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## Spaces of encounter: relations between the occupier and the occupied in Norway during the Second World War

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### ABSTRACT

With Nazi Germany's aggressive expansion, millions of Europeans were forced under German rule. Although the worlds of the occupier and the occupied overlapped in multiple ways, the everyday interactions between members of opposing sides of the conflict have received little scholarly attention. Using German-occupied Norway as a case study, this article explores the manifold relations between German soldiers and civilians during the Second World War. It argues that the asymmetry of power was not stable but constantly shifting as a result of these encounters. Based on an analysis of German military court records, the article identifies crimes and spaces as nodes where these worlds converged. First, using crimes as a lens, it explores how people on both sides responded to the constraints and opportunities the occupation produced. Secondly, it illustrates how space became the real and symbolic battleground in the struggle for power, and how the spatial norms inscribed in public, private and work spaces shaped these interactions. Since concepts of 'resistance' and 'collaboration' are inadequate to make sense of the complex reality of occupation, the article proposes the categories of conflict, cooperation and solidarity to analyse the diverse social relations between the occupier and the occupied.

### KEYWORDS

Second World War; German occupation; Norway; social relations; everyday life; space; collaboration and resistance

On 3 August 1942, three members of the German Flakbattalion 265 stationed in Stjørdal in Mid-Norway went into the nearby forest to pick berries.<sup>1</sup> On their way back to the barracks, they passed four Norwegian men who were standing by the roadside. One soldier, who, as the court protocol noted, had only recently arrived in Norway, greeted the locals with 'Guten Abend'. His gesture of politeness met with a rigorous response. One of the Norwegian men kicked the pot of berries out of the soldier's hands, allegedly laughing as the berries fell to the ground. A German military court later sentenced the Norwegian to 18 months in prison for ridiculing the Wehrmacht. The court did not discuss the motives of the defendant but

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<sup>1</sup>Gericht des Kommandierenden Generals und Befehlshabers im Luftgau Norwegen, Trondheim, 18 September 1942. Staatsarchiv Hamburg (StaHa), 242-1-11/Abl. 17, T. Mæland.

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simply concluded that he had acted ‘without any reason’ (‘ohne jeden Anlass’). Yet did the Norwegian really have no reason? The Germans had invaded his country two years earlier. Now he and his companions had to witness the Germans entering *their* forests and picking *their* berries, a traditional food staple for the Norwegians, which became even more precious in times of rationing and growing scarcity.<sup>2</sup> For them, the berry-picking soldiers symbolized everything that was wrong with the German occupation. The fact that one of the soldiers greeted the Norwegians in German might have added to their resentment. Whereas the German soldier presumably wanted to present himself as a friendly and civilized man (after all, he did not greet them with ‘Heil Hitler’), the Norwegians sensed a taunt.

Nazi Germany’s aggressive expansion and occupation of large parts of Europe forced millions of individuals into the role of either occupier or occupied. The German occupation overturned the existing socio-political order and severely curtailed the freedoms of those who lived in these ‘occupied societies’.<sup>3</sup> Although power rested now with the occupiers (and their collaborators), they were never in sole possession of it, nor was their position ever secure. Positions of power were claimed and contested, temporarily strengthened or relinquished. To administer occupation the German rulers depended on local cooperation. The locals, too, needed to cooperate with the occupier to a certain degree, since they controlled access to vital resources.<sup>4</sup> The worlds of the occupiers and the occupied thus ‘overlapped in multiple ways’.<sup>5</sup>

This article analyses the spatial overlaps, and the social relations that developed within them. Based on an analysis of German military court records, it demonstrates that the interactions between the occupier and the occupied upset the power structures that the new rulers had created. Norway was chosen for study because of the high number of German soldiers stationed in the country. With 350,000 soldiers in place to govern three million Norwegians, encounters with the ‘other’ were almost inevitable. Moreover, Norway was, with the exception of the most northern part, largely spared wartime action, and therefore allows us to gain a clearer picture of the functioning of occupation.

Adopting Alf Lüdtke’s concept of ‘rule as social practice’, I want to investigate the practices and agency of individuals in order to illuminate

<sup>2</sup>G. Hjeltnes, ‘Supplies under pressure: survival in a fully rationed society: experiences, cases and innovation in rural and urban regions in occupied Norway’ in T. Tönsmeier, P. Haslinger and A. Laba (eds), *Coping with Hunger and Shortage under German Occupation in World War II* (Basingstoke, 2018), 61–82, 69, 74.

<sup>3</sup>T. Tönsmeier, ‘Besatzungsgesellschaften. Begriffliche und konzeptionelle Überlegungen zur Erfahrungsgeschichte des Alltags unter Deutscher Besatzung im Zweiten Weltkrieg’, *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte* (2015), [http://docupedia.de/zg/toensmeyer\\_besatzungsgesellschaften\\_v1\\_de\\_2015](http://docupedia.de/zg/toensmeyer_besatzungsgesellschaften_v1_de_2015) (accessed 14 February 2020).

<sup>4</sup>T. Tönsmeier and K. Thijs, ‘Dealing with the enemy: occupation and occupied societies in Western Europe’, *Francia. Forschungen zur Westeuropäischen Geschichte*, 44 (2017), 349–59, 355; O.K. Grimnes, ‘Kollaborasjon og oppgjør’ in S.U. Larsen (ed.), *I krigens kjølvann. Nye sider ved norsk krigshistorie og etterkrigstid* (Oslo, 1999), 47–58, 47.

<sup>5</sup>T. Imlay, ‘The German side of “things”’, *French Historical Studies*, 39, 1 (2016), 183–215, 211.

the complex social relations between the occupier and the occupied.<sup>6</sup> How was ‘rule’ implemented on a daily basis, and where did it encounter resistance? How was the asymmetry of power reproduced – or undermined? For, even under Nazi Germany’s brutal, dictatorial regime, the divide between (allegedly active) ‘rulers’ and (allegedly passive) ‘ruled’ was never clear cut or stable.<sup>7</sup> The concepts of ‘resistance’ and ‘collaboration’ are unhelpful because they obscure rather than elucidate the nuances of these ‘endlessly varying’ relationships.<sup>8</sup> Philippe Burrin introduced the term ‘accommodation’ to illuminate ‘the vast grey zone’ of attitudes and reactions to the German occupation. Burrin argues that it is necessary to distinguish between ‘different forms and degrees’ of collaborative behaviour in order to gain a better understanding of the varied and often contradictory responses and the complexity of motives which inform them.<sup>9</sup> However, just like ‘resistance’ and ‘collaboration’, the concept of ‘accommodation’ merely categorizes the attitudes of the occupied *towards* the occupier, not their relations with each other. In contrast, Robert Gildea’s term ‘cohabitation’ draws attention to the ‘multi-faceted, subtle and complex’ character of the interactions between the enemies.<sup>10</sup> He uses ‘cohabitation’ to describe a wide variety of relations that inevitably developed when members of the two enemy camps began living side by side. According to Gildea, money and sex form the core of these relations, which ranged from business interactions to intimate friendships.<sup>11</sup> However, ‘cohabitation’ is a descriptive rather than an analytical term, and amalgamates very different forms of relations and motives.

Jan Thomas Gross and others have called for new ‘middle terms’ to make sense of the ‘multifaceted involvements between the occupiers and the occupied’.<sup>12</sup> In response, this article uses Max Weber’s concept of social relationships to formulate three new categories<sup>13</sup>: relations of conflict, relations of cooperation and relations of solidarity. Conflict is defined by a clash of interests. Cooperative relations define instrumental relations which are primarily profit oriented. Relations of solidarity describe non-utilitarian, often affective relationships based on subjective feelings of belonging together, or of sharing common, non-material interests. Although in reality

<sup>6</sup>A. Lüdtké, ‘Einleitung: Herrschaft als soziale Praxis’ in A. Lüdtké (ed.), *Herrschaft als soziale Praxis* (Göttingen, 2007 [1991]), 9–63.

<sup>7</sup>*ibid.*, 13, 31; F. Bajohr, ‘Der Cultural Turn und die Gesellschaftsgeschichte des Nationalsozialismus’, *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 65, 2 (2017), 223–32, 226.

<sup>8</sup>R. Cobb, *French and Germans, Germans and French. A personal interpretation of France under two occupations, 1914–1918/1940–1944* (London, 2018 [1983]), 166.

<sup>9</sup>P. Burrin, *La France à l’heure allemande, 1940–1944* (Paris, 1995), 9, 468.

<sup>10</sup>R. Gildea, *Marianne in Chains. In search of the German occupation, 1940–1945* (London, 2002), 67.

<sup>11</sup>Gildea, *op. cit.*, 70–88.

