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Changing relations of neighborhood service, sociability, and social control in Oslo

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Foreword and acknowledgements

The present article is the Norwegian contribution to the comparative project 'Loges et gardiens', based in Paris. The results of the project are so far published in the preliminary report 'Portiers, concierges, gardiens et loges: la ville en creux**.** Pratiques spatiales, logiques sociales: une étude comparative européenne.' They will be published in French in a book edited by Roselyne de Villanova, Martine Segalen, and Philippe Bonnin. The book presents material from Paris, London, Oslo and Barcelona. In the introductory and concluding chapters of the book the similarities and differences of these various materials are discussed. I thank all the participants in the project 'Loges et gardiens', Lars Gulbrandsen, Barbara Jean Rogers, Susanne Søholt, the current chair of the board and one of the board members in "Garden Street", as well as my colleagues at the Institute for Social Research in Oslo working on civil society for their useful comments to the first drafts. All quotes in the article have been translated from Norwegian by me.

Oslo, september 2003

Marianne Gullestad

Introduction[1]

At the entrance to a Norwegian apartment building, there is no architectural counterpart to the French *loge* – the space close to the main entrance from where the *concierge* (or *gardien*) watches the building, and there is no institutionalized equivalent to the watchful eye of the *concierge*. These facts imply certain problems for comparing urban life in Oslo to urban life in such cities as Paris, Barcelona, and London. The solution I have found is to look at the activities in the interstices between the apartments in a building and the street as a *series of tasks connected to this specific urban space*. For comparative purposes I have roughly identified the following main categories of tasks: 1) house maintenance such as cleaning and painting; 2) house repairs and refurbishing, such as carpentry and plumbing; 3) safety and security (protecting the residents and their possessions from intrusion); 4) the creation of social networks and community spirit based on physical proximity; 5) the maintaining of social control and conflict resolution among the residents; 6) the distribution of mail, newspapers, and parcels; and 7) the removal of garbage. Each of these categories is to be thought of merely as a headline encompassing many different concrete tasks that are combined and recombined in specific clusters crossing the main categories. Focusing on security, for instance, the French concierge is involved in tasks connected to several of the categories above, whereas the Norwegian *vaktmester* (an urban work role described below) performs an institutionalized role focusing mainly on maintenance and repairs. Moreover, my analysis relies on an analytic distinction between *tasks, teams,* and *relations*. Different *teams* (sometimes consisting of only one person) are responsible for different *tasks*, and these

1 Besides relying on new research that will be specified below, the interpretations in this article draw on almost thirty years of research in Norwegian society, including two long-term fieldwork experiences in the City of Bergen (Gullestad 1979, 1984, 1985, 1992), detailed analytical work on a collection of autobiographies written by 'ordinary people' (Gullestad 1996a), and as a critical analysis of the Norwegian debates on immigration (Gullestad 1997a,b, 2001a,b, 2002ab,c, in press a,b).

son) are responsible for different *tasks*, and these teams are based on *social relations* with widely differing types of reciprocity and degrees of formality. For example, a task such as cleaning the hallway can be done by a husband as part of the internal division of labor in his marriage, by a minority woman hired on the informal market, by a *vaktmester* in the building, or by a minority or majority employee in a private company. These various relations involve different tensions between control and service on the one hand, and between social proximity and distance on the other.

In order to cover the whole range of tasks listed above, this article is divided into three parts. Because many of the tasks related to maintenance, social control, and sociability are performed by the residents, the first part of the article is a discussion of the changing relationship between people and space in urban Norwegian neighborhoods. The general tendency in the Western world is that local moral communities of significant others are not lost within modernization and globalization; rather, they assume more voluntaristic forms, sometimes with a wider territorial basis than the small neighborhood had, and with less time-depth for the creation of common norms and mutual knowledge. With special reference to the USA, this development has been summarized as being from 'the social order' of relatively tight-knit communities to 'communities of limited liability' (Suttles 1972b). The literature about these transformations has been extensive from the 1950s and onwards (see, for example Bott 1957; Gans 1967; Gullestad 1979, 1984/2002, 1992; Suttles 1972a, b; Young and Wilmot 1962 [1957]).

I regard the neighborhood as a moral community functioning as a buffer between the household on the one hand, and the state and the market on the other, and I argue that this role is changing in the present stage of modernity. Citizens increasingly rely on technological solutions, state agencies, and the market to conduct some of the surveillance, the practical tasks, and the care work they no longer have the means and, most crucially, the time to undertake. The line between public and private life is a diffuse, historically and situationally changing, and constantly renegotiated moral boundary. The parameters within which these negotiations occur have changed dramatically over the past three decades. Part of this development is due to the changing relations between women and men. Since the 1970s, women and children have left the neighborhood during the day. At the same time, the division of both paid and unpaid work is still largely gender divided.

In the second part of the article, I change perspective, in order to present empirical material about the *vaktmester* – an institutionalized work role in Norway that is not identical to the *concierge/gardien* in France, but that can fruitfully be brought into the comparison of tasks and teams. The *vaktmester's* work role is presented from the point of view of the *vaktmesters* themselves. As noted, the *vaktmester's* job is focused on technical mainte-

nance and repairs. Over the years there has been a change in this work role in the direction of greater professionalization, which results in regulated work hours, specified task descriptions, and less personal relationships with the residents. Thus the *vaktmester* has changed from a kind of servant to a provider of specified services.

In the third and last part of the article I again change perspective and level of analysis in order to focus on how the whole range of tasks connected to the space between the apartments and the street is organized in one building in an upper-middle-class area. The organization of tasks is now seen from the point of view of the residents. As for the management of this building, a *vaktmester* company is hired to do a few specified tasks, while the residents and hired craftsmen do most of the other tasks.

When discussing the various arrangements of tasks, I encounter the problem that some of the complex conditions influencing urban living are specific to a particular housing estate or apartment building. Some are national, connected, for example, to specific housing policies or to specific cultural traditions; whereas others, such as technological development, are connected to parameters that might be described as transnational. The reader must keep in mind, therefore, that not everything described in the Norwegian case is specifically Norwegian.

1

Changing conditions for local social life

In this section I attempt to bring together some of the many complex and changing parameters for the development of specific qualities in neighborhood relations and thus for security, social control, sociability, and a helping hand. In particular, I discuss the history of the housing market, the effects of social and geographic mobility, the changing roles of women and children, technological developments, increasing affluence, and the processes of suburbanization and immigration.

