

Our Lady of the heterotopia: An empirical theological investigation of heterotopic aspects of the Church of Our Lady, Trondheim

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Interpreting the Lutheran church of Our Lady of Trondheim Norway in the light of Michael Foucault's spatial of heterotopia, the article explores the capacity of a church space to become a site of ritual and spatial justice for people living in with different kinds of marginality. The article contributes to the development of the relationship between spatial theory and Christian social practice and the contextual theology arising from this relationship. While the majority of scholars of diaconia draw on Norwegian systematic theologian Trygve Wyller's appropriation of Foucault's theory, this article builds on the British sociologist Kevin Heatherington's elaboration of the theory. Instead of understanding heterotopic spaces as overtly ethical spaces, the article follows Hetherington in exploring how Foucault's heterotopic spaces are sites of unsettled and unresolved agonism. This theoretical move opens up for seeing the displacements of space, bodies and practices in the church of Our Lady as sites of ambivalence and negotiation.

Keywords: heterotopia, displacement, ritual justice, spatial justice, Kevin Heatherington, Trygve Wyller, agonism

1. Introduction

One important addition to the theoretical repertoire of the study of Christian social practices is the introduction of the application of Michael Foucault's concept of heterotopias, first developed by Norwegian systematic theologian Trygve Wyller (Wyller 2006, 2009, 2010, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c). Wyller's work is of great importance to the study of diaconia. It expands the intellectual horizon of the study of diaconia from its past confinement to social work and theology as its primary intellectual dialogue partners to contemporary philosophy¹. Of equal importance is the fact that *space* is brought into the focus of the study of diaconal practices. In this article, I wish to contribute to the discourse on heterotopic diaconia by including one more voice in the discussion: The British sociologist Kevin Hetherington's notion of heterotopia as *an alternate ordering* (1997).

The empirical starting point of this article is an ethnographic study of the diaconal practice of a particular congregation, the Church of Our Lady in Trondheim, Norway. The church building dates back to the 13th century and since

1 Another example is Sturla Stålsett, who in his work brings the work of Giorgio Agamben and Judith Butler (2012) into the dialogue with practices of diaconia.

1545 has served as the home of the Lutheran congregation of the inner city of Trondheim. Due to falling attendance in Sunday services and occasional offices, the congregation faced closure and had to radically reconsider its vision and mission. Since 2007 the church has been run by the diaconal organization, The Church City Mission Trondheim (CCTM)², as “Our Lady Open Church.” The transformation of Our Lady from a traditional congregational church into an “open church” included extensive opening hours, alteration to the floor plan of the church, and changes in the practices of hospitality.

The questions driving this article are the following: First, in what way are the displacements of street space and church space in the Our Lady examples of heterotopia? Second, what does this heterotopia look like, as narratives, theological reflections, and practices documented and interpreted in the material created from an ethnographic study of Our Lady³? The argument of this article is that, through deliberate spatial and practice-wise rearrangements of a medieval church space, such a space may become an alternate ordering where socially produced identities are destabilized and utopias are deployed in new and surprising ways.

2. Theory: Michael Foucault’s heterotopia and its various uses

In the text “Of Other Spaces,” Michael Foucault shifts his focus from the study of the formation of the subject through historical processes to the study of the spatial aspect of these processes⁴. The perspective is no longer on the chronology of the discourses of the social production of otherness in modernity (the prison, the mental hospital), but on how the social production of *space* formats the construction of the subject. Surprisingly, Foucault starts his spatial

2 Founded in 1855, Kirkens Bymisjon (“The Church City Mission”) is one of the largest and oldest professional humanitarian nonprofit organizations in Norway, working in areas of rehabilitation, marginalization, elderly care, and mental health. The organization has a Christian heritage, but today employs people from a wide range of religious and nonreligious backgrounds. It operates in numerous large and middle-size Norwegian cities.

3 The empirical material is created based on a triangulation of taped interviews, participant observation, and document study. The interview material consists of transcribed interviews with 20 guests, 12 volunteers, and 12 past and present employees of the Church of Our Lady. Three weeks of field work were conducted during the Spring of 2014 in addition to the Christmas celebration. The data collection was approved by the NSD, Norwegian Center for Data Research. The document study consists of annual reports of Our Lady 2008–2014, the street ministry of Church City Mission prior to the opening of Our Lady as an open church in 2007, reports produced in the process of establishing Our Lady as an open church, material produced in the recruitment and training of volunteers and written material produced in the daily running of the church.