<sup>12</sup>J. Gross, ‘Themes for a social history of war experience and collaboration’ in I. Deák, J.T. Gross and T. Judt (eds), *The Politics of Retribution in Europe. World War II and its aftermath* (Princeton, 2000), 15–35, 31; V. Drapac and G. Pritchard, *Resistance and Collaboration in Hitler’s Empire* (London, 2017), 136; Tönsmeier, *op. cit.*, 6.

<sup>13</sup>M. Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (Tübingen, 2014 [1920]), 27–31.

social relations are complex and fluid, and seldom fit neatly into one category, this form of categorization is useful for grasping the shifting relations of power between the occupier and the occupied.

Methodologically, my approach is informed by *Alltagsgeschichte*. Historians of everyday life are interested in the experiences, practices and relations of 'ordinary' people to explain how they make sense of and shape their present. An *Alltagsgeschichte* approach can help to explain how power is produced, experienced and contested in different social contexts.<sup>14</sup> To illuminate the power structures in (occupied) societies, we also need to examine the role of gender. How did the huge influx of men alter society, and to what extent did shared or different gender norms affect the cross-cultural encounters between the occupiers and the occupied?

For this study, I analysed the records of two German military courts stationed in Norway during the war.<sup>15</sup> To obtain a richer picture, these were supplemented by written judgements of other military courts which form part of the personal files of Norwegian prisoners who were held in the German prison complex Hamburg-Fuhlsbüttel.<sup>16</sup> These records give voice to both Norwegians and Germans. Unlike ego documents, which yield insight into the subjective experience of occupation, court documents offer a multi-perspective view of events, albeit a mediated one. One disadvantage of relying on court records is that certain aspects of the occupation are barely touched. This concerns in particular the inhumane treatment of prisoners of war and of forced labourers, as well as the expropriation and deportation of the Norwegian Jews. Another potential problem is the court records' inevitable emphasis on conflict, which could result in a skewed picture of the actual character of social relations. I sought to circumvent this problem by selecting all cases containing information about contacts between Germans and Norwegians, and not just those where relations were subject to prosecution. It is also crucial to consider the courts' ideological bias, and their well-documented role in bolstering the power of the military and Nazi leadership. The Wehrmacht justice system played a key role in implementing and legitimizing Nazi terror by persecuting (presumed) internal and external enemies of the state.<sup>17</sup> Wehrmacht courts sentenced between 25,000 and 30,000 Wehrmacht soldiers to death, the majority for desertion or

<sup>14</sup>P. Steege, A.S. Bergerson, M. Healy and P.E. Swett, 'The history of everyday life: a second chapter', *Journal of Modern History* 80, 2 (2008), 358–78, 368; A. Lüdtkke, 'Introductory notes' in A. Lüdtkke (ed.), *Everyday Life in Mass Dictatorship. Collusion and evasion* (New York, 2016), 3–12, 5; W. Hartwig, 'Alltagsgeschichte heute. Eine kritische Bilanz' in W. Schulze (ed.), *Sozialgeschichte, Alltagsgeschichte, Mikro-Historie. Eine Diskussion* (Göttingen, 1994), 19–32, 21–22.

<sup>15</sup>Gericht 214. Infanterie Division (ID), stationed in Stavanger and Arendal from June 1940 to January 1944 (283 case files); Gericht Admiral der norwegischen Nordküste (AdNN), stationed in Trondheim and Molde from 1940 to 1945 (566 case files). Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv Freiburg (BA-MA), Germany, record group PERS15. Of the 849 records, 102 cases contained evidence of contacts between Germans and Norwegians and were selected for further analysis.

<sup>16</sup>StaHa, record group 242-1-II, Gefängnisverwaltung II, Ablieferung 17, 10, 12, 14, 18. Of the 370 records, 100 cases were selected as relevant for further analysis.

<sup>17</sup>M. Messerschmidt and F. Wüllner, *Die Wehrmachtjustiz im Dienste des Nationalsozialismus. Zerstörung einer Legende* (Baden-Baden, 1987); most recently K. Theis, *Wehrmachtjustiz an der Heimatfront. Die Militärgerichte des Ersatzheeres im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Berlin, 2015).

for ‘subverting the war effort’.<sup>18</sup> However, the bulk of the cases the Wehrmacht courts dealt with on a daily basis were minor (yet often punished harshly): absence without leave, petty theft, sleeping while on guard duty, car accidents, drunkenness and other misdemeanours.<sup>19</sup> These offences, which frequently involved civilians, offer valuable insights into the lives of ordinary people under occupation.

The first section of this article explores the social impact of the German occupation by discussing the rise in certain types of crime and their meaning. These violations of law serve as entry points to shine light on the coping strategies people developed to deal with the (material and immaterial) constraints that war and occupation produced; they also enable us to gauge the complex hierarchies between the occupier and the occupied. The second section illuminates the dynamics that characterized these relations by exploring the role of space and place. Space (and place) are a defining feature of power relationships. They express and reproduce relations of power and provide the medium through which identities are formed and confirmed.<sup>20</sup> The analysis of encounters in different spatial settings shows how space, and the norms inscribed in these spatial settings, shaped the asymmetry of power.

### **Research on everyday life under German occupation**

Although the German occupation of Norway has been extensively studied, and continues to be a subject of intense interest in Norway, Norwegian research has centred on the ‘big topics’: the civilian and military resistance, the issue of defence and the role of political (and, lately, also economic) collaborators. Everyday life under German occupation has largely been studied on a local or regional plane, highlighting the Norwegian experience. Guri Hjeltnes’ monograph *Hverdagsliv (Everyday life)* of 1986 is the only study to examine the experience of German occupation on a broader, national level, exploring the effects of suppression and shortages, but also the opportunities the new regime brought for some.<sup>21</sup> The occupier’s view has been documented in several published diaries and letters by members of the Wehrmacht or the German administration.<sup>22</sup>

Despite the frequent contacts between the occupiers and the occupied, few studies have actually looked into these interactions. Aimed at a general audience, Ebba Drolshagen’s book investigated soldiers’ experiences and

<sup>18</sup>M. Messerschmidt, *Die Wehrmachtjustiz 1933–1945* (Paderborn, Wien, 2005), 168. A higher estimate is given by F. Wüllner, *Die NS-Militärjustiz und das Elend der Geschichtsschreibung* (Baden-Baden, 1997), 476.

<sup>19</sup>See for example Theis, *op. cit.*, 195–200.

<sup>20</sup>Steege et al., *op. cit.*, 363–4; S. Gunn, ‘Changing histories of space and place’ in S. Gunn and R.J. Morris (eds), *Identities in Space. Contested terrains in the western city since 1850* (Burlington, 2001), 1–14, 9.

<sup>21</sup>G. Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv. Norge i krig*, Vol. 5 (Oslo, 1986).

<sup>22</sup>D. Schmitz-Köster, *Der Krieg meines Vaters. Als deutscher Soldat in Norwegen* (Berlin, 2004); B. Nøkleby (ed.), *Johannes Martin Hennig. Ein tysk soldats dagbok frå krigen i Nord-Norge* (Oslo, 2002); H. Christen, *Okkupantens dagbok. Heinrich Christens dagbok fra Bergen og Trondheim 1941–1943* (Oslo, 2009).

their interactions with locals in occupied Norway and France.<sup>23</sup> Ruth Weih interviewed German veterans and Norwegians to compare the diverse experiences of occupation in the northeastern region of Sør-Varanger.<sup>24</sup> Lars Gisnås' rich local history of the mountainous region of Oppdal illustrates how closely the lives of Norwegians and soldiers were intertwined.<sup>25</sup> Bjørg Evjen and Veli-Pekka Lehtola have investigated German views on the Sámi people in Northern Norway and Finland, as well as the Sámi's responses to the German occupiers.<sup>26</sup> The only interactions which have attracted considerable attention over the last two decades are the intimate relations between Norwegian women and German men, and the defamation and mistreatment of these women and their children after the war.<sup>27</sup> The myriad other forms of relations between the occupier and the occupied remain largely unexplored.<sup>28</sup>

One of the first to ask how the occupiers and the occupied related to each other on a daily basis was the eminent British historian Richard Cobb, in his intriguing chronicle of German–French relations in France and Belgium during the First and Second World Wars.<sup>29</sup> Writing the history of German occupation from below, Cobb used autobiographical writings and conversations to fashion a rich portrait of an occupied society in which the German occupiers became an integral part of daily life. The re-publication of his book in 2018 reflects the reawakened scholarly interest in people's experiences of and responses to German occupation. Recent studies exploring daily life under occupation cover a broad range of topics: from strategies to deal with rationing and hunger to practices of cinema-going, which allowed the two opposing sides to 'meet without being seen'.<sup>30</sup> Also, investigations into the role of intermediaries, such as translators, or of soldiers who commented on their encounters with the natives, has shed new light on these multifaceted interactions.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>23</sup>E.D. Drolshagen, *Der freundliche Feind. Wehrmachtssoldaten im besetzten Europa* (Augsburg, 2011).