The housing market[2]

Norway came relatively late into the urbanization process. In Northern Europe cities have traditionally been associated with exploitation and sin, in contrast to the good, clean life of the countryside and the small town. Many city dwellers continue to practice remnants of the peasant's way of life during their leisure time by gardening and homemaking in the city or the small town (Gullestad 1992). Thus the ideal home is often modeled on the rural household.

Although more than half of Norwegians live in single-family detached houses occupied by the owners, the situation is different in the city. In 1920, only 5% of the inhabitants of Oslo owned their own dwellings, whereas 95% rented. For Bergen the figures were 18% and 82%.[3] Since World War II, private rented housing has decreased considerably. In order to diminish the power of the private landlord, the Labor Party regulated the private renting market to the point that landlords were left with modest profits, and many of them have been forced to withdraw from the business. In the 1970s and the

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2 The information about the housing market is based on Gulbrandsen and Torgersen (1978), and Gulbrandsen (1983, 2003).

3 The source of these figures is an interview with the historian, Erling Annaniassen, who is currently writing the history of cooperative housing in Norway.

1980s most of the inner city buildings were converted into housing cooperatives or owner-occupied apartments as a part of an extensive program for urban renewal. With the exception of a short period, a substantial municipal non-profit housing sector was never developed in Norway as it had been in Sweden. It has been the policy of the Labor Party that as many people as possible should own their own dwelling, either as individual owner-occupants, or as shareholders in cooperative ownership. In order to secure good quality housing for everyone, a loan program for public construction was established in 1946 with the Norwegian State Housing Bank. The bank also provided loans for individual family houses, but was particularly instrumental in the development of the large cooperative sector, through which housing estates were constructed in the cities, outside the ordinary market. Recruitment was based on membership seniority in the cooperative.[4] Thus the period after World War II saw a decline in tenants and a rise in shareowners and owner-occupants, and the market in the cities was divided into: 1) private ownership of apartments and houses by owner-occupants, 2) cooperative ownership of apartments and row houses, and 3) a primarily profit-based rental sector. As an exception, Bergen continued building municipal rental housing until 1955. The Scandinavian countries differ on this point. In Sweden the municipal rental sector is still about 20%. In Denmark it is also about 20%, but here it is organized by the housing cooperative. [5] In the 1980s, the cooperative housing market was deregulated in Norway, and the rental sector was gradually deregulated between the 1980s and 1999.

As a result of these developments, rental housing in Norway forms a relatively small sector of the market compared to that of other countries – even other Scandinavian countries. It is now almost 20% of the housing market, but because it is based largely on short-term contracts, it forms a less important housing sector than it does in Sweden and Denmark because most tenants rent a dwelling only for certain periods of their lives. The ideal is to own one's own house or at least a share in a cooperative housing estate. This ideal,

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4 The housing cooperatives started earlier in Oslo than in the rest of the country (OOBS , founded in 1929, became OBOS in 1935 and NBBL was founded in 1946), but after World War II building activities became extensive. There are two kinds of cooperative companies in Norway: limited companies (boligaksjeselskap) and housing cooperatives (borettslag). In both organizations, the company is the juridical owner of the building(s), and the occupants co-own the company, each as the owner of a share (aksje) or a part (andel) in the company. There is no important difference between the two types of company, with the exception of the period between 1978 and 1982, when part owners' rights to sell their parts was restricted. The majority of the cooperatives are linked to the housing cooperative association of the municipality. Therefore there are housing cooperatives where people live, local housing cooperative associations, and a national housing cooperative association coordinating the local ones (Guldbrandsen 1983).

5 I thank Erling Annaniassen for these figures.

underpinned by the values of independence and self-sufficiency, is expressed in numerous proverbs and formulaic sayings such as “It is best to be one's own master.” and “It is best to be the master of one's own house.” (Gullestad 1984/2002: 319).

The neighborhood as a moral community tended by women and children

Both the household and the neighborhood can be analyzed as *places* defined by specific *social relations*, one more or less encompassed by the other. The two concepts thus comprise both the materiality of place and the qualities of social relationships. Both households and neighborhoods are, in a certain sense, *moral communities*, although with differing degrees and modes of social control and practical cooperation.

The term ‘neighborhood’ covers widely differing practical and symbolic realities. On the one hand, many important decisions have been delegated from the level of national government to the regional and local levels. Seen from the state level, then, the local level has become strengthened. On the other hand, neighborhood ties based on face-to-face interaction seem to have become less important in many people's everyday lives.

Over the past two hundred years, households and neighborhoods in Norway have changed in many ways. The process had an early start in the first decades of the nineteenth century with the development of the ideology and the practices of private bourgeois family life. The spheres of women and men were separated and the houses turned into modern homes. The later era of ‘classic modernity’ or ‘the first modernity’ (Beck 1997) can be defined by the separate spheres of men on the one hand, and women and children on the other. This era culminated with the housewife ideology of the 1950s. Middle-class housewives worked at home, while working-class housewives often had to work both inside and outside the family household. During my first ethnographic fieldwork in a central city neighborhood in Bergen in 1972-73 (Gullestad 1979), for instance, many working-class women still worked late at night or early in the morning in order to keep up with the housewife ideology and “not affect anything at home.” To a large extent, social ties in urban neighborhoods were maintained through women's housework and children's work and play. After a school day that was short relative to those of continental Europe, children had time to roam about, to play, and to assume specific tasks such as child care or the distribution of the afternoon newspapers, all of which served to link different households (Gullestad 1992: 113-136, 1996 a: 50-58). Seen from the point of view of individual children, the neighborhood could be defined as the area they knew well through play, work, and friend-

ship. The residents often had relatives among their neighbors, and these relations were crucial to the social and symbolic integration of the neighborhood as a moral community. During my first and second fieldwork experiences, I learned that a good neighborhood often has "kinship at the core" (Strathern 1981). In addition, I want to add, good Norwegian neighborhoods usually also have 'children at the core'.

During the era of the housewife ideology, the division of labor between the genders and the generations consolidated male authority by offering the home as a moral counterbalance to the insensitivity and brutality of the market. Women and children belonged to homes and neighborhoods, and were regarded as repositories of such virtues as care and compassion. Ideologically, the home represented human relations outside the realms of buying and selling – a fortress of human values. Within the neighborhood, women often represented a watchful eye and a helping hand, and women's talk in their coffee klatches, maintained and negotiated moral values. In this way, one could say that women's friendship circles in the neighborhood were important teams for the maintenance of social control.