4 The idea of heterotopia is developed in two places in the work of Michel Foucault. The first is in the book *The Order of Things* (1970), where heterotopia is used primarily as a linguistic term. The second place is the short article “Of Other Spaces,” where the focus is not on heterotopia in language, but as concrete space. The following is based on the latter use, heterotopia as space.

analysis of the practices of subject formations with a statement about the status of the relationship between sacredness and space in contemporary society. Space has not been entirely desanctified, Foucault holds. The preservations of *a difference* between private space and public space, family space and social space, cultural and useful space, spaces of leisure and work as “inviolable,” is “nurtured by the hidden presence of the sacred” (1998:238). Yet, it is not these spaces in themselves that are the target of attention. Rather, Foucault adds a new layer of differentiation on to this first categorization of spaces: *Utopias* are places that do not exist in time and place, but represent a society in perfect form. More interesting are the *heterotopias*, the other space. According to Foucault, heterotopias “have the curious property of being in relation with all the other sides, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror or reflect” (1998:239). The heterotopias represent a continuous blurring of the line between the normal and the deviant (“to suspect, neutralize, or invert”). Thus, the heterotopias may therefore become a space for critique of the normal, created by *normality itself*. In the heterotopic space, the epistemic order of normality is thrown back at normality itself. Heterotopias are linked to power, but not as *univocal resistance to dominant power*. Rather, they are spaces where *resistance and transgression is problematized*, as *the other* of both normality and utopia.

The idea of heterotopia has an extensive scholarly legacy. A noncomprehensive list of different applications of heterotopias in various disciplines displays a range from literature⁵, media studies⁶, architecture⁷, theology⁸, philosophy⁹, and social work¹⁰. Dehaene and Caüter proposed that, “when putting on het-

5 In the field of literature, Wenche Mühleisen used the term to analyze the novel *Tjuenedagen* by the Norwegian author Geir Gulliksen. For Mühleisen, the heterotopic aspect of the novel proposes an alternative way of organizing love and sex in the society. She speaks of the “heterotopic energy” (2011:184) of the novel as a will to transcend traditional categories of sexuality.

6 Jutta Haider and Olof Sundin (2011) apply the term on Wikipedia. They focus on the emancipatory aspect of the heterotopia, presenting a new way of understanding memory and blurring the line between the professional and the amateur.

7 In architecture, Henry Urbach (1998) applies the term by describing it this way: “Heterotopias (...) display the incoherencies, fissures, and contradictions that inhere in social arrangements and expose their shaky legitimacy” (1998:348). Urbach’s article is rather critical of the term and shows how the application of the term – at least within architecture – has been so differentiated that it seems to be able mean almost anything.

8 See Flynn’s *Michel Foucault and Theology – the politics of religions experience* (2004). Flynn defines heterotopia as spaces “that are linked with all other sites by the fact that they contradict them (...) These counter-sites combine the ‘othering’ character of Foucauldian ‘transgressive thinking’ with the spatializing nature of his argument” (2004:149). Flynn does not link such spaces to religious space, but to the desert.

9 Georges Didi-Huberman (2013) analyzes the idea of democratic representation in the light of heterotopia.

10 Elm Larsen explicitly draws on Foucault’s term heterotopia (Elm Larsen 2003) for understanding the use of space in social work. Just as much as being spaces where marginalized persons may receive care in the immediate proximity of professionals and/or volunteers, social work cafes are also potentially places of resistance against the discourse of normality. Creating a

erotopic spectacles, everything tends to take on heterotopic traits” (2008:6)¹¹. It has a “slippery meaning” and its utility is “limited” (Urbach 1998:347). Hence, the uses of Foucault’s heterotopia in various academic discourses are so diverse that one might not delineate one single use, but rather evoke the Wittgensteinian metaphor of family resembles to describe the plethora of different uses. The concept of heterotopia may be understood as a complex of ideas, metaphors and sensitizing devices rather than as theory in the strict understanding of scientific theory and no single use can claim to be comprehensive.

2.1 Heterotopi and Diaconia

Trygve Wyller introduced Foucault’s theories heterotopia to the study of Christian social practices. This work received wide recognition within the field (Villadsen, Kaspar, and Wyller, 2009, Wyller and Heimbrock 2010, Stiles-Ocran 2015, Sander, Villadsen, and Wyller 2016). A literature review of Wyller’s application of heterotopia reveals that its content has shifted over the years. In Wyller 2006, the search for a heterotopic diaconia is motivated by the need for an intervention in the World Council of Churches (especially “Diaconia in Context”) discourse on the transformation from a charitable first-person-oriented diaconia to a diaconia-oriented one towards advocacy and justice (“prophetic diaconia”). In this early work on heterotopia, which unfortunately exists only in Norwegian, Wyller identifies the problem of contemporary diaconia not in its lack of structural focus, but in a lack of critical self-reflectivity and the question of representation. To reflect on who defines “liberation,” “empowerment,” and “inclusion” on behalf of whom is just as important as whether the horizon of social practices is the individual or the public. According to Wyller, the study of diaconia needs to interact with philosophical discourses, which discuss and also critique liberationist and progressive regimes that deploy different kinds of pastoral power: all kinds of diaconia – even self-proclaimed “prophetic diaconia” – run the risk of reproducing the very same discourses that marginalized people in the first place¹².

space for the marginalized collectivizes the nonnormative in a way that might not otherwise have come into being. On the use of heterotopia with respect to social work with homelessness, see Mendel 2011.