<sup>24</sup>R. Weih, 'Alltag für Soldaten? Kriegserinnerungen und soldatischer Alltag in der Varangerregion, 1940–44' (Ph.D., Kiel, 2005).

<sup>25</sup>L. Gisnås, *Oppdal. Okkupasjonen* (Oppdal, 2011).

<sup>26</sup>B. Evjen and V.P. Lehtola, 'Mo birget soadis (How to cope with war): adaptation and resistance in Sámi relations to Germans in wartime Sápmi, Norway and Finland', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 45, 1 (2020), 24–47.

<sup>27</sup>K.E. Eriksen and T. Halvorsen, *Frigjøring. Norge i krig*, Vol. 8 (Oslo, 1987), 249–52; K. Olsen, *Krigens barn. De norske krigsbarna og deres mødre* (Oslo, 1998); K. Papendorf, *Siktet som tyskertøs. Rettsoppgjøret i videre forstand* (Oslo, 2015).

<sup>28</sup>On homosexual relations between German and Norwegian men see W. Raimund and J. Runar, 'Homoseksualitet i det tyskokkuperte Norge – Sanksjoner mot seksuelle forhold mellom menn i Norge 1940–1945', *Historisk Tidsskrift*, 94, 3 (2015), 455–85.

<sup>29</sup>Cobb, *op. cit.*

<sup>30</sup>*ibid.*, 95; Tönsmeier, Haslinger and Laba (eds), *op. cit.*; L.R. Cohen, *Smolensk under the Nazis. Everyday life in occupied Russia* (Rochester, 2013); A. Rescigno, 'Les films allemands en Moselle annexée par l'Allemagne nazie (1940–1945): histoire d'un plaisir oublié' (Ph.D., Metz, 2017); P. Skopal, 'Going to the cinema as a Czech: preferences and practices of Czech cinemagoers in the occupied city of Brno, 1939–1945', *Film History*, 31, 1 (2019), 27–55.

<sup>31</sup>P. Kujamäki, 'A friend and a foe? Interpreters in WWII in Finland and Norway embodying frontiers' in D. Rellstab and N. Siponkoski (eds), *Rajojen Dynamiikkaa, Gränsernas dynamik, Borders under Negotiation, Grenzen und ihre Dynamik* (Vaasa, 2015), 229–38; K. Thijs, "'Die müssen ein bisschen aufgemöbelt werden, die Holländer.'" Deutsche Feldpostbriefe aus den besetzten Niederlanden – eine Annäherung' in K. Thijs and R. Haude (eds), *Grenzfälle. Transfer und Konflikt zwischen Deutschland, Belgien und den Niederlanden im 20. Jahrhundert* (Heidelberg, 2013), 85–107; J.S. Torrie, *German Soldiers and the Occupation of France, 1940–1944* (Cambridge, UK, 2018); Tönsmeier and Thijs, *op. cit.*



Yet a *systematic* analysis of these social relations, both within the national and in the broader European context, is still missing. Research on (sexual) fraternization has highlighted how blurred the lines between collaboration and resistance really were.<sup>32</sup> Revealing the high percentage of sexual relationships between German men and European women, these studies have shattered the national myth of a united front against the Nazi enemy.<sup>33</sup> As the studies by Gildea or Sandra Ott have illustrated for France, it is necessary to widen the perspective to explore the many other forms of social contact, whether they were fleeting or more enduring.<sup>34</sup> After all, German soldiers were co-workers and supervisors, customers and business partners, tenants, neighbours, acquaintances and even friends.<sup>35</sup>

### Opportunities and constraints: violations of law and their meaning

The German occupied territories and their populations were principally subject to military jurisdiction. In many territories, however, military jurisdiction was either bypassed or handed over to other courts.<sup>36</sup> Thus, it was only in France, Belgium and Norway that the Wehrmacht retained jurisdiction over civilians for the duration or substantial parts of the war.<sup>37</sup> This section of the article uses the crimes that came before a Wehrmacht court in Norway as a lens through which to explore how people on both sides responded to the constraints as well as the opportunities that the occupation produced. These violations of law can be understood as crossing points at which the interests of the occupier and the occupied converged or clashed, thus allowing insights into the complex power relations under occupation.

The rapid rise in thefts and misappropriations during the war (property offences made up the highest share of cases in the sample) was mainly the result of two closely connected developments: the growing scarcity of available goods, and the sudden influx of a large number of German

<sup>32</sup>A. Warring, *Tyskerpiger. Under besættelse og retsoppgør*. 3rd edn (Copenhagen, 2017), 7, 29.

<sup>33</sup>*ibid.*, 10, 14; see also L. Westerlund (ed.), *The Children of Foreign Soldiers in Finland, Norway, Denmark, Austria, Poland and Occupied Soviet Karelia*, Vol. 2 (Helsinki: 2011); F. Virgili, *La France virile. Des femmes tondues à la Libération* (Paris, 2000).

<sup>34</sup>Gildea, *op. cit.*; S. Ott, *Living with the Enemy. German occupation, collaboration and justice in the western Pyrenees, 1940–1948* (Cambridge, 2017).

<sup>35</sup>Cobb, *op. cit.*, 133.

<sup>36</sup>In the Soviet Union, Greece and Serbia, military courts were largely circumvented, and civilians liquidated or deported without a trial. In other occupied territories, SS or German civilian courts assumed jurisdiction over civilian crimes against Germany. See Messerschmidt, *op. cit.*, 239, 259, 274–5, 279.

<sup>37</sup>In Norway, the Wehrmacht's judicial powers over Norwegians were curbed when the *SS- und Polizeigericht Nord* was set up in autumn 1941. My investigations revealed that in practice the Wehrmacht courts (of which there were approximately 40) continued to try Norwegian civilians until at least mid-1943. On the German judiciary in Norway see R. Bohn, *Reichskommissariat Norwegen. 'Nationalsozialistische Neuordnung' und Kriegswirtschaft* (München, 2000), 109; G. von Frijtag Drabbe Künzel, 'Rechtspolitik im Reichskommissariat. Zum Einsatz deutscher Strafrichter in den Niederlanden und in Norwegen 1940–1944', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 48, 3 (2000), 461–90, 480–81.



soldiers.<sup>38</sup> While the invading German army found shops plentifully stocked, supplies soon dwindled as a result of the vastly increasing demand and the overwhelming number of willing buyers. In his book *Volkstaat*, Götz Aly explains the integrative element of Nazi society by illustrating how ordinary Germans profited from Hitler's expansionist politics. The newly invaded countries seemed like a shopper's paradise to the German soldiers.<sup>39</sup> Norway was no exception. The soldiers were able to purchase groceries and items that were by this time rationed in the German Reich, and at considerably lower prices, at least in the early months of occupation.<sup>40</sup> Many soldiers went on spending sprees, buying indiscriminately everything they could get their hands on, and sending the goods home to Germany. Fairly soon, the only items left to buy on the regular market were silver fox pelts and herring. While producers and business owners profited from the high demand, the occupiers' appetites also caused widespread resentment. As early as the first year of the occupation, the Norwegian authorities introduced rationing of bread, fat, sugar, coffee and cocoa, with meat, eggs and dairy products following in 1941.<sup>41</sup> Soon, not only food but also clothing, shoes, medical supplies, fuel and building materials became increasingly difficult to obtain, forcing people to barter, or to purchase at greatly inflated prices on the black market. While Norwegians never faced a famine, their diets became poorer and blander, resulting in malnutrition and a rise in infectious diseases.<sup>42</sup>

This exacerbated tensions, and most Norwegians blamed the German occupiers for their hardships. War and occupation had cut off their country from traditional trading routes and burdened it with hundreds and thousands of soldiers who appeared to be living off the land. In December 1941, a Wehrmacht court in Trondheim convicted a country doctor for having sprayed with his garden hose two Norwegian women who were strolling past his garden in the company of German officers. He also shouted abuse at their German escorts, calling them 'Nazi-bandits' and robbers 'who come to Norway to devour everything there is to eat and send it to Germany'.<sup>43</sup> For some Norwegians, theft became an acceptable form of survival, especially if the goods were taken from a supposedly anonymous apparatus like the German military. These thefts often functioned as symbolic acts of revenge,

<sup>38</sup>The sample comprised 202 court cases. See footnotes 15 and 16 for details. Property crimes also made up the bulk of convictions of the SS- and Police court as well as of the Norwegian civilian courts. See B. Nøkleby, *Skutt blir den ... Tysk bruk av dødsstraff i Norge 1940–45* (Oslo, 1996), 88; P. Madsen, 'Kriminaliteten i Norge under den tyske okkupasjon 1940–45 – Et tolkningsforsøk' in H. Takala and H. Tham (eds), *Krig og moral. Kriminalitet og kontroll i Norden under andre verdenskrig* (Oslo, 1987), 116–26, 119.