The changing roles of women and children

This ideology and the practices and identities associated with it were challenged in the 1970s when younger women embarked upon paid work, not only to help with the family economy, but also "to get away" from the home. I first experienced these changes during my second fieldwork experience in 1978-80 (Gullestad 1984, 1992), when it became more legitimate for women to engage in various activities without inscribing all of them in the ideology of women as the moral centers of their homes. It was then that some of women's duties in home, in the neighborhood, and within their kinship relationships were assumed and formalized by the state in the form of kindergartens and nursing homes, thereby creating even more paid employment for women. Increasingly in the 1980s and 1990s, children also left the home during the day. Women went to work and children to kindergartens, schools, and after-school programs. Thus each household began to participate independently in many social roles and arenas outside the immediate neighborhood. Still, despite the present organization of children's leisure time after school, they can sometimes and in some ways be watchful eyes in the neighborhood, maintaining and negotiating moral values – particularly the children who are older than ten and no longer attend after-school programs.

The sharpened boundary between home and neighborhood

Because of the extensive social and geographic mobility of the baby boom generation born after World War II, one can assume, first, that fewer people today have close relatives in the neighborhood than was the case in, say, the 1930s,[6] and, second, that more people are newcomers in their neighborhoods or must relate to newcomers of all kinds.

Because each family has fewer children and more space than in earlier times, there are also fewer people in each neighborhood. In the inner cities, heavy automobile traffic renders the spaces between houses less suitable for many social activities. The car also made suburbanization possible, and with suburbanization came a greater distance between home and workplace, contributing to a reduction in neighborhood sociability. In urban planning, the boundary between indoors and outdoors is typically transferred from a public or semipublic space to a private terrace. New public spaces are often commercial, most typically in the form of shopping malls. In addition, many neighborhoods have lost integrating institutions such as schools and grocery stores through rationalization, and the remaining institutions serve much larger areas than they did before. For example, the network of grocery stores has been dramatically restructured into a few large-scale supermarket chains. At the same time, immigrants from the Third World have opened many small businesses, particularly in central Oslo.

With rising general affluence came an increase in consumer goods in the home, rendering the home more attractive in relation the semi-private and semi-public spaces of the neighborhood. Household members work symbolically in order to transform market commodities into goods that belong to the moral space of the home. Television brings images from all over the world into the home and new technologies such as airplanes, cars, telephones, and personal computers, provide new opportunities to develop and maintain ties outside the neighborhood. It is now possible to converse from the home with relatives in distant places instead of visiting the next-door neighbors.

In spite of certain counteracting tendencies such as longer maternity leave, the new paternity leave, and increased numbers of retired people and people on disability pensions in many neighborhoods, I conclude that the material and organizational conditions for developing many-stranded social ties among households in the neighborhood have changed. The boundary between the private home and the neighborhood has been drawn more sharply. Whereas the home has become an even more important focus for privacy and intimacy,

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6 More people live close to their relatives in the capital city of Oslo than in any other place in Norway. Many people move to Oslo, but fewer people leave Oslo.

present conditions do not favor as much as before locally based social density, multiplexity of ties, informal information flow, practical support, or social control among neighbors. Thus the neighborhood is marginalized compared to the intensified intimacy of the home and to the rich and intensive social life in which many people engage with kin, friends, colleagues, and comembers of voluntary associations who live elsewhere. More than before, the neighborhood seems to be just one of several contexts for current identity formation and moral reasoning. Because of new opportunities to engage in social life outside the neighborhood, one could say that it has today become more of a *part-time society*.

Immigrants as a symbol of value pluralism and as providers of neighborhood service

Since the end of the 1960s, Third World immigration has become as salient part of the neighborhoods, especially in Oslo. Since the immigration ban imposed in 1975, newcomers to Norway are accepted only if they are experts in some area, family members (thanks to the family reunification program), students who have agreed to return home after they have completed their education, refugees, or asylum seekers. The immigrant proportion of the population, including refugees and asylum seekers, has increased steadily, from 2.0% in 1980 to 5.5% in 1998. In 1970, 6% of the immigrant population came from Asia, Africa, and Latin America; in 1998 that figure was 49.5%.

Between 1977 and 1998, 109 000 foreign citizens became Norwegian citizens.[7] Their countries of origin are many, with the largest number originating from Pakistan, followed by Sweden, Denmark, and Vietnam. One-third of all immigrants, and 41% of non-Western immigrants, live in Oslo,[8] where their presence is highly visible, particularly in some of the inner city neighbor-

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7 One can become a Norwegian citizen after having lived continuously in Norway for the seven years previous to applying.

8 The source for all the figures in this paragraph is Bjertnæs 2000. Since 1994, the official statistical analyses in Norway use the following definitions: «The population of immigrants comprises persons with two parents born abroad. The population of immigrants include first generation immigrants who have themselves immigrated, and second generation immigrants, who are born in Norway from two parents born abroad. (Bjertnæs 2000: 10, translated from the Norwegian, italics as in the original). The statistics also distinguish between 'immigrants' from 'Western countries' (Western Europe, USA, Canada, and Oceania) and 'non-Western countries' (Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa, Central America, and South America). Turkey is classified among the non-Western countries.

hoods.[9] Together with a more differentiated educational system, consumerism, tourism, and general mobility, the presence of immigrants both contributes to and symbolizes an increasing *pluralization of norms* in Norwegian neighborhoods. If they ever could, neighbors can no longer take for granted that they share the same values concerning sociability, maintenance standards, and aesthetic criteria. On the one hand the pluralization of ways of life is a central part of the definition and attraction of urban life, both historically and presently. By definition, cities comprise people with different values and life styles, implying that they define and draw the boundaries around their privacy in different ways. On the other hand, pluralization is often experienced as a problem that must be overcome because it seems to threaten the social order and trust that neighbors need to develop in relation to each other.

As we shall see in the following section, immigrants also provide an important base for the recruitment of labor to neighborhood service concerning repairs, maintenance, and cleaning.

9 Many non-Western immigrants work in unskilled and semiskilled occupations, as taxi drivers, hotel personnel, and cleaners, doing many of the jobs that Norwegians no longer want to apply for. Educated immigrants often experience difficulties acquiring positions to fit their educational level. Even if the relative number of immigrants is smaller than in countries such as Sweden, Germany, and France, the debates are extensive and polarized. 'Immigrant' is usually a code word for 'non-Western immigrant'. The groups of political extremists (such as self-defined racists and Neo-Nazis) are small, comprising only a few hundred individuals (Bjørgo 1997, 1998; Fangen 1998), and on several occasions, thousands of people have demonstrated publicly against the actions of these marginal groups. Yet anti-immigrant sentiments are strong. The Progressive Party (Fremskrittspartiet) – a right-wing populist party fighting for lower taxes, fewer regulations, increased funding for eldercare, a larger police force, and a more restrictive immigration policy – can be compared to the Freiheitspartei in Austria and to the Front National in France. In January 2003, it was chosen in the opinion polls by 30% of the population, and is presently one of the political parties with the strongest endorsement in Norway. However, the leaders of the Progressive Party do not use explicit Nazi, neo-Nazi, or traditional racist arguments – merely what has been termed 'new racist' or 'cultural fundamentalist' arguments in which 'culture' now replaces the notion of 'race'.