11 The American critical geographer Edvard Soja even goes as far as stating that “For Foucault, every space is heterotopia, a realized and imagined space of resolved opposites” (2001:104).

12 Wyller has also been criticized. Korslien and Notland write: “Heterotopia may bring useful analysis, but it is our proposition that one should not look for sources for the right diakonia from outside diakonia. It is within ourselves we need to discover the vocation, and in the respectful encounter with the other we find the best possible way to work” (2011:241 my translation). The position of Korslien Notland is problematic: To argue that the source of diakonia is personal vocation in order to suspend new theorizations brings one dangerously close to an epistemology of self-legitimation and self-righteousness. There is no reason why the academic

A heterotopic perspective on diaconia is concerned with what happens to the conception of diaconia when the lives and social contexts of the marginalized themselves are no longer seen only as targets for transformation, but when their experiences and strategies of survival and dignity are understood as epistemological starting points. This clears the way for a much more messy and multilayered role of diaconia than the one-dimensional prophetic/political diaconia. The WCC discourse is no longer explicitly present in later works. However, the concern is similar: In 2009, Wyller again pointed out how practices of diaconia often have been places where “people have been included (‘disciplined’) into the large community of a nation or of the local municipality” (2009:209). In his latest book, another part of Foucault’s theoretical complex is used to theorize the coercive capacity of diaconal (and secular welfare) practices, namely, pastoral power (Sander, Viladsen, and Wyller 2016:11). In heterotopic diaconal practices, the helper/care giver recognizes the danger of disciplining. In order to avoid becoming agents of governmentality and discipline, the helper should be ready to be profoundly transformed by the otherness of others:

“the project is not any more to construct an ideal space into which the others sooner or later should (possibly by force) change or move into. The project is different, the being formatted in the icon of the other, creates and open, imaginary space, where you, in principle are no longer able to know the next step or final outcome” (Wyller 2009:214)

Heterotopic diaconia thus describes a situation where the professional/activist refrains from acting and imagining according to prefixed answers and practices. Heterotopic diaconia allows the relationship to take its own course. Diaconal practices become heterotopic spaces when this suspension of fixed professional asymmetrical power relations also takes places on a structural level. In other words: when those targeted as recipients of care, help, or transformation themselves become subjects in a specific space: “Instead, the other spaces become spaces of the others insofar as ‘the others’ presence, significance and impact upon the space increase” (B. Sander, Viladsen, and Wyller 2016:185). The governmentality of the pastoral power so often embedded in even the best of intentions is rolled back in favor of the agency of the former object. The heterotopic potential of professional relations and spaces of help/care have an explicit theological dimension. Sacredness occurs in spaces and relations where the otherness of the other is respected and not reduced to sameness: “There is no intentionality of the sacred if there is no other” (Wyller 2009:209). In his later works, Wyller turned from diaconia to ecclesiology, searching for a *heterotopic ecclesiology* (Wyller 2016b and Wyller 2016c). In a heterotopic ecclesiology, features of traditional church spaces and activities redraw in order

study of diakonia should enjoy a privileged, self-contained position sheltered from critique from “outside.”

to (literally) make space for the agencies and bodies of people who in some way or another leave precarious and marginalized lives.

Even though Wyller's work represents a much needed renewal of the theoretical repertoire of the study of diaconia and ecclesial practices dedicated to attentiveness to marginality, this article does not build on his application of Foucault's term. The reason for this is that, in most of Wyller's writing, the heterotopic is understood to be imbued with an ethical quality. The result is that the heterotopic is given positive and constructive traits, like "respect," "hospitality," and diverse forms of agency of the marginalized. The danger of such a theoretical trajectory is that the ambivalence, risk, and polyphony of any space gets lost.¹³ Thus, let me turn to a different theorist of heterotopia: In contrast to Wyller, British sociologist Kevin Hetherington develops his thinking on heterotopia without attaching ethical qualities to such spaces. To him, heterotopias are not primarily "sites of resistance, sites of transgression or marginal spaces" (1997: 9). Neither are they places of freedom and liberation from coercive power. Rather, heterotopias are "alternate form of ordering" (1997: 35). Hetherington relates this ethical arbitrariness of the heterotopia to Foucault's complex understanding of power. For Foucault, power is not a negative force itself; rather, it is a set of actions that acts upon another set of actions, from resistance to subordination. The relationship between the slave and the slave owner does not entail power: In this relationship, resistance is not possible and power ceases to be a stakeholder (Foucault 1982:220). Rather, Foucault coins the neologism "agonism"¹⁴ as a way to describe the creative and performative nature of power, "a relationship which is at the same time reciprocal incitation and struggle; less a face to face confrontation which paralyzes both sides and more a permanent struggle (Foucault 1982: 222).¹⁵ Drawing a parallel to Foucault's notion of power as a relationship in which subordination and resistance happen simultaneously, Hetherington argues that the heterotopia is not a space where one is liberated from oppressive power or where the otherness of other is respected. Rather, it is a place where the vision of the utopia is deployed in a different way, opens to a different ordering than the present. For Hetherington, the role of the Palais Royal in Paris prior to the French Revolution is the prime example of a heterotopia. The Palais Royal was not a utopia – the ideal plan of modernity at the threshold of the old regime. It is the capacity to be "a place of otherness that expressed an alternate ordering of society