<sup>39</sup>G. Aly, *Hitler's Volkstaat. Raub, Rassenkrieg und nationaler Sozialismus*, 3rd edn (Frankfurt am Main, 2005), 114–38.

<sup>40</sup>Bohn, *op. cit.*, 246.

<sup>41</sup>Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv. op. cit.*, 100.

<sup>42</sup>B.A. Godøy, *Okkupert. De fem lengste årene i Norges historie* (Bergen, 2018), 232–3.

<sup>43</sup>Gericht der 181. ID, Trondheim, 12 December 1941, StaHa, 242-1-II/Abl. 17, Mogens F.

a sort of reclaiming of robbed property. In fact, many Norwegians who misappropriated goods from Wehrmacht depots would later frame their action as patriotic acts that helped to undermine German rule.<sup>44</sup> The German military's presence thus also created new opportunities to obtain products which were no longer freely available.

Yet Norwegians were not the only ones who stole food or other objects from the enemy. Wehrmacht soldiers, too, stole or looted Norwegian property, even though such incidents were comparatively infrequent and mostly occurred in the first year of the occupation. Valuable, shiny objects in Norwegian shops and households, such as watches, rings, cameras, silver spoons or silken underwear, seem to have been particularly tempting. The military leadership took rigorous action against offenders, fearing that the thefts could 'damage the reputation of the Wehrmacht' and ruin the soldiers' 'good reputation amongst Norwegian businessmen'.<sup>45</sup> In December 1940, the navy court of the Admiral der norwegischen Nordküste concluded 10 trials of navy soldiers who had stolen watches, necklaces and rings from watchmakers and goldsmiths in the two coastal towns of Kristiansund and Molde.<sup>46</sup>

While these shop owners noticed the thefts only after their German customers had left the premises, others were literally overpowered. In March 1941, a large group of navy soldiers landed in the harbour of Volda and streamed into a nearby clothes shop. While the shop owner was being overwhelmed by the massive influx of customers, the soldiers began to help themselves. They took items from the shelves and 'quite blithely ignored the shop owner and his rights'. One soldier, who had swiped two sets of lingerie in the chaos, explained to his comrade that 'this is no big deal. One has to take these things when the opportunity arises'.<sup>47</sup> The example illustrates how the soldiers shed their role as customers and began to behave as if they had acquired ownership of the shop.

In a way, the soldiers' behaviour mirrored the Nazi leadership's occupation policies, only on a much smaller scale. The rise in property crimes must be seen in the context of the Nazi Germany's robbing of the European Jews and the unlawful appropriation of property in the occupied territories. 'Under German occupation', Tony Judt reminds us, 'the right to property was at best contingent'.<sup>48</sup> The sharp rise in property offences during the war thus also indicates a general erosion of established legal and moral norms. On the Eastern European front, German soldiers were often allowed to loot and steal with impunity. In Norway, however, the military leadership sought to clamp down on such crimes by threatening offenders with and meting out severe punishments.

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<sup>44</sup>P.O. Johansen, *Den illegale spriten. Fra forbudstid til polstreik* (Oslo, 2004), 65.

<sup>45</sup>Gericht Admiral der norwegischen Nordküste, 30 December 1940, BA-MA PERS15/68460 and PERS15/64152.

<sup>46</sup>BA-MA PERS15/64152, 64153, 64163, 66186, 68458, 68459.

<sup>47</sup>Gericht des Admirals der Norwegischen Nordküste, 23.6.1941, BA-MA PERS15/63524.

<sup>48</sup>T. Judt, *Postwar. A history of Europe since 1945* (London, 2010), 38.

### ***Conflicts, cooperation and solidarity: conceptualizing relations between the occupier and the occupied***

What can these court cases tell us about the relationships between the occupier and the occupied? In the introduction I proposed new categories – relations of conflict, cooperation and solidarity – to conceptualize the social relations that emerged between the two opposing parties. Evidence of conflict relations can be found in the many court cases dealing with verbal or physical assaults. Due to their fragile position, the Norwegians often vented their anger about the occupiers verbally. Wehrmacht soldiers, in contrast, did not shy away from using physical force against Norwegian civilians. As in other occupied territories, disputes frequently erupted over access to space, provisions or women.<sup>49</sup> Almost always, alcohol was involved.

However, the occurrence of conflicts between members of the two parties did not preclude the possibility of ‘mutually profitable transactions’ on the flourishing black market.<sup>50</sup> On a number of occasions, Norwegians and Germans joined forces to steal or barter Wehrmacht goods from its still plentiful depots. Although these relations of (unlawful) cooperation represent only about 10% of all court cases investigated, they illustrate how permeable the line between the enemies was. Moreover, such examples of collusion remind us of how closely Norwegians and Germans worked and lived together during the war, and indeed of the wider economic collaboration of Norwegian businesses and workers with the Germans.<sup>51</sup> These cooperative arrangements were often extensive and could involve many people from both sides. They were temporary and clearly profit-oriented and should not be mistaken as evidence of Norwegian approval of the German occupation, or, in the case of Germans, as any mark of respect for their partners in crime. As Lüdtke notes, cooperation with those in power can go hand in hand with deviation and friction.<sup>52</sup> Cooperative relations were business-like relationships that served the interests of both parties. In such relations, the power imbalance inevitably tilted in favour of the Norwegians. The German offenders needed their Norwegian counterparts to shift the large quantities of stolen goods on the black market, just as the Wehrmacht depended on the willingness of the Norwegian industry and workers to realize its enormous building projects. A member of the occupying power who engaged in activities that threatened to damage this very power could no longer exert pressure on his Norwegian partner. In relations of cooperation, the asymmetry of power temporarily shifted.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>49</sup>Gildea, *op. cit.*, 76.

<sup>50</sup>Cobb, *op. cit.*, 60.

<sup>51</sup>H. Espeli, ‘Det økonomiske forholdet mellom Tyskland og Norge 1940–45’ in H.F. Dahl, H. Kirchhoff, J. Lund and L.-E. Vaale (eds), *Danske tilstander, norske tilstander. Forskjeller og likheter under tysk okkupasjon 1940–45* (Oslo, 2010), 135–66.

<sup>52</sup>Lüdtke, *op. cit.*, 13.

<sup>53</sup>Gross, *op. cit.*, 24–5.

Hierarchies of power also began to waver or were temporarily broken down in relations of solidarity, which make up the second largest group in the sample. Perhaps the purest form of solidary relations constitutes those cases where Norwegians gave assistance to Wehrmacht deserters, providing them with food, shelter or advice on how to reach the Swedish border, at great risk to their own lives, and often spontaneously. Under this category also fall those cases where German foremen allowed Norwegian workers to take home a piece of material or clothing, as do the rare examples of Germans and Norwegians conducting illegal political activities together.<sup>54</sup>

While these types of solidarity were subject to legal persecution and heavy punishment, heterosexual relationships or friendly associations between Germans and Norwegians were not. Although, as in the case of relations of cooperation, pragmatic considerations or material motives might have played a role in these, we must not underestimate the affective elements. The foundations for friendships were often laid when a soldier was billeted in a Norwegian home, or when he hired a local woman to do his washing. Unlike in many parts of Eastern Europe, the Nazi leadership accepted and even approved of Wehrmacht soldiers consorting with the ‘racially valuable’ Norwegians. It deemed friendly relations as favourable for fostering acceptance for the German presence and its aims.<sup>55</sup> When it came to sexual relations, however, the Nazi leadership and the Wehrmacht in particular were more sceptical. German soldiers were allowed to marry racially pure Norwegians after careful vetting, and Norwegian women who fell pregnant from German soldiers received financial support. Nevertheless, the German military authorities remained concerned about the risk sexual relations posed to the Wehrmacht’s fighting power.<sup>56</sup>

Women fraternizing with the enemy were usually frowned upon. They challenged the moral order and traditional gender norms, which assigned power of control over the body of the women to the nation and its men.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, these women were often suspected of divulging secrets to the enemy, thereby weakening the nation even more. To be sure, ‘fraternization’ of any kind, even if non-sexual in nature, destabilized hierarchies of power. German soldiers who engaged in amicable relations with the enemy willingly or unwillingly yielded some of their power and thus potentially undermined their own position.