2

Working as a *vaktmester*

The concept of the French *concierge* can be interpreted as a typically urban institution, developed to manage pluralism by maintaining historically and culturally specific ways of balancing surveillance and privacy. The most important task of the *concierge* is to keep track of people's comings and goings. According to Lars Gulbrandsen and Ulf Torgersen (1978), two well-known researchers on Norwegian housing, Norway has no real counterpart to the French *concierge* and the Russian *dvornik*. They discuss this observation in the context of changes in the Norwegian housing market, and argue that the growth of cooperative housing and owner-tenant housing in Norway at the expense of tenant housing can be explained by what they see as the strength of the Norwegian smallholder tradition and of people's accompanying yearning for secure possessions. They believe that the lack of a *concierge* functions as yet another example of the influence of the smallholder tradition, which they say operates even in urban life – an opinion which, no doubt, has some basis in fact. Nevertheless, in the early stages of urbanization, a function called *portner* (porter or 'opener of the gate') existed on a few private estates, not as a primary position, but an additional job for someone who was otherwise employed (*Oslo og omegn vaktmesterforening* 1960: 459). More widespread, both historically and currently, is the role of the *vaktmester*.[10] A Norwegian *vaktmester* plays the role that in the USA is called a janitor and in England a caretaker or house porter. Etymologically, the word *vaktmester* means 'master of the guard' or 'master of care' (in French, *maître gardien*).

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10 In my examination of the role of the *vaktmester*, I rely especially on two booklets from the celebrations of the anniversaries of the union in Oslo – the 25th anniversary in 1960 (Oslo og omegn vaktmesterforening 1960), and the 50th anniversary in 1985 (Oslo og omegn vaktmesterforening 1985). In the present text these two publications are abbreviated to '1960' and '1985'. In addition, I have read research reports, brochures and magazines from the housing cooperative, searched on the Internet, interviewed three senior experts on research on housing, and (by means of an assistant) interviewed the leader of a large service center.

His role is to take care of the building and its immediate environment, with an emphasis on the technological aspects.

The position of *vaktmester* developed with urbanization in the second half of the nineteenth century, the person filling that role being the representative of the owner in relation to the residents. In the beginning, the role was associated with the large blocks of rented apartments in the inner city, but with the changing housing market, the occupation became associated with the cooperative housing estates in the outskirts of the city and with the owner-occupied private apartment buildings in the inner city.

In the capital of Oslo, the *vaktmesters* organized their own union in 1935 – the year the first labor government was established in Norway. Written as a history of success and emphasizing the many achievements, the development of this work role is described in two booklets from the perspective of the union. In the beginning, the *vaktmester* was often a former plumber or a ship's engineer (*maskinist*) (1985: 51) who started doing this work because he needed somewhere for him and his family to live. He had no special apartment in the building he serviced, but lived in one of the regular apartments, usually on the first floor where he would be accessible to the other residents and close to the boiler room in the basement. Near or in the boiler room he often had at his disposal a small space, a mixture of office and workshop, where he kept his tools and the necessary supply of light bulbs and other things that he needed to do the maintenance work. Except for the fact that the other residents could call on him there, his apartment seems to have been as private as the other apartments in the building.

Union work among the *vaktmesters* was regarded as particularly difficult, because they were "dealing with one employer for each member."[11] During the first years of its existence, the union worked hard to establish an agreement (*tariff*) for the *vaktmesters*, stipulating work hours, days off, vacation, and wages. They won three weeks of vacation before World War II, for which they held a celebration (*Oslo og omegn vaktmesterforening* 1960: 19). In 1959, the union bought its own vacation home (1960:70).

The union also worked to protect the job by developing standardized education. Beginning in 1920, the National Institute of Technology held evening courses on the technicalities of maintaining boilers. In 1953, the municipality of Oslo established the first six-week evening school (1960: 54, 1985: 32-33), which consisted of three theoretical and one practical component spread over 234 hours. The theoretical part involved the maintenance of boilers, elevators, and water and sewage systems; building maintenance, cleaning, and painting;

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11 A study group was established in 1936. In 1938 a separate group for wives of the members was established; they worked, in particular, for the vacation home.

tending the garden; writing reports to the owner; completing official forms; showing the apartments to prospective tenants; controlling for bugs; disinfecting; enforcing house rules; providing statistics of consumption; collecting debts; and a section entitled "treatment of people". The practical part of the course consisted of working with different kinds of boilers and heating installations. (1960: 54- 55).[12] The time and degree of specification shown in Appendix I is an indication of the importance of the various topics.

In 1968, a full-fledged school was established in Oslo, with a curriculum sanctioned by the Ministry of Education. The subjects do not vary appreciably from those of the evening course: water, heating, sanitary installations, oil-fired central heating, low voltage and power currents, building maintenance, laundry installations, cleaning, legal matters pertaining to housing, fire instructions, first aid, civil defense regulations, tending of parks and gardens (*grøntanlegg*), the Norwegian language, and themes from the social sciences. (1985: 32). By 1985 the school had been established also in Stavanger, Drammen, Bergen, Trondheim, Kristiansund, and Ålesund.

One way of approaching the *vaktmester* as an institution is to examine its representation in popular culture, where the tensions between service and control are particularly visible. Judging from book titles that include the word *vaktmester*, this word serves as a positive metaphor for someone who maintains and protects. But there are also some negative aspects of meaning, reflecting what is seen as an unreasonable focus on social control.Two popular comedians on Norwegian television have created different caricatures of the *vaktmester*. One, Trond Viggo Torgersen, is clearly a member of the working class, and dresses in an unbecoming brown frock with a belt from which dangle his main symbol of power – keys. He constantly tries to obstruct whatever is happening in his building by referring to the regulations of his union. The other *vaktmester***,** Robert Stoltenberg as Roy Narvestad in the sit-com *Borettsslaget* (The Housing Cooperative), wears less bizarre attire, but is always butting his nose into other people's affairs in the name of the rules of the cooperative. The comic aspects of both these characters rely on their rigidity and their orientation toward some imaginary rules and regulations, rather than to the task and the situation at hand.