13 Indeed, Wyller is open about this potential problem. In his study of a Swedish parish engaged in practices of hospitality for people living without legal status in Sweden, he states that a more comprehensive ethnographic study than the one he has undertaken will reveal other dimensions of the congregation (B. Wyller 2016:65, footnote 4).

14 From Greek (*agon*), denoting the productive outcome of a competition.

15 For a further discussion on Foucault's understanding of power in relation to social work and activism, see Butler and Athanasiou, 2013.

through its contact with the society that it despised” which make it into a heterotopia (1997:6).

In the following I will draw on Hethrington’s use of heterotopia to identify practices, narratives, and reflections created through the spatial and practice wise transformation of Our Lady from a traditional Lutheran congregational church into an “open church.” I ask whether and how these spatial arrangements and practices open for an alternate social dis/ordering compared to the traditional order of both the reality of street/commercial space (4.1) and ecclesial space (4.2). In the discussion (5), I ask how this may contribute to the diaconal and ecclesial discourse on heterotopia.

3. The empirical context: the Church of Our Lady

The meaning of any particular space is a complex product of social production (Soja 2010, Vesthelle 2004). After 2007, i.e., after being transformed into an “open church,” the social production of the space of Our Lady is characterized by displacements: The line between the life of the outside street space and the life of the space within a prestigious¹⁶ medieval church becomes porous. New and deliberate spatial arrangements dispossess traditionally compartmentalized spaces of their stability. The church is open from 9–18 hours on weekdays and open 24 hours a day on weekends. In the back part of the space, beneath the gallery, a kitchen has been inserted and the pews have been removed in order to make space for tables and chairs, creating a cozy café where free coffee and tea are served all day. Breakfast is served in the morning, on Thursday soup and on Saturday lunch. The regular guests of Our Lady is comprised of four groups: guests with Norwegian citizenship who suffer from different kinds of social marginalization, guests with Norwegian citizenship living with drug addiction, guests with Romanian citizenship of Roma origin who beg in the streets of Trondheim, migrant worker guests from diverse Central and Southern European countries. The groups of guests can spend large amount of their time in the church. Guests who spend less time in the church are Trondheim citizens who drop by to light a candle or participate in a service as well as Norwegian and international tourists who find their way to Our Lady to admire its grand baroque alter piece and beauty. The church is tended to by 266 volunteers.

16 Our Lady is listed as one of the 12 larger churches in Norway of national importance by the National Directorate of Cultural Heritage. When the church reopened on 11 November 2007 after extensive renovation, the King of Norway was present during the service, signaling the national importance of the building.

4. Analysis: Our Lady as a heterotopic space

4.1 An alternate ordering of street space: Redeploying the utopia of the inclusiveness of the folk church

To understand Our Lady only as a “church” would miss a vital contextual dimension of what “church” means in particular context. Theologically, the Scandinavian folk church is an ecclesiology that understands church not as separate from the common majority culture, but as embedded in it (Myhre-Nielsen 1998). However, narratives from the reality of people suffering from different kinds of social marginalization undergoes a rupture when the conventional and consensual story of the folk church as inclusive and friendly to common secular culture is augmented with a critical class perspective: One employee informant highlights the church as a space of public and representational identity formation where the politics of social exclusion and inclusion peak. Before coming to Trondheim in the beginning of the 1990s, he worked as a street priest in the street ministry of another city in Norway. He narrates a story of how a woman in the drug-using community who considered herself a believer wanted to attend service on Sunday morning:

NN was using drugs. She thought “Today I will go to church.” She got as far as the stairs outside the entrance doors of the church. She saw the other churchgoers coming. She noticed that she had a big hole in her tights. She felt: “This is a space I cannot enter.” She turned around and walked away.

