norway — as a consequence of the fact that the site was chosen for its natural harbor and its central location in relation to greater parts of East Norway — it is a typical Norwegian city.

Among the number of interesting aspects in terms regeneration paradigms and lessons learnt, four main outcomes can be identified in the case-study.

A first aspect deals with the construction of a proper Fjord City through the **reconnection the city and its natural environment**, achieved through the recovering of the waterfront and the eastward expansion, that has allowed to restore the relationship between urban tissue and the sea also in this part of the city.

A second core outcome is related to the role of **art as catalyst for urban regeneration**, as testified by the galleries and Astrup Fearnley Museum in Tjuvholmen.

A third lesson derived from the case-study deals with the symbolic and touristic use of urban space, in terms of **city branding as a tool for urban regeneration**. The medieval park with its museographic structure, on the one hand, and the Opera House flagship project on the other hand, represent two paradigms of this aspect.

Furthermore, the **reinterpretation of heritage** is a key outcomes that results from the overall regeneration process undergone in the city. In order to better understand the inherent character of Oslo as a potential heritage city, it should be taken into account that the city is characterized by a sort of “nostalgia” of the pre-Danish age, ended with the Thirty Years War in the 17th century which caused the displacement of the old settlement of Oslo for defense against external forces and especially the Swedes. As a consequence, the Medieval portion of the city — mainly corresponding with the railroad area — has long been an

archaeological “dig”, hiding 4 centuries traces underneath its ground. Today, the redevelopment and reuse of the waterfront “surfaces” has regenerated these peculiar heritage places aiming at a touristic and symbolic interpretation of the urban space. The result is a “medieval park” — mainly characterized by a museographical arrangement — that shows the ruins of some ancient structures and the reconstruction of the coastline that has changed over time, so as appearing as a sort of “theme park” that however has deeply affected the development of the port area of the city.

The interpretation of the heritage of the city finds another interesting case in the Norwegian Folk Museum, which represents a sort of pre-cinematographic construction of a landscape, settled as a scenography, but not stuck in the time of its foundation, at the end of the 19th century. The open air museum — one of the largest of its kind in Europe — includes 155 traditional houses from all parts of Norway and a Stave Church from the year 1200 and shows the traces of later transformations and alterations of this environment which has been growing through time as a culture of landscape, but also a culture of modernity, of the ability to design a changing scene.

9.6.6 Perspectives for the future

The unbuilt plan for Oslo’s promenade — about 10 kilometers of public walkway — represent one of the main perspectives in term of the urban transformation forecasted for the city. Rather than a line running along the seashore, the promenade will thus become a proper reconnecting device, providing many potential regenerative occasions on its development.

In an overall perspective, Oslo’s regeneration shows the potentialities for the addition of a further “stratum” — partly resulting from the last decades in which a new urban geography has emerged — in the terms of a new urban geography that would foster the understanding of the Oslo region as a complex system.