The *vaktmester* role used to be filled almost exclusively by men, and to a large extent still is, in spite of a well-known fictional example to the contrary[13] and non-fictional examples of female caretakers. Technical knowl-

12 See also Appendix I.

13 In two well-known Norwegian books for children first published in the 1970s (Vestly 1975, 1976), the protagonist, Guro, is a little girl who lives with her mother, Erle. They move to the city of Oslo from the countryside. Erle had planned to work as a housemaid, but instead

edge, being handy, and doing as opposed to talking have been and to a large extent still are valued aspects of masculinity in Norway, particularly in working-class social circles, but also among middle-class men.

Sociality and social control as secondary effects

As evidenced in the curriculum of the *vaktmester* school, the focus is on technical components rather than human components of the role. Over the years, new technologies have removed some tasks and complicated others, leading to specialization. New security gadgets make it possible to control the door mechanically from the apartments, and computer technologies are increasingly used for heating and heating control. The use of technology is largely motivated by rationalization and specialization – as ideology and practice. Nevertheless, it seems that the overall definition of the tasks has changed relatively little. At the same time, the human aspects are somehow there, in the past and in the present, usually presented as something secondary, more like prodigious side effects than as part of the serious job to be done. For example, it is said that the *vaktmester* should contribute to the social aspects of the environment (*et sosialt miljø*) (1985:5), and that he has to be 'somebody who knows human beings' (*menneskekjenner*) (1985: 11). The following is an excerpt of a talk on Norwegian radio in 1947. Some ambivalence in relation to the social aspects can be discerned – both humorous pride and detachment:

What are the criteria for a suitable applicant to a *vaktmester* position? In one sense, the *vaktmester* is the main person in the tenement – the liaison between the company and the tenants and among the tenants. In the event of a dispute, the *vaktmester* hears both sides of the argument. It may be an elderly couple on the third floor who are irritated by a noisy child on the fourth floor or someone on another floor who is constantly having parties, keeping the other tenants awake until all hours. In such circumstances, the *vaktmester* must act politely and with authority, but must also be a diplomat and somebody who understands people. The importance of being able to understand people is particularly central in relation to the children. How is he to tackle them? Is he to be the angry watchman continually tracking their movements, or is he to be a mate? As much as possible, he must, of course, be a mate. Children in urban tenements don't always enjoy ideal conditions. They have little space, and so much is not allowed. The grass lawn and verges are for decoration, and it is forbidden to make a noise and to play in the cellars and

starts working as a vaktmester in a co-operative housing estate. As a part of the feminism of the 1970s, Erle moved from a disappearing feminine role to a masculine domain.

stairways. The *vaktmester* has to be as sympathetic and understanding as possible toward children, though at times his patience may be put to a hard test. In return, he can often receive the help of the children with a number of small things.

The *vaktmester* does not only have to mind children, he also has to mind the grown ups. He must ensure that they comply with the house rules and the rental contract. In return he has to serve them as much as his time allows him to do – to lend a hand when a faucet is dripping or a tenant has forgotten his house key, for example.[14]

This quote illustrates the emphasis on order and discipline in the role of the *vaktmester*, as well as the tensions between service and control.[15] He must be diplomatic when telling the residents what they are and are not allowed to do.[16] The text exemplifies widespread ideas in Norway about the ideal childhood. Compared to France, for example, Norway can be described as a more child-friendly society, with a strong focus on play as both an activity form and a way of learning. According to many people, the best place for playing is somewhere 'out in nature' (Gullestad 1984 / 2002). But as we shall see in the last section of this article, the close association between childhood and nature is now changing. In addition, the quote demonstrates the pronounced emphasis on balanced reciprocity in much of Norwegian social life. In relation to both adults and children, the *vaktmester* stresses what he himself will receive in return for providing service.

Leaving the 'crofter's contract'

As described by the union, the *vaktmester's* main problem was that he had to be available 24 hours a day: "He has hundreds of employers, and each and every one of them feels entitled to occupy him more or less at all hours of the day" (1960: 22). The 'hundreds of employers' were the residents of the building(s) he serviced. The first chair of the union therefore saw "how difficult the situation was, and how miserably many of his colleagues lived. Personal contracts and agreements tied (*svinebandt*) them down to their positions. They had almost no leisure time, and usually the wife had to support her husband by assisting him" (1960: 37). The historical narratives of the union con-

14 Terje Biseth Olsen, in a talk on Norwegian radio in 1947, reprinted in 1985: 52-53, translated from Norwegian.

15 According to Erling Annaniassen, a vaktmester in Bergen (as opposed to Oslo) had the keys to all the apartments, which allowed him a measure of control.

16 In cooperative housing estates, the chair of the local cooperative often acted as a little king, with the vaktmester as his assistant.

tain memories of unreasonable demands in the middle of the night and at other odd times. In the memories of one *vaktmester*, the class differences between him and the people he serviced are emphasized. Linking unreasonable behavior to a difference of social class somehow seems to make the behavior appear even more unreasonable, and the narratives, one may suppose, strengthened solidarity among the *vaktmesters*. The following is a text included in the union's anniversary publication from 1960. It is here quoted in its entirety in translation from Norwegian:

> It's well past midnight and all is quiet throughout the house – nothing stirring, not even a mouse! And then that damned telephone rings and grabbing the phone as if in a drunken stupor, I mumble, "Yes, what is it?" "Oh goodness gracious! Is this the *vaktmester*? Are you already in bed, because it took so long before you answered the phone! You must come here as quickly as possible. There's someone in the hallway." Before I can gather my senses, the phone has been hung up, but not before I recognized that staccato-tone of that priggish bossy-type, Miss W. I throw on some clothes and rush to the doorway, fully prepared to grab a thief that I had caught in the act. But it was only the daughter of her neighbor who was caught in the act of a prolonged goodnight kiss in the hallway. And there was Miss W., peeking out the kitchen door, witness to the episode, commenting tersely, "Well, I never! One hears so much about immorality these days that I'm not surprised".
>
> I amble back to my apartment, where the whole family is now awake. "What's going on?" they ask in unison. But peace soon descends again. I had scarcely returned to my bed when that infernal doorbell rings again – incessantly. My wife jogs me: "Hallo. Now it's ringing like Notre Dame. Just get up and ask what the h… is going on". I drag myself to the window and glance outside. "Hallo, what is it?" There stands a man – slightly tipsy. "Are you the *vaktmester*?" I affirm this. "Can y' tell me if Missy Hansen lives 'ere? She 'n I were together at this dinner party and then she jus' dis'peared all of a sudd'n and I ain't got no cash on me." "Sorry, you've made a mistake," I say, pretty fed up by this time. "There's no Miss Hansen living here."
>
> Following this intermezzo, it took a while before I dozed off again. The last time I glanced at the clock it was about two-thirty. Quarter to six and the alarm clock rings; I must admit that I am not in the least enthusiastic about rising just now. But duty calls. And I shall be late. I'll get the fire going first. Seven o'clock, and then I must open the scullery doors. It's just at that moment that factory manager, D., comes shuffling along in his dressing gown and slippers with his lap-dog bitch and a couple of powerful dogs. He shakes the door – I am still a couple of doors away. He curses and cusses as the door is still locked – and it's three minutes past seven!