This and other stories made the street priest reflect on how being denied access to practices and spaces of (the drug-free) normality was an independent source of hardship for people living with drug abuse on top of the daily struggle with housing, food, and health. In the story above, the limits of access to the church space are not drawn along lines of revivalist pietism (are you a proper Christian or are you not), but according to lines of the social convention of middle-class dress codes. On other words, the church space is a space for people who do not have holes in their clothes when they go to church. After starting his new job as street priest in the newly founded CCMT at the beginning of the 1990s, he was sitting on a bench outside Our Lady. The park surrounding Our Lady was (and still is) a hub of the drug community. A man approached him:

“Is there space for me in your house?” At first I did not understand what he meant. I thought he was homeless and wanted to live in my house. (...) I did not know how to get out of the situation. He rescued me by saying “I mean the church.” As a priest, my first impulse was to say “Of course there is room for you in the church!” But I could not utter the words because I knew that they were not true. I was quite sure that it would contradict his experiences. I do not think he would believe the words I was saying. (...) If we believe and want to tell others about a God who has room for all, we cannot do this in a different way than to show that the church has room for all.

Thus, the formation of Our Lady as a hospitable church for people living outside normality can be interpreted as *ecclesial spatial justice*. The transformative element is the social reality that is produced by the space: The church space is no longer a space where people are excluded because they do not abide by dress codes or the obligation to stay sober or behave appropriately. To the informant, ecclesial spatial justice is performative theology: The spoken words of the radical inclusiveness of God have no meaning if they are not accompanied by the willingness to perform acts of radical social inclusiveness¹⁷.

In the empirical material, a different dimension of Our Lady as justice surfaces. Death is an everyday matter in the drug community¹⁸. Several of the employee informants make a point out of how people living with drug addiction are intentionally or unintentionally prohibited from attending the funerals of deceased friends. In some cases, it is a matter of not being able to stay tolerably sober enough to attend or making it on time; in other cases, the family of the deceased actively prevents people in the drug community from attending by not announcing the place and time of the funeral publicly in the newspaper. Thus, conditions of societal exclusion and inclusion spill over into ritualizations of death and mourning. In Our Lady, the deaths of all members of the community (from guests to employees) are co-memorized with words, symbolic actions (a rose, a picture, a lighting of candles) during the Thursday service. This alternate ordering of the rituals of death of the folk church can be labeled *ritual justice*: People who are excluded from the practices of normality (funerals) are granted the right to be mourned and mourn.

Whereas the two first types of alternate ordering are shaped by practices of exclusion/inclusion, the third deals with precariousness/protection. Many of the regular guests of Our Lady live highly precarious lives. Fights over drug debts and other kind of violence are belong to the daily lives of some of the guests – especially those living with drug addiction¹⁹. Faced with this reality, creating spaces of protection is of pivotal importance. According to the empirical material, the socially produced idea of the church as a church space functions as a means of caring for a space of protection. Marte, a woman with a long and extensive experience as a host articulates this particular role of the church:

Taking care of people because they are inside this space. ... Some might be in danger outside, but here inside they are safe. It can be people who have overdosed. It can be

17 See Mainwaring (2014) for an elaboration of the organization of church space as a means of justice.

18 Shortly before my fieldwork was initiated, a woman of the drug using community was murdered.

19 One of the female informants living with drug addiction reports a threatening situation with her boyfriend and how she literally ran to the church to escape him.

people who seek refuge inside the church because they are being chased on the outside because of drug debt.

Our Lady plays a role as a space where the order and danger of street space are replaced by a new order: an order of protection. Yet this order of protection is fragile, both on a concrete and on an abstract level. Volunteers or employees have no formal medical training. Several host informants complain that other hosts are not attentive enough to the precarious medical conditions of many of the guests, and that the CCMT should provide better training for new hosts. On an abstract level, the idea of the church as a protective space is vulnerable because it is not supported by Lutheran dogma: According to *Confessio Augustana*, the church is where the Gospel is preached and sacraments are celebrated. The physical space is of no theological importance in itself. Thus, there is no power to enforce the idea of Our Lady as a space of protection – save the socially constructed idea of the church space as a space of difference compared to the outside secular space of the park and the street. However, maintaining the difference is of utmost importance. Street priest Gunnar reflects:

The day the difference between the park and the church space is leveled out ... if there is no difference ... that means the end of Our Lady. The effect is that you move from the park and inside the church space. If someone says that the church space is just as sacred as an outdoor toilet²⁰, then Our Lady has no significance. Then it is uninteresting ... Some weird volunteers warming up drug addicts. That's just a lot of nonsense.

In this quote Gunnar makes it clear that the impact of Our Lady is not to provide material goods to people living with drug addiction. Rather, Our Lady – as pointed out earlier in this section – redistributes access to space, practices, and symbols as ecclesial and ritual justice. Gunnar points to Our Lady's ability to function as a vehicle of redistribution of access to protective spaces (like ecclesial and ritual justice), which is conditioned by the prevalence of the socially constructed idea of church space as a space governed by a different set of social rules than the park and street space outside²¹. Thus, the traditional folk church

20 The view that the church space is no more sacred than an outdoor toilet (“lokum”) was publicly proposed by a Danish bishop in a discussion on the legitimacy of church asylum in Denmark. Iraqi asylum seekers who had been living for years in Danish receiving centers sought refuge in a church in Copenhagen after their asylum applications had been turned down. The bishop scorned the refugees and their supporters for believing that the police would not enter the church space to arrest and deport the Iraqis asylum-seekers (Christoffersen 2013).