Relations of solidarity and cooperation thus destabilized the asymmetry of power, shifting the balance, if ever so slightly, and usually only temporarily, in favour of the occupied. In contrast, conflicts openly challenged the

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<sup>54</sup>BA-MA, PERS15/9402.

<sup>55</sup>Godøy, *op. cit.*, 49, 75–6.

<sup>56</sup>A. Warring, ‘Intimate and sexual relations’ in R. Gildea, O. Wieviorka and A. Warring (eds), *Surviving Hitler and Mussolini. Daily life in occupied Europe* (Oxford, 2006), 88–128, 105–06.

<sup>57</sup>*ibid.*, 91.

opposite side and its claim to power. The courts' handling of physical or verbal assaults on members of the German forces show that the occupier was able to assert his power on the macro level. On the micro level, the same court cases illustrate that representatives of the occupying army occasionally suffered defeat and humiliation, as the next section will show.

## Places of encounter

The German occupation of Norway, of both its concrete physical places and more abstract national space, inevitably produced tensions. Access to and control over space is, as Michel Foucault pointed out, 'fundamental in any exercise of power'.<sup>58</sup> This goes for both a state's geostrategic aims – the Nazi *Ostraum* policy is a telling example – and its societal systems, such as capitalism or patriarchy.<sup>59</sup> Space expresses and symbolizes the power of those who control it. At the same time, it (re)produces relations of power.<sup>60</sup> Historically, power has been enforced by excluding certain groups, such as women, blacks or homosexuals, from – or confining them to – certain spaces and places.<sup>61</sup> In occupied Norway, the German forces demonstrated their power by cordoning off whole areas and declaring them off limits to Norwegians. Permits and occasional curfews further restricted free movement.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, the sheer number of German troops in the country meant that, at least in some regions, the available space became more densely populated. In January 1944, for instance, an estimated 387,000 German military personnel were stationed in Norway: 148,000 troops were based in the southern part, 117,000 in mid-Norway which covered the territory from Kristiansund to Bodø, and 122,000 were in the north.<sup>63</sup> Obviously, the troops were not distributed evenly: larger cities and port towns teemed with soldiers. Many of the tiny hamlets along the coast had Wehrmacht bases in the vicinity, whereas some rural communities farther inland seldom saw a soldier. In the most northern, thinly populated part of the country, the occupiers outnumbered the locals by far. Up to 60,000 soldiers were thus stationed in the municipality of Sør-Varanger, which held a population of about 8000.<sup>64</sup> The occupation exacerbated the already severe housing shortage, as the occupiers impounded buildings and billeted

<sup>58</sup>M. Foucault, 'Space, knowledge, and power' in P. Rabinow (ed.), *The Foucault Reader* (London, 1984), 239–56, 252.

<sup>59</sup>T. Tönsmeier, 'Raumordnung, Raumerschließung und Besatzungsalltag im Zweiten Weltkrieg. Plädoyer für eine erweiterte Besatzungsgeschichte', *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung*, 63, 1 (2014), 24–38; C. Hartmann, *Wehrmacht im Ostkrieg. Front und militärisches Hinterland 1941/42* (München, 2009), 425–67.

<sup>60</sup>M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish. The birth of the prison* (London, 1977).

<sup>61</sup>Gunn, *op. cit.*, 7–8.

<sup>62</sup>Drolshagen, *op. cit.*, 64; Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv. op. cit.*, 25.

<sup>63</sup>K. Korsnes and O. Dybvig, *Wehrmacht i Norge. Antall tysk personell fra april 1940 til mai 1945* (Tromsø, 2018), 22. The number includes prisoners of war. About 50% were army personnel, 22% navy, 13% air force and the rest comprised other Wehrmacht personnel, such as members of the Organization Todt. *ibid.*, 23 u. 27.

<sup>64</sup>Olsen, *op. cit.*, 244.

soldiers in private homes. Soldiers filled the streets and beaches, crowded into the shops, occupied the seats in the cinemas and filled the tables at restaurants and bars.

The German occupiers did not occupy 'virgin' territories, but spaces that were already 'occupied': that is, inhabited and inscribed with norms and values. Space thus became both the real and symbolic battleground in the struggles for power. According to Lefebvre, space has to be understood as dynamic; it shapes and is shaped by human interactions.<sup>65</sup> Since space, unlike place, is under continuous transformation, it can be inscribed with new meanings.<sup>66</sup> Yet claims to space seldom go uncontested. Studying encounters between the occupier and the occupied in different spatial contexts helps to make sense of the complex dynamics of power in occupied societies, as well as of the meaning of space in exchanges between the occupiers and the occupied. The second half of this article analyses how people communicated and moved in three different spatial settings: public spaces, the workplace and the private domestic space. The aim is to establish how space influenced the behaviour of the protagonists towards their counterparts, and to identify the strategies they adopted to claim or defend space.

### **Public space**

Almost half of all encounters in the sample took place in the public or the semi-public realm of shops, restaurants, cinemas or public transport.<sup>67</sup> As in France, the threshold for engaging with Germans was much lower in public than for inviting them home.<sup>68</sup> Even though many of these interactions were friction-free, the court cases analysed indicate a much higher frequency of conflict in public spaces than in the domestic space or in the workplace. One reason is the strong public presence of the German military, which demonstrated 'ownership' over public space, causing resentment amongst communities. Immediately after their arrival, the Germans started to requisition public buildings for their troops and administration. Harbours and depots were impounded, and numerous barracks erected, as visible signs of the German occupation. As in France, the German occupiers imposed 'an alien topography over the familiar grid of streets', by setting up signposts and renaming places.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, 1991), 410–11.

<sup>66</sup>A. Assmann, 'How history takes place' in I. Sengupta (ed.), *Memory, History, and Colonialism. Engaging with Pierre Nora in colonial and postcolonial contexts* (London, 2009), 154; Foucault, 'Space, knowledge and power', in *Discipline and Punish*, *op. cit.*, 253.

<sup>67</sup>Based on a sample of 202 cases (German and Norwegian cases combined). See notes 15 and 16 for details; 47% of the encounters occurred in public spaces, 32% in private Norwegian space, and 17% at the workplace.

<sup>68</sup>Gildea, *op. cit.*, 88.

<sup>69</sup>Cobb, *op. cit.*, 74.

The struggle over public space found expression in the V-campaign, launched by the British in January 1941 to undermine German morale. The BBC's call to people in Western Europe to paint the letter V (for victory) on buildings and public spaces was eagerly taken up by the Norwegians. In June 1941, the German occupation authorities responded with a vigorous countercampaign.<sup>70</sup> They appropriated the V-sign for their own purposes, promoting it as symbol ('Victoria') of the German victory over Bolshevism. The representative of the Reichskommissar in Bergen, for instance, hired 35 men to clandestinely paint V-signs on buildings. He even engaged the Luftwaffe to fly three fighter jets in a V-formation over the city to drop one million leaflets.<sup>71</sup> While the German efforts failed to divest the V-campaign of its subversive power, the omnipresence of the V-sign on public buildings, such as the Norwegian parliament, made visible the power struggle between the occupier and the occupied. Apart from the German presence, another catalyst of conflict was the amply consumed alcohol in restaurants or bars, which loosened inhibitions. Finally, gender, or, more specifically, masculinity, played a key role. Many of the conflicts in public spaces seem to have been triggered by a real or perceived challenge to male status, as the following case illustrates.

On a summer evening in 1941, about 250 young Norwegian men and women gathered for a dance at the local youth centre in the village of Håkonshella, 20 km southwest of the city of Bergen.<sup>72</sup> A couple of months later, on 4 October 1941, the German administration prohibited public dances, though it is unclear whether incidents such as this had anything to do with the ban. Two German corporals, who were taking an evening stroll along the village road, later reported that several Norwegians who were standing outside the clubhouse had appeared hostile as they passed by. On their way back, they heard one of the Norwegians mumbling, 'Deutscher Hund' (German dog). Corporal S. immediately reacted to the insult and slapped the man. As they walked on, another Norwegian stepped in their way, asking, 'What do you want?' He also received a smack to the face and moved out of the way.

This could have been an unpleasant, if minor, exchange of blows if the two soldiers, after reporting the incident, had not concluded that it was 'their duty to register the personal details' of the man who had voiced the abuse. They returned to the youth centre, where they were met by a large crowd which obstructed their way into the clubhouse. What is more, the crowd disobeyed Corporal S.'s order to form two lines to single out the culprit and instead began to close in on him. Fearing for his safety, he began

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<sup>70</sup>G. Carr, 'The archaeology of occupation and the V-sign campaign in the occupied British Channel Islands', *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*, 14, 4 (2010), 575–92.