Nine o'clock. Home to breakfast. Surprisingly I manage to eat in peace. But then the mail arrives – a letter from the lawyer, the business manager of the company. Major Sharp had complained that I had not been very co-operative in doing a job for his wife. The lawyer advised me to show more willingness and to fix that griddle Mrs. Sharp had complained about. Well, there's a story behind this! The Major's wife's oven griddle was damaged, but she did have another that was a shade too wide and a shade too deep. Surely the *vaktmester* could file a bit here and a bit there for a few cents so it would fit? My recommendation was that she purchase a new one for a 'buck and a bit' or so. But no, I had to file that griddle until it fit – two hours' work, and five blades for the file. With a caustic smile, the major's wife would recompense me with 75 cents, but upon my protest graciously condescended to pay me a bit more next time a problem arises. A bit of tidying up in the cellar, some small repairs and so forth, and then it was two o'clock already. Late lunch, but no time to eat in peace, as there was a message from Mrs. Olsen, wife of the wholesaler, to come quickly, as she needed my assistance in the loft! When I arrived, I was given a proper tongue-lashing. "Good heavens, is it ever possible to get hold of the *vaktmester*? I sent a message, but no one's ever at home. The *vaktmester* is never there when I need him!" I protested mildly that I had been busy in the cellar and that my wife had been out shopping and perhaps even that was a mistake. Mrs. Olsen yielded not an inch and I had to guarantee that someone would be there from now on. And all that this madam wanted was that I fetch three sets of women's underwear that were hanging in the loft – madam was busy doing her laundry!

However, this was a reminder that the *vaktmester* should always be available for the shareholding tenants of the company, but it was erroneous to think that he was 'only' the *vaktmester*. The *vaktmester* consists of himself, his wife and any children they might have – all of whom must be available as required (for 100–120 tenants, their spouses, and their maids). And yet the saying goes, "No one can serve two masters!"

I continued with 'lunch' until 3 o'clock, but by now it had been cold for a long time. Afterwards, a little nap, but immediately one of the board members rang – if I could only help him to carry a wardrobe up to the loft. Smiling, he observed that 'you *vaktmesters* have it alright if you can take an afternoon nap'. After this job was done, there were only the waste bins to clean out, and I strove to be finished with this early. I was going to play cards with the lads this evening. It was fortunate that I managed to make it on time at 8 p.m. We four – the plumber, the carpenter, the agent, and I – are a regular team. And how long was Adam in Paradise? At exactly nine-thirty my son arrived on his bike – I had to get home at once. Mrs. B had created a scene; there was something wrong with her water tap. Thus the evening was ruined for me and the lads.

When I got there to fix the thing, the daughter maintained that it had been leaking for a whole week, but that she had suddenly got a bout of migraine and it

> was torture to listen to that drip-drip-drip from the tap. Sorry to have interrupted your leisure time, she ventured cautiously, but it was really my fault as I should have arranged for a deputy when I was free.
>
> Little point in returning to the bridge table as it was now after 10 p.m., and no sane person would blame me for being a bit annoyed and grumpy. Then to bed, relatively early considering the circumstances. Hardly had I entered the Land of Nod when the door rang. Mrs. K. had forgotten her keys (third time this month). Of course the *vaktmester* could help her – and there was no charge.
>
> I return home once more, to bed and to continue my dreams …as is the lot of the *vaktmester's* pleasant and 'easy-going' life (1965:22–25).

Narratives such as this one supported the work of the union to break the tight links between the tenants and the *vaktmester,* in order to shield him from what they called a *husmannskontrakt* ('a crofter's contract').

The '*husmann' in' husmannsknontrakt'* means 'man of the house'. Between the eighteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, a system existed in Norway in which landless peasants were allowed to inhabit a house and to farm a tiny plot of land in exchange for working for the landlord when he needed it. These landless peasants were called *husmenn* (plural of *husmann*). Used about the *vaktmester*, this metaphor stresses the inequality in relation to the people he serviced, the drudgery of the *vaktmester's* work, and the lack of autonomy in the work situation. The same is implied in the expression 'to be at somebody's beck and call' (*stå på pinne*) at all hours of the day (1985: 5, 22). In the writings of the *vaktmester's* union, the liberation from 'the crofter's contract' is seen as its main achievement.

From dependent worker to professional service centers

The main direction of this change is now developed further. Both in the cooperative sector and in some new owner-occupant estates, 'service centers' (*servicesentraler*) have been established.[17] This is a new organizational structure, in which many *vaktmesters* work together to serve many buildings, rather than working alone to serve one or more buildings. The advantage, as it is seen by union members, is "regulated work hours, an independent position, good work environment, nice colleagues, a well equipped workshop" (1985: 53), as well as the "recruitment of people with different kinds of experience and knowledge" (1985: 5). Odd Hågensen, a *vaktmester* in a cooperative

17 The first center was established at Oppsal in Oslo in 1975 (1985: 47).

housing estate, emphasized in a 1985 interview that he and his colleagues work every weekday from 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. They do not work on Saturdays or Sundays or in the evenings. The service center has an agreement with a firm in town, and if something happns in the buildings outside regular work house, someone from that company takes care of problems that cannot wait until the next workday. They also do the necessary snow shoveling and plowing in the evenings and on weekends. The rest of the shoveling and sanding is done by the service center within the normal work day. "I think this is the future place of work for the *vaktmester*", Hågensen affirms in the interview. "In the service center we can share the jobs, specialize, and have access to good equipment. In this way we save money for the residents, and the work is done quickly. That this works well, is demonstrated by the stability of the boys – this is a job we thrive on and which we want to keep" (1985:56).[18] There is no information in the article about the residents' reactions to the service centers – if they miss the more personal and flexible services of the traditional role, for example. It is easy to imagine that when the *vaktmester* serves more people, the relationships between the *vaktmester* and the tenants become more distant.