21 In other parts of the empirical material, the theologically trained informants reflect extensively on the lack of foundation of a theology of sacred space in Lutheran ecclesiology. They are very well aware of the difference between the socially constructed idea of the church space as sacred ground and CA's indifference to space. They do not confuse cultural imagination with theology. In the spatial typology of Westhelle (2004), one could say that it is Our Lady's capacity to become an epiphanic space that is at stake. An epiphanic space is a religious space, albeit one that refrains from attaching ontology quality to the physical space itself.

imagination becomes an instrument of creating radically new experiences of justice and care.

In this section, I have depicted three ways in which Our Lady represent an alternate order compared to the order of the street space. The experience of exclusion from ecclesial rituals of mourning because of non-normative habits like drug addiction and the exposure to the potential violence of conflicts of drug debt is *countered as the only experience of the life on the streets of Trondheim* through the presences of an open sacred space in the middle of the city. Through extended opening hours, practices of hospitality, and a transformed floor plan, the socially constructed idea of the otherness of the church space is creatively exploited in order to create a protective space, care, and justice for those who live in precarious situations. The disorder of street space is dispossessed by the order of a space which – through its transformation in 2007 – includes, mourns, cares, and protects. It is a space that encompasses the reality of the street. The utopia of an inclusive church that mourns all deaths, that cares and protects everyone because all are created in the image of God is deployed in a new way. This utopia is no longer a drug-free, middle-class life; but in some instances it becomes available as well to people who for whatever reason live their lives outside normality. The cultural constructed idea of the church space as a space of difference is used as a means to protect those who live outside normality: drug users and – in the Danish case referred to by the street priest – asylum-seekers (see footnote 18). In this respect, Our Lady can be said to be heterotopia in Hetherington's use of the term.

4.2 An alternate ordering of the folk church space: Redeploying the utopia of the Christian God as a God who is revealed in the people of the street

However, there is a paradox here. Whereas volunteers, employees, and guests articulate the importance of the reiteration of the cultural and historical capital of the space as a means of creating justice and protection, the spatial arrangements of Our Lady are deliberately rigged to destabilize the set-up of a traditional church space. Being a space that is set apart from other spaces – the vehicle of the social production of spatial and ritual justice and protection – is continuously subverted by its hospital practices and long opening hours. Our Lady claims to be a church, but does not in fact perform what is culturally accepted as “church activities.” Thus, cultural and religious possession of ecclesial space (a culturally prestigious place, a place of protection) gives way to the dispossession of ecclesial space through the introduction of new practices. The alternate orderings of 4.1 become not just sources of justice and protection, but also sources of critique of and resistance to traditional ecclesial spaces and practices. The nature of this critique and resistance has several dimen-

sions. First, to many of the guest and host informants there is much general frustration with traditional ecclesial spaces. One host says:

I have been to so many domes and churches before. It all becomes so pompous. What are all these empty cathedrals, all the small and large chapels, for? Money is spent only on these spaces for grand occasions. They are full only when some celebrity gives a concert. Sometimes the church of Norway consists of nothing more than a pile of liturgy and hymnals.

In contrast to a church structure fetishizing formality and predefined liturgy, another host interprets the practice of Our Lady as a space where the ethical and performative aspect of Christian faith comes to life:

What fascinated me about Our Lady was that it was faith in action. You do not need to know Bible verses, but you did need to be able to help someone else. You needed a cup of coffee, you needed to be able to lie down and rest in the pews. To cover a human being who is freezing with a blanket, is that not the true “love your neighbor”? Does the plurality you find in Our Lady not reflect the plurality of creation? (...) Man does not live by bread alone. In Our Lady, you find both the bread and the Word.

Thus, the displacement of street and church space facilitate a shift from “churchiness” as a product of solely sacramental and ritual practices performed throughout the centuries (Sunday services and the occasional offices) to practices of care and comfort for the vulnerable other. As such, Our Lady becomes a heterotopia *not only* of the violence and precariousness of the street space, *but also* of the order of the ritual- and tradition-based Lutheran folk church of Norway. It represents a site of critique of the church (“sometimes the Lutheran church is just a pile of hymnals and liturgy”) by understanding it not just as ritual practice and historical continuity, but as acts of care and mercy, more sincere and valid expressions of Christian faith.