<sup>71</sup>Christen, *op. cit.*, 60–1.

<sup>72</sup>Gericht der 69. ID, Bergen, 13 August 1941, StaHa, 242-1-II/Abl. 17, Odd S.



to lash out with his belt. A scuffle erupted between a handful of soldiers who came to help their comrades and a large number of Norwegian men. The Norwegians fighting the soldiers were cheered on by the bystanders, who shouted, 'Be Norwegians, grab them, do not retreat' and 'beat the German pigs'. Eventually, a German *Feldwebel*, hurrying with a small unit from the nearby barracks, ended the fracas with several warning shots. Three hundred and fifty-six Norwegians were arrested that night. Eight were later convicted of breaching the public peace, and punished severely.<sup>73</sup>

The incident is revealing. It illustrates the German efforts and obstacles to implementing rule and highlights the significant role that public space played in the formation of identities. For the locals, the village road was filled with meaning, almost 'semiprivate, worthy of pride and even of defensive action to ward off other'.<sup>74</sup> The fact that the judge emphasized that there was only one road through the village, and that the soldiers thus had no choice but to walk on it, expresses some awareness that the Germans might have been considered as intruders. The clashes that occurred between Norwegians and their German occupiers can thus be understood as a battle for control over public space.

Superficially, the dispute looks like a re-enactment of the overarching geopolitical conflict between Nazi Germany and Norway. Yet did the locals behave with hostility towards the Germans because they had occupied their country? Or was their behaviour typical of a young male group who saw their territory intruded upon by other men who were about the same age? Although in principal open to everyone, access to public space is actually 'regulated by powerful norms, whose force resides partly in the fact that they are implicit'.<sup>75</sup> The village's main street was male territory, and it was the local young men who controlled access to it. Under different political circumstances, the local men could easily have asserted their power. However, the occupation had overturned traditional power structures, leaving the local men powerless and humiliated. Even though they outnumbered their enemies, they were unable to exploit this advantage, because the occupiers' claim to the public space was backed up by military might.

The German corporal took advantage of his position and 'disciplined' two Norwegians who had challenged his presence. While the military court hailed the bravery of the German soldier who had heroically fought against an overwhelming enemy with his bare hands, it pictured the Norwegians as cowards. They were presented as men who only acted as part of the crowd and did not react to the officer's blow 'man to man'. The judge's depiction questioned their masculinity and therefore their claim to power. Yet to do

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<sup>73</sup>The sentences ranged between four years *Zuchthaus* (prison with hard labour) and one year in prison. Gericht der 69. ID, Bergen, 13 August 1941, StaHa, 242-1-II/Abl. 17, Odd S.

<sup>74</sup>Steege et al., *op. cit.*, 364.

<sup>75</sup>Gunn, *op. cit.*, 8.

so, he had to overlook the fact that the Norwegians had successfully contested the occupiers' claim to the public space and had defended their established right, if only briefly. The incident illustrates how social identities are formed in interaction with spaces and places; they are, as Simon Gunn suggests, 'frequently forged in conflicts over the boundaries, ownership and meaning of places'.<sup>76</sup>

Many Norwegians, painfully aware of their powerlessness, only expressed their pent-up anger under the influence of alcohol. Alcohol was usually involved when Norwegians started to abuse German soldiers verbally or to voice public criticism of the Nazi leadership. Even friendly conversations with German soldiers could descend into drunken tirades against the occupation as such, or against Norwegian members of the collaborating regime.<sup>77</sup> Interesting in this regard are also those physical assaults on members of the occupying forces which were often disguised as 'accidental' brushes. To mark ownership of public territory without openly attacking the occupier, Norwegian men often used the tactic of accidentally bumping into a passing German soldier.<sup>78</sup> The German addressees usually understood the meaning of these covert attacks, and probably often responded in kind, without reporting the incident. They, too, sought to demonstrate their power by forcing pedestrians from the pavement, but, unlike their Norwegian counterparts, did not risk punishment.<sup>79</sup>

### **The workplace**

Another frequent place of encounter was the workplace. In the sample of Norwegian defendants, the workplace was the second most frequent space of interaction with the German occupiers (26% of encounters).<sup>80</sup> This is not surprising considering that during the war approximately 175,000 Norwegians worked for the Wehrmacht and Organization Todt, or the Norwegian or German companies they contracted.<sup>81</sup> The German occupiers had an almost insatiable demand for labour. Many thousands of soldiers needed to be supplied and moved, making it necessary to extend the existing rail and road network.<sup>82</sup> Moreover, Hitler's aim to turn Norway into a strong fortification against an Allied attack resulted in a massive building programme.<sup>83</sup> The

<sup>76</sup>*ibid.*, 9.

<sup>77</sup>See the cases against Olaf H., Hartmann J., Walter K., William S., Rolf St. in StaHa, 242-1-II/Abl. 17.

<sup>78</sup>Gericht der 163. ID, 16 April 1941, StaHa, 242-1-II/Abl. 17, Einar St.

<sup>79</sup>M. Fritsche, 'Umkämpfte Räume. Konflikte zwischen Besatzern und Besetzten im Zweiten Weltkrieg', *L'Homme. Europäische Zeitschrift für feministische Geschichtswissenschaft*, 30, 2 (2019), 119–25, 124.

<sup>80</sup>See note 16. The sample of the Norwegian defendants comprises 100 cases; 44% of the encounters in this sample occurred in public spaces, 26% in the workplace and 19% on private Norwegian property.

<sup>81</sup>Espeli, *op. cit.*, 142. The majority worked for the Germans voluntarily, although from 1941 onwards the Quisling regime introduced several measures to recruit Norwegians by force. See G. Hatlehol, 'Tvangsstyringen av arbeidslivet under hakekorset 1940–1945. Diktat og kollaborasjon', *Arbeiderhistorie*, 22, 2 (2018), 49–71.

<sup>82</sup>H.O. Frøland, 'Organization Todt som byggherre i Norge', *Historisk Tidsskrift*, 97, 3 (2018), 172–75.

<sup>83</sup>T.E. Sæveraas, 'OT, Wehrmacht og byggingen av Festung Norge', *Historisk Tidsskrift*, 97, 3 (2018), 199–200.

Wehrmacht and Organization Todt offered attractive salaries.<sup>84</sup> Norwegians found work on construction sites, building barracks and coastal fortifications as well as airports, roads and railway lines. Also, seamen and drivers were in high demand, as were female kitchen and laundry staff.

The Wehrmacht as a workplace inevitably brought Norwegians and Germans into close contact. These encounters are well documented and appear to have been fairly harmonious. Economic factors were certainly conducive to good relations. The German occupiers, who needed Norwegian cooperation to realize their plans, used economic incentives to foster good-will. In a country that was still reeling from an economic crisis and high unemployment, the creation of new jobs and business opportunities proved an effective means of winning (partial) acceptance.<sup>85</sup> The absence of alcohol as well as the presence of a clear professional hierarchy also furthered harmonious relations. Most important perhaps was the fact that by working side by side, a form of dialogue became possible.

In such an atmosphere, small misdemeanours by colleagues were tolerated more easily. Sometimes, it was only a small step from looking the other way to active cooperation. In February 1941, for example, a military court tried eight Wehrmacht soldiers and 16 Norwegians for misappropriating and selling oil and petrol stolen from the military airfield in Trondheim.<sup>86</sup> In March 1942, another court convicted two Germans and eight Norwegians working in a macaroni factory in Oslo for misappropriating large quantities of butter and bartering it for alcohol and cigarettes.<sup>87</sup> Just a month earlier, the same court had concluded a case against 10 Norwegians and two German corporals charged with handling the offloading of clothing in Oslo harbour. They had diverted shoes, cloth and underwear on a large scale.<sup>88</sup> The occupation-produced economy of scarcity was conducive to and encouraged these crimes, blurring the dividing line between professional crime and acts of resistance, between survival strategies and profiteering.<sup>89</sup>

Imlay has pointed to the ‘information asymmetry’ between the occupiers and the occupied which made the German occupier dependant on local cooperation in most domains.<sup>90</sup> The same was true for individual Wehrmacht soldiers who engaged in criminal activities: they had to rely on the knowledge and contacts of their Norwegian co-workers in order to sell and barter the stolen goods. In a spectacular court case in December 1941, the court of the Kommandantur Oslo sentenced two German soldiers to death for misappropriating Wehrmacht

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<sup>84</sup>Bohn, *op. cit.*, 227, 266–7.

<sup>85</sup>*ibid.*, 262–5; Grimnes, *op. cit.*, 196–7, 203–04, 219–20.

<sup>86</sup>Gericht des Kommandierenden Generals und Befehlshabers im Luftgau Norwegen, Trondheim, 18 February 1941, StaHa, 242-1-II/Abl. 17, Sverre St.