Some large estates with individual ownership of each apartment have also established service centers. For this article, an interview was conducted with the leader of one of these centers in the summer of 2000 at his place of work.[19] Altogether, ten employees work at the center: one master builder, one electrician, one painter, two all-rounders ("with no specialist knowledge, but they are handy and practical people"), two cleaners, one secretary, and one accountant. The division of tasks is based on traditional and well-established gender roles: the two cleaners and the secretary are women; the other seven workers are men. Yet despite the gender mix, the leader calls his employees "the boys" (*gutta*). One of the all-rounders originally comes from former Yugoslavia and the two cleaners from Thailand and Iran. Thus the ethnic division is also fairly typical, with minority people doing the least specialized tasks. The leader of the service center is particularly proud of the fact that he writes specified task descriptions for each employee each week. "In this way we save a lot of money for the residents." The center also does private maintenance work for the residents, but then they charge NOK 200 (about EUR 24) per hour.

When the interviewer asked if the work at the center has some social aspects, the leader answered brusquely "we don't have the time to chat with people", thereby strongly distancing himself from any social tasks, which he

18 The service center is portrayed as a model for the future in a magazine from the national cooperative association (Norske boligbyggelags landsforbund) in 1994.

19 Frida Gullestad conducted the interview.

may have associated with feminine gossip. Nevertheless, a man in a wheelchair entered during the interview, chatted for a while, and left. The leader explained that this man had been isolated until he was included in the work at the service center. He now performs certain tasks, such as fetching parcels at the post office for the other people living there. When the interviewer then asked if they also help old and handicapped people with small tasks, he answered that they help handicapped people with such tasks as changing light bulbs. Thus the social aspects are no doubt present, as unacknowledged side effects of the more practically oriented responsibilities.

As mentioned, the service center relies on a firm in town to do the necessary work outside regular work hours. In the telephone directory for Oslo, one can now find 55 private companies offering various *vaktmester* tasks in the city. Each task is clearly defined and individually priced. Urban dwellers can thus pick and choose from a menu of typical *vaktmester* services. Because the tendency in the service center is to specify all tasks, the main difference between the service centers and these private firms is that the latter must be available *at all times*. The idea of service when people need it necessarily implies to be 'at the beck and call of others'. When some *vaktmesters* withdraw from being available, they create a niche for new companies. But because the tasks are specified, and because there are many employees, each employee in these firms is not at the beck and call of others 24 hours a day. The service is effective, but apparently less personal. As will become evident in the last part of this article, small associations of owner-occupants also use these companies to perform specific tasks.

A new specialization: Social caretaker (*miljøvaktmester*)

Recently an additional *vaktmester* role has emerged. The social functions have become a specialization. I first learned of this development in a brochure from the Norwegian Building Research Institute (*Norges byggforskningsinstitutt*) (Krogh 1999) directed at people living in what is called "multicultural housing" (*flerkulturelle bomiljøer*), in an attempt to teach them how to deal with conflicts with an "ethnic dimension." In the brochure it is said that if the co-operative building association can afford it, a 'social *vaktmester*' (*miljøvaktmester*) should be hired to deal with these types of conflict. *Miljøvaktmester* literally means '*vaktmester* of the (social and physical) surroundings', which I have translated into 'social caretaker'. The social caretaker is, it is said in the brochure, "something between an ordinary *vaktmester* and a social worker", with a special expertise in dealing with conflicts and creating harmonious conditions for the development of positive social rela-

tions among tenants with different experiences and interests. The inevitable tensions between conflict resolution and social control are not mentioned. As a role with few sanctions and resources, it can perhaps be compared to the new 'super caretaker' in England.

According to Susanne Søholt of the Norwegian Building Research Institute (see Ganapathy and Søholt 2000 and Søholt 1994), this specialization was developed in experimental projects in so-called troubled areas (*forsøksprosjekter i vanskeligstilte boligområder*). [20] With its explicit emphasis on dialogue and conflict management, both women and men have been recruited to this job. The other parts of the job are seen as men's work, but when social skills are emphasized, women are also both interested and qualified. At present the social caretakers do not necessarily have any particular education. When recruiting candidates, it has been a question of finding the right person rather than a person with a particular educational background.

In the beginning, local project leaders of the experimental projects in the so-called troubled areas were given the title of social *vaktmester*. They had to be able to create feelings of trust among the locals, to create and maintain feelings of community among people, and to do minor practical tasks (but not technologically complicated tasks such as repairing an elevator). In contrast to the technically oriented *vaktmester*, the social caretaker is supposed to talk to the residents and arrange for the organization of social life, providing a basis for positive relations among the residents in their roles as neighbors. The work description focuses on social maintenance, in addition to the usual technical tasks. However the social caretakers do not seem to have many sanctions or economic means at their disposal. The members of each local housing cooperative have to pay for their social caretaker (*miljøvaktmester*), in the same way as they pay for an ordinary *vaktmester*. Oslo University College has recently started courses in social work in the neighborhood that may turn out to be relevant for this job. Nevertheless, because this is an academic education, there is a risk that the students will seek office jobs in the municipality rather than accept to work at the 'grassroots' level in specific neighborhoods.

Volunteer centers (*Frivillighetssentraler*)

It is worth noting that over the past few years 250 local 'volunteer centers' have been established in Norway. They organize the exchange of services

20 I thank Susanne Søholt, researcher at the Norwegian Building Research Institute, for the information in this and the following paragraph.

(such as minor repairs and homework assistance for children) without the transfer of money. A few of these bartered services could be regarded as substitutes for the services of a *vaktmester*. Nevertheless, even if the volunteer centers are locally based, they bring together individual people who are scattered over a much larger area than the neighborhood.

3

A building in a ‘upper middle-class area’ in Oslo

In this section I again change perspective and level of analysis in order to enter one building to study the organization of tasks concerning cleaning, maintenance, sociability, safety, and conflict resolution among neighbors.[21] As we shall see, there is no *vaktmester* in the building, and only two specified tasks are allocated to a professional *vaktmester* company. Other tasks are distributed among a variety of people, from professional craftspeople to the residents themselves. I begin with a detailed description of the physical structures and the social positions of the residents. This is background information for a discussion of the distribution of tasks and the typical conflicts it involves.