Another and related dimension of Our Lady as a site of critique of and resistance to the order of traditional ecclesial spaces and its practices addresses the issue of the traditional forms of *teaching* from the pulpit and alter and *listening* in the news. When turning a space with such a familiar script of an ecclesial “division of labor” into a space for ethical practices, one could easily find this script being reproduced under different labels: Teaching put employees and hosts on the same level, being in the pews means being a guest. However, several of the host and employee informants talk extensively about the *reciprocal process of the performance of ethical practices*: Guests are not just recipients of care, but also givers of care towards other guests and hosts. Paraphrasing a key concept in liberation theology, this can be called the *affectional privilege of the marginalized*. Sissel, a former host and now a guest, recalls having been seriously ill and admitted to the hospital for long periods. She is eager to narrate how the community of guests supported her through the practice of lighting candles:

When I was ill, I experienced that there was an ocean of burning candles for me. It was the people of the street who lit candles for me. It was a kind of sensitivity that was missing among people who have stable lives. This says something about faith. This has given me a lot and has made me very happy. We have many Bible texts about this: the least shall be the first, the gift of the widow, and so on.

To Sissel, Our Lady becomes a place where Biblical parables are *performed*: It is a place where the “people of the streets” – who in terms of material goods and health are much worse off than herself – are given a space to care in a way that far supersedes the support she would have expected to receive from “people who have stable lives.” In this way, the asymmetrical relationships of giver and receiver are shifted when the host becomes the object of care and support is performed by the guests. This is facilitated by practices that are open to the agency guests, like the lighting of candles. The marginal life situations of the guests who lit candles for her are not only material for transformation or rehabilitation, but are understood as a vehicle for making them more sensitive to her illness. Drawing on the Biblical sources of Matt 25 and Mark 12:44, human action is given a transcendental dimension. To Sissel, the social reality created in Our Lady not only converges with, but also confirms the social reality promised in the biblical stories.

The theologically trained employees add a level of epistemological privilege to the affectional privilege of the marginalized identified by nontheologically trained hosts. Ida says:

When we are together in Our Lady, we are a congregation. It is the body of Christ. It is as simple as that. The identification with the body of Christ (in Our Lady) is so striking because there are so many poor among us. (...) Jesus is among us (...) because we see the wounds (*informant points towards the palm of her hand*). Jesus says it himself: among the sick, among those who are in prison. They are here! Sometimes there are people here who have been beaten several times, or have had a tooth knocked out. Or they sit there with this feeling that you can see from the outside of being chased.

The employee deploys the incarnation as a hermeneutical device for interpreting the presence of the guests in the most miserable life situations theologically: The pierced hands of Jesus become visible in the needle sticks of the drug addict, in the wounded flesh of the beaten and in the weary soul of someone filled with anxiety. The new order brought into the traditional ecclesial order of church space by the presence of people who have been beaten or have arms covered with scars from drug use represents a capacity to fully grasp the scandal of the incarnation: The body of Christ is to be found in the contemporary despised and afflicted bodies. The guests are not only recipients of care, but theologically essential in order for the space to remain (or become) a valid witness to the incarnation. Another theologically trained employee, Arne, pushes the point even further by pointing to the guests who sometimes represent the

greatest disorder in the traditional order of an ecclesial space are the greatest asset of Our Lady:

Church space is a space associated with phrases like “Be quite!” and “Sit down and behave!” “Behave!” “Hush!” “Sit still.” Because of these connotations, we are blinded from seeing the messiness of life in the textual foundation of the church. In the Gospels, there is no “Be quiet” or “sit down.” The gospels speak of people shouting Kyrie Elision, have mercy on me! There is yelling, shouting, crying and unclean spirits *en masse*. The texts speak of noisiness and things that smell bad. All this is present in Our Lady. (...) The people living on the streets are our greatest assent. (...) The day they no longer feel welcome and do not come here any longer, Our Lady is finished.

To this employee, the alternate ordering created is no longer the capacity of the church space to become a space of justice, protection, and care for the guests living precarious life. Rather, it is the disorder that is created by the very presence of these guests which needs to be protected from the staring gazes of the hosts and guests who consider their presence and behavior inappropriate in a church space. Thus, the dispossession of the church space of its traditional order by the most unruly guests is the greatest resource for rediscovering who the first receivers of the Gospel as good news were: the excluded and the despised. To discover this demands a method. To the informant, the method is to create a rupture in the specific cultural and religious meaning of a place: Biblical texts are not read and interpreted *anywhere*. Ritualizations do not occur in *a void*: Texts are read, interpreted, and ritualized in specific spaces, in the Norwegian culture called “church.” As culturally and religiously prestigious spaces, these spaces are spaces where order easily becomes fetishized (“Church space is a space associated with phrases like “Be quite!” and “Sit down and behave!” “Behave!”). The hospitable practices of Our Lady create a rupture in this fetishizing of decency and decorum. Thus, in Our Lady, the utopia of the Christian God as a God who lives among and is made visible through the marginalized and despised is deployed not only as *talk* (in sermons, liturgy) but also as *embodied and experienced reality*. This reality is not a utopia, but a heterotopia: not perfect but messy and vulnerable. The openness and hospitality of the space is easily compromised by the stares of hosts and non-drug-using guests at the unruly drug-using guests. It would be easier to abandon the openness towards people who like Christ have visible wounds and sometimes behave in strange ways. Yet, the insistence of the heterotopic is constitutional to Our Lady. Without it, “Our Lady is finished.”