<sup>87</sup>Gericht der Kommandantur Oslo, 31 March 1942, StaHa, 242-1-II/Abl. 17, Reidar S.

<sup>88</sup>Gericht der Kommandantur Oslo, 23 February 1942, StaHa, 242-1-II/Abl. 17, Georg J.

<sup>89</sup>Cobb, *op. cit.*, 60.

<sup>90</sup>Wolfgang Seibel, cited by Imlay, *op. cit.*, 199.

property.<sup>91</sup> Also tried were 28 Norwegians who worked under the supervision of these soldiers for the Feldzeugstab at Akershus fort in Oslo, where equipment for the German troops in Norway was stored and repaired. They formed part of a workforce of 250 Norwegians who were overseen by only 11 Germans, amongst them the two accused. One of them, Corporal Jakob F., found that he could quite easily remove equipment from the depots without anyone noticing, since control from above was very lax. According to the written judgement, he was egged on by a Norwegian employee, whose excellent German had awarded him a 'position of trust' in the Wehrmacht depots. Over time, Jakob F., together with a number of his local workers, smuggled large quantities of skis, backpacks and leather from the Wehrmacht stores and sold them on the black market. Inevitably, other workers got wind of what was going on. The Norwegian staff at the oil depot began to siphon off oil with the knowledge of their German supervisor, Gerhard R., who supervised the oil storage. Although he did not participate in the theft, he was found guilty of accepting payment from his Norwegian subordinates for looking the other way.

This and similar cases illustrate the fluidity of power relations, especially in spaces where Norwegians and Germans constantly interacted with each other. While the Wehrmacht soldiers held positions of power, the illegal nature of the activities, as well as the Norwegians' cognizance of and complicity in them, made their positions increasingly untenable. The two parties were tied together by shared financial interest, and neither could act without the other. The specific spatial setting of the workplace was conducive to cooperation with the 'enemy', since it encouraged exchange and communication. In the cooperative and solidary relations that developed, the occupier lost much of his power, though only temporarily and with considerable risks to both parties involved. In the case discussed above, the two German soldiers were sentenced to death, whereas the Norwegian defendants received sentences ranging from three years' hard labour to 18 months in prison.

It is important to note that women were rarely directly involved in these types of cooperation. The reason was that the jobs in the depots and the transport sector, where goods could be funnelled off easily, were taken by men. Women in the employ of the Wehrmacht mostly worked in kitchens and laundries. Since they usually acted alone and worked under much closer supervision, they could only pocket small quantities of food.

### ***Private space***

While most daily encounters between Germans and Norwegians occurred in the public space, many Germans had access to the domestic space of

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<sup>91</sup>Gericht der Kommandantur Oslo, 15 December 1941, StaHa, 242-1-II/Abl. 17, Willi J.

Norwegians. In the sample, a third of all encounters between the occupier and the occupied occurred in or around Norwegian residences.<sup>92</sup> Soldiers were billeted in Norwegian homes, especially in the early phase of the occupation. Many continued to visit long after they had moved out, often with other comrades in tow, making Norwegian domestic space the setting for jovial get-togethers. For many homesick soldiers, this domestic space provided a second home, a temporary escape from the strictly regulated and crude military life.<sup>93</sup> For deserters, it presented a safe haven from persecution.

Seemingly removed from the outside world, the occupiers and the occupied met on a (more) equal footing in domestic space, which was conducive to harmony and the development of relations of cooperation and solidarity. The space thus inevitably altered the positions of power of both the occupier, who was equipped with power, and of the occupied, who 'owned' the private space. Interactions between the occupier and the occupied within Norwegian domestic sphere thus differed in two ways from meetings in other settings: firstly, members of the occupied country behaved more self-confidently and were prepared to defend their rights, and secondly, more women appeared in the trial records. The presence of women can at least partly be explained by the gendered division of spaces in Western societies. While gender relations in 1940s Norway no longer excluded women from the public realm or from pursuing a salaried job, many female duties still revolved around domestic space. Other spaces, while not explicitly excluding women, remained largely male domains, which 'respectable' women only entered with a male companion.<sup>94</sup>

As a result of these factors, most Norwegians, and women in particular, still had agency denied to them outside the private sphere, meaning that they were more likely to defend their space against German intrusion. They called upon Norwegian or German authorities for support if Wehrmacht soldiers damaged their property or stole items from their homes.<sup>95</sup> Some farmers even shouted abuse at soldiers who crossed their property, telling them in no uncertain terms to leave.<sup>96</sup> Thus, when it came to the private sphere, Norwegians behaved as if this space was excluded from the occupation. In turn, the Nazi regime respected and even defended the concept of the private sphere, both in the Reich and in Norway, with the notable exception of the private space of Jews and other 'enemies of the state'.<sup>97</sup> The popular view that the Wehrmacht soldiers' conducted themselves in

<sup>92</sup>See note 67 for more detail.

<sup>93</sup>Schmitz-Köster, *op. cit.*, 113; Gisnås, *op. cit.*, 103; Godøy, *op. cit.*, 48.

<sup>94</sup>S. Kühn, 'Küchenpolitik. Annäherungen an subalterne Handlungsweisen in hofadeligen Haushalten des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts', *L'Homme. Europäische Zeitschrift für feministische Geschichtswissenschaft*, 28, 2 (2017), 69–84, 80.

<sup>95</sup>BA-MA PERS15/167214, PERS15/164817, PERS15/164662.

<sup>96</sup>StaHa, 242-1-II/Abl. 17 Sven Ho., Anton Ma., Alfred Jo.

<sup>97</sup>Bajohr, *op. cit.*, 229.

a 'by and large, exemplary' fashion in Norway might also be a result of their disciplined conduct in Norwegian homes.<sup>98</sup>

Yet the court records (due to their focus on conflict) tell a different story, and thus can add more nuance to the stereotype of the 'nice' German soldier.<sup>99</sup> Incidents where soldiers, usually drunk, assaulted civilians were by no means as rare as Andenæs posits, although it has to be added that the vast majority of violent incidents that came before the Wehrmacht courts in Norway occurred between soldiers, and not between soldiers and civilians.<sup>100</sup> Furthermore, the analysed sample is too small to make statistically valid assumptions about the prevalence of German violence against civilians. Even though some of these cases support the widely shared assumption that Wehrmacht courts took assaults by German soldiers on Norwegian civilians seriously, the victims' social status decisively influenced the investigation and its outcome.<sup>101</sup>

In the discussion that follows I use the intrusion of a German soldier into the domestic space of a Norwegian woman to demonstrate how views on gender and the nation came to the fore in a conflict over access to space that was also a struggle over power. The example also bolsters the earlier argument that the division between the occupier and the occupied was not clear cut but criss-crossed by various encounters and temporary alliances. On the evening of 31 October 1942, a drunken corporal, August Sa., entered the home of Jeanette S., an acquaintance who was having a party in her one-room apartment.<sup>102</sup> August Sa. was obviously well connected in the local community, probably due to his line of work: as a trained architect in charge of Wehrmacht building projects, he cooperated with local construction firms. According to the witness statements, the German corporal had known Jeanette S. for about two years, though it is unclear what kind of relations they engaged in. Amongst her guests was a girl named Marvel, whom the corporal had met just a couple of hours earlier in the office of a Norwegian business partner where he had been drinking. When August Sa. invited himself to Jeanette's party, Marvel fled to join some acquaintances upstairs. Frustrated by Marvel's absence, August Sa. started a dispute with another Norwegian guest who had once worked for him. Jeanette S. repeatedly asked the drunken corporal to leave, to no avail. Obviously angered by her insistence, August Sa. grabbed her by the throat, slapped her several times, and then threatened to shoot her.

<sup>98</sup>J. Andenæs, *Det vanskelige oppgjøret. Rettsoppgjøret etter okkupasjonen*, 3rd edn (Oslo, 1998), 229; see also Gisnås, *op. cit.*, 102–03; Hjeltnes, *Hverdagsliv. op. cit.*, 34. For similar images of the 'cultivated' German soldier in France see Gildea, *op. cit.*, 66–7, 70.

<sup>99</sup>Drolshagen, *op. cit.*, 172.

<sup>100</sup>Andenæs, *op. cit.*, 229.

<sup>101</sup>Madsen's claim that Germans usually received a death sentence when found guilty of rape or sexual violence against minors is not substantiated by the evidence. See Madsen, *op. cit.*, 117.

<sup>102</sup>The citations are direct quotations from the witness statements and German and Norwegian interrogation reports. See BA-MA, PERS15/139508.