5. Discussion

The analysis shows that when a prestigious church space undergoes a radical spatial rearrangement, the space may become a space of ecclesial and rit-

ual justice. In this respect, Our Lady has become the heterotopia of the street life which its drug using guests are so familiar with. However, only focusing on spatial justice and care omits the most striking heterotopic aspect of Our Lady: Host and employee informants articulate the alternate ordering of traditional ecclesial space which occurs when the reality of street space is invited inside. People living with drug addiction become models of faith and physical hermeneutical devices for accessing the original context of the gospel. Utopias are deployed in new ways: Our Lady is not just a space in which to perform acts of mercy towards the marginalized. Our Lady contributes theologically to how Christianity should be performed and conceptualized in late modernity in order not to remain a “pile of hymnals.” Just as much as the space is a space where spatial symbolic capital of a prestigious spaces is redistributed by giving people living in marginalized life situations access to these spaces, these very same people are the greatest theological assets of the practice itself. In this respect, Our Lady lives up to the most heterotopic space known to Foucault – the boat: “In civilizations without boats, dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure and the police take the place of pirates” (2001: 244). Paraphrasing Foucault: Ecclesial or diaconal structures that do not allow themselves to be transformed into spaces where socially produced identities risk being dispossessed by contradictory hermeneutics and practices. They may turn out to be beautiful annexes of historical museums of past esthetical and religious practices but nothing more.

Hetherington’s investigation of heterotopia pays no attention to Foucault’s link between sacredness and heterotopias. Thus, at this point, we need to turn directly to Foucault himself. To Foucault, sacredness is a product of *maintaining differences* between private and public space, family space and social space, cultural and useful space. The empirical material presented in this article does not confirm this: My informants push heterotopia far beyond Foucault’s own imagination. To the informants, it is the displacement and destabilization of socially produced spaces of difference which embody experiences of sacredness. The reason for this is the specific notion of sacredness found in the Christian narrative of the incarnation. Several informants use the story of the incarnation in order to understand sacredness as a quality nurtured by the displacement of the seemingly opposite space of God and human, stable and palace, ritually pure and ritually impure spaces. God is born in a stable, not in the palace of Herod; God dies as a blasphemer, a death administered by the pious. Thus, an incarnational sacredness does not nurture the *difference* between God and human, church and secular space, but rather the breaking down of such stable categories. In Our Lady, a performative and repetitive incarnation occurs when such opposites are displaced and thus break down. Rather than remaining in Foucault’s notion of sacredness as a force that nurtures opposites, we see that returning to Hetherington’s heterotopia as an “agonism” – the understanding of resistance and submission as productive – is

more fruitful in order to theologically understand the dynamic relationship between street space and church space. The risk of the incarnation is continuously performed in the unresolved incitation between respect and irreverence, between street and church space. Our Lady performs the incarnation through what we may call an *ecclesial agonism*: It is an ecclesial space where the drug addict is a miserable recipient of care and protection (Marte), but at the same time a role model for people who have “stable lives” (Sissel) and the greatest asset for theologically rediscovering essential qualities of the Gospel (Ida, Arne). In order for its order to be both order and disorder, Our Lady depends on the idea of the church space as a space set apart from ordinary space (park, street). Yet, at the same time, this set-apart-ness is continuously being subverted through its practices of hospitality towards those who live in such “ordinary spaces”: extensive opening hours, tolerance towards people who are intoxicated, hosts geared towards creating a protective space, free coffee and food. Thus, when refining the heterotopia theory complex through empirical studies like this one of Our Lady, it is worth asking: Is Our Lady not a heterotopic church, but rather an example of *ecclesial agonism*?

Wyller’s trajectory on heterotopia emphasizes the ethical supremacy of such spaces when the professional relations which occur allows for being “formatted in the icon of the other” (Wyller 2009:209). Such spaces are examples of new spaces for sacredness in late modernity. However, the intellectual benefit of choosing Hetherington’s understanding of heterotopia instead of Wyller’s is that ambivalence and displacement is brought into the theoretical lens. This understanding of heterotopia does not ask whether Our Lady allows the other to remain fully other or if sacredness flows from the will to be transformed by the other. Rather, it asks how utopias can be deployed in new ways, both the ecclesial utopia of the folk church space as an inclusive and protective space for all and the theological utopia of the Christian God as a God who is revealed through the lives of marginalized people. This understanding of heterotopias in Christian social work and ecclesial practices points to a space *between* Wyller’s wholly otherness of the other and traditional spaces of diaconia which – as Wyller rightly observes – too often have harbored discipline just as much as hospitality.

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