Whereas most physical assaults in the public space occurred between men, in the domestic sphere of Norwegian homes more women became the target of violence. What is interesting in this case is that several Norwegian men and women were present when the German corporal clashed with their friend, Jeanette S. Some knew the corporal, but they only protested verbally when he assaulted their host. Jeanette S., however, was not a passive victim, but actively defended her space against the intruder. In her statement to the Norwegian police, she explained that the corporal had responded with violence to her demand to leave. He grabbed her by the throat, pushed her against the wall and said, ‘I am a German Unteroffizier, and what are you?’, to which she replied, ‘I am a Norwegian’ (actually: ‘Ich bin eine Norwegerin’ – I am a Norwegian *woman*). They repeated this verbal exchange in German several times, whereupon the corporal assaulted her and threatened her with his gun. When Jeanette S. dared him to shoot, he tore off the turban she was wearing and shouted, ‘and what are you now?’ According to Jeanette S., he called her a whore. Despite the visible bruises on her face, the corporal denied harming Jeanette S., stating that he had only pushed her away because he was ‘horrified’ by what he saw.

What happened here, and how can we understand this violent incident? In the verbal exchange the corporal underlined his refusal to leave by repeatedly referring to his nationality and his rank (Unteroffizier), thereby insisting on his doubly superior status as a military man and as a representative of the German occupying power. Jeanette S. contested his claim to superiority by calling upon her status as a (free) Norwegian woman. The presence of other Norwegians and the fact that the encounter occurred on her own turf might have emboldened her. Obviously angered by her insistence, the corporal responded by calling her a whore and tearing off her headscarf in front of the other men.

This act is highly significant because it was meant as an act of humiliation. The aggressive gesture exposed the fact that Jeanette S. had suffered considerable hair loss, which she was trying to cover up. In the police interview she stated that she was suffering from a ‘hair illness’, and was therefore covering her head with a turban. She possibly suffered from syphilis, a venereal disease that can result in the patchy loss of hair. Venereal disease rates increased rapidly during the war due to the massive influx of German soldiers.<sup>103</sup> Norwegian society mostly blamed ‘immoral’ Norwegian women who engaged in intimate contact with Germans for the rise in infections.<sup>104</sup> The fact that the corporal called her a whore may or may not have been

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<sup>103</sup>Norwegian police statistics registered a rapid increase in venereal diseases in Norway during the occupation. Madsen, *op. cit.*, 117. See also Warring, ‘Intimate and sexual relations’, *op. cit.*, 104.

<sup>104</sup>Olsen, *op. cit.*, 292; G.S. Snerting, ‘Simpel var du, tyskertøs’. Debatten rundt tyskerjenter i trønderske aviser etter fredsslutningen i 1945’ (MA, Trondheim, 2017), 51–3; Warring, ‘Intimate and sexual relations’, *op. cit.*, 95–96, 104.



connected to her hair loss. Yet by revealing the loss of her hair, such an archetypical female asset, he aimed to shame the Norwegian woman in order to assert his position as a man. This illustrates how gender hierarchies were not only shaken up by the occupation, but also reasserted by the occupier to boost his power.

It was Jeanette S. herself who fetched the Norwegian police to arrest the corporal, and it was she and her female friend who pressed charges. However, the German military police later successfully persuaded the women to drop the charges.<sup>105</sup> The corporal was thus not tried for the violent assault, merely for the unlawful use of his weapon. He got off lightly with a 9-month prison sentence.<sup>106</sup> The case illustrates Jeanette S.'s agency in asserting her position of power in her own home, as well as the considerable amount of insecurity that characterized relations with the occupier. She had obviously maintained friendly relations with the Germans, as had some of her guests. Although these close relations might have been advantageous at one point in time, they turned into a disadvantage as soon as she refused the wishes of the occupier. The corporal used her (presumed) sexual relations with Germans as proof of her low moral character, which diminished her status in the eyes of both the occupier and the occupied.<sup>107</sup> She received no support from her friends, who presumably feared negative repercussions. One could argue that Jeanette S.'s power was weakened, not despite but because of the fact that the dividing line between the occupier and the occupied had become blurred. As Warring pointed out, the body of the fraternizing woman had become a 'combat zone'.<sup>108</sup> It brought to the fore the dilemma of the occupied who tried to accommodate to the occupation and reflected the power struggle between the occupier and the occupied.

## Conclusion

Insecurity was a defining constant of German occupation. Even though the situation in Norway was fairly calm and its occupation policy comparatively mild compared to that in other occupied territories, people lived in a perpetual state of insecurity. Long-term planning was impossible; chances had to be seized and decisions often taken in a flash. Every action, utterance or gesture could have weighty consequences: a harmless remark about the war could land a person in prison; a few friendly words with a German soldier could ruin a woman's reputation. In the early stages of the occupation, the Nazi leadership sought to win popular acceptance by presenting

<sup>105</sup>Undated final report, Feldgendarmerie, Stavanger, BA-MA, PERS15/139508.

<sup>106</sup>Gericht der 214. ID, 25 November 1942, BA-MA, PERS 15/139508.

<sup>107</sup>S. Neitzel and H. Welzer, *Soldaten. Protokolle vom Kämpfen, Töten und Sterben* (Frankfurt am Main, 2011), 217–29.

<sup>108</sup>Warring, 'Intimate and sexual relations', *op. cit.*, 89.

itself as a fair occupier that guaranteed safety and stability. At the same time, it demonstrated its will to quash any opposition. Over the course of the war, the German stance against the Norwegians hardened as resistance against foreign rule stiffened.

Even if most Norwegians were opposed to the German occupation, they adapted quickly to it. A few days after the German troops had invaded southern Norway on 9 April 1940, shop owners welcomed their first German customers. Within weeks, Norwegians reported to the Wehrmacht depots in Oslo to work as drivers or translators. For the majority, life under occupation continued much the same as before. For many, the most acutely felt change concerned the increasing scarcity of food, clothing and stimulants, such as cigarettes and alcohol. On the positive side, the Germans' high demand for labour brought an end to long-term unemployment. Salaries rose, and fishermen and farmers earned higher revenues for their catches and produce, allowing them to pay off their debts.

In some regions, and in the cities, the occupation was highly visible through the physical presence of Wehrmacht soldiers. The occupiers invaded all levels of society. However, these intrusions were not necessarily accompanied by the use of force, especially since German occupation policy demanded that Norwegians should be treated as allies, not enemies. The occupiers had to acknowledge and adjust to the presence of the local population, and vice versa. As a consequence, the military and the civilian spheres intersected in multiple ways.

My analysis has focused on two nodes where these worlds converged: crimes and spaces. In examining encounters in different spatial contexts, the article has shown how the norms and values inscribed into space affected and altered power relations, at least temporarily. While public space was a fiercely contested area resulting in open clashes, encounters in private Norwegian homes tilted the power (im)balance towards the occupied and thus increased their agency. Meanwhile, the workplace facilitated dialogue between Norwegians and Germans and thus gave rise to pragmatic co-operation. Crimes were another node where the interests of the occupied and the occupier converged or clashed. Crimes and misdemeanours constitute a useful lens through which to reveal the strategies people employed under German occupation and their often contradictory behaviour. The drastic rise in property crimes is evidence of the tensions between occupier and occupied as result of the increased scarcity of goods, as well as of the weakening of established legal norms. At the same time, property offences provided a platform for mutually profitable co-operations between members of opposing sides of the conflict.

By studying the occupation from below, it becomes clear how everyday interactions between occupiers and occupied undermined the asymmetry of power and led to a blurring of the divide between friend and foe. Both the

relations and the actions of those living under occupation were complex and contradictory, and could take many forms. The terms ‘collaboration’, ‘accommodation’ and ‘resistance’ prove unhelpful for grasping these relations, which were, at their core, power relations. In this article I have therefore proposed the categories of relations of conflict, relations of cooperation and relations of solidarity, which highlight the shifting power dynamics between the occupier and the occupied.

The study has revealed how the German occupiers’ position of power was continually punctuated both by dependency on local cooperation and by interactions between Norwegian civilians and German military on the lower, everyday level. The Nazi and military leadership sought to quash any open challenge to their rule. Yet it could not do much against the solidary and cooperative relations that developed between the civilian population and the members of their own forces. Or perhaps it did not need to. For, although the balance of power could shift in favour of the occupied as result of such relations, and thereby undermine German power, their position remained fragile. The constant threat of violence, paired with the benefits granted to selected groups, created a feeling of insecurity which held the occupied in place. Thus, any gain in power on a personal level could widen the individual’s room to manoeuvre; but this gain was only temporary. Moreover, the shift in power on a personal level did not alter the principal asymmetry of power, as long as the occupying power successfully defended its position on a macro level.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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