The building is located in one of the most prestigious areas of Oslo. It is close to a street with many types of shops and services. In local parlance,[22] particularly in local real estate parlance, the building is located in “one of the best parts of Oslo”, on the corner of a street, which I shall rename Garden Street. The cross-street is a street with more traffic and no front gardens, which I will call Plain Street. Garden Street consists primarily of four- and five-storey buildings that were built at the end of the nineteenth century. In front of the building on which I now focus is a garden lined by a wrought iron fence, with a hedge on the street side. The building contains eight spacious apartments, privately owned by the occupants, a workshop in the basement facing Plain Street, and a picturesque old stable in the back yard. There are nine proprietors and eight owner-occupants in the apartments, plus one absentee landlord who rents the workshop to a plumber and the stable to one former and one present resident owner. One of them – a musician and composer

21 The interpretations in this section are based on two years of observation (from January 2001 to January 2003), which I have conducted in this building and in the meetings of its association. During this period I have also had access to the rules of the association and all the documents the board has sent to its members.

22 This is particularly so in the rhetoric of the real estate agencies when they advertise apartments in this area.

of pop music – uses this rented space as a recording studio and the other uses her space to store merchandise (mostly objects for interior decoration) and occasionally as a sales room.

Entering the building

There are two entrances to the building. One is the main entrance from Garden Street. The other is an entrance from the back yard – from the more heavily trafficked Plain Street and this entrance provides access to the kitchen stairways. In order to use the main entrance, one enters through an opening in the wrought iron fence with no swinging gate and walks a few meters along a semipublic pathway. Parallel to and on each side of the pathway is a low fence with a small gate that opens onto the front garden. The front garden is thus divided into two gardens by the pathway. And, as I will demonstrate, the gardens, which are simultaneously private and public spaces, are infused with complex meanings. After walking a few meters along the pathway, one mounts nine stairs to arrive at the entrance door. To enter through the front door, one needs a key or must be 'buzzed in' by means of an intercom by a person in one of the apartments. To the right of the front door, each apartment is represented by a doorbell button marked with one or two surnames. In contrast to the situation 30 years ago, the front door of an apartment building in a Norwegian city is almost always locked.

So far, so good. One enters a spacious hallway that is decorated with pretty, old tiles on the floor, marble parapets, decorative marble pillars, and beautiful paintings on the ceiling of the third floor. In this semiprivate space many tenants greet other people in the hallway, even if they do not know them. In the hallway on the ground floor, there is a series of letterboxes, one for each apartment. The mailboxes are big enough for letters, but not for parcels, which must be fetched individually by the residents at the nearest post office.[23] Both the mail carriers and the people who deliver the newspapers are usually entrusted with the keys to the buildings. The mail is placed directly into the mailboxes, and the daily newspapers are set on the doormat in front of each apartment every morning and every afternoon. On the ground floor one can also observe the two double doors to the apartments on that floor. Sometimes a message to the residents is taped to one of the pillars: a reminder from the chair of the board, perhaps, that the boiler has started working for the winter season and that the residents must therefore air their radiators, or a

23 The postal service has been privatized, and it is now also possible to have parcels delivered to one's door. But it is still necessary to be at home to receive them or to arrange for somebody else to be there.

letter from new tenants apologizing for any inconvenience that their remodeling may cause.

To enter the private space of the individual apartment, one must again pass through a locked door. But before we do that, let us return outside and walk through the entrance from Plain Street to the back yard. We must then walk around the corner of the building to the side street, passing all eight cars of the residents that are parked, each in its allotted space, on the broad sidewalk. The parking space is separated from the rest of the sidewalk by a metal chain. Behind the parking space we see the entrance to the plumber's shop. The gate to the back yard is a large locked door at the end of the building. Through the door is a covered gateway where four large garbage containers are located to the left – one for special waste, one for paper and cardboard, and the remaining two for everything else.[24] The residents bring their garbage to the containers, and being entrusted with the keys to the gate, the men from the garbage company fetch it from there. In the gateway, the locked door to the kitchen stairway to the B apartments (see below) is located to the right. This means that from the B apartments the residents can bring their garbage down without getting wet or getting their shoes dirty when it is raining. Formerly, before the Second World War, the kitchen stairs were used by delivery boys[25] and house maids[26]. Now it is used by the residents for garbage, to reach a small storage room on each floor (the former toilet before the time of water closets), and to reach the locked storage bins in the large open attic. Each household is allocated one or two storage bins in the attic and one storage room in the basement. From the covered gateway one enters the back yard that features the former stable straight ahead, a simple wooden shed for the bicycles in the corner to the right of the stable, and the locked doors to the kitchen stairways of the A apartments (see below) and the common basement further to the right. Thus, from an A apartment one must go outside to dispose of the household garbage. The basement is a dismal place, containing locked storage rooms as well as various other rooms, including a room for the boiler. The

24 If one wants to further differentiate garbage for recycling purposes, one must go to specific places in the city to dispose of glass and metal objects in separate containers.

25 Today, people who deliver goods always use the front entrance.

26 Since World War II maids have virtually disappeared from the Norwegian work force. Some households have house-cleaning assistance a few hours a week or every other week. In spite of some reluctance towards personal service of this kind, the practice seems to be growing, because more women are working outside the home and because immigrants, in particular, constitute a new supply of people who are willing to do this kind of service work. Somewhat comparable to the private vaktmester companies, housecleaning assistance to private homes is provided by a plethora of firms with names such as CityMaid or Cleaning (Renhold). In addition there is a large, informal, black market.

ceiling in the basement hallway is covered by an intricate system of old pipes and faucets.

Apart from the stable and a nice tree in front of it, the back yard is not particularly charming. Except for a few times in the summer, when the residents have used the back yard to service pre-dinner cocktails, this area is seldom used: the children rarely play there, and nobody uses it except for coming and going to visit the stable, to fetch the bicycles, to dispose of the garbage, or to go to the basement. Many years ago, one of the ex-proprietors tended pots of flowers in the back yard, and any traces of this endeavor (a few large broken pots) were removed only a few years ago. There has been some talk of buying garden furniture, decorating the back yard, and installing some ball-playing equipment for the children, but in January 2003 nothing has been done.

The apartments

On each floor there is one larger 'A' apartment (about 200 m^2) and one smaller B apartment (about 170 m^2), except for on the ground floor, where the B apartment is the larger of the two. The A apartments face Garden Street. The B apartments face Plain Street. Each apartment on the ground floor has a garden out front. The others have a balcony, the A apartments having a larger one than the B apartments. In each apartment, four or five living rooms and one or two bedrooms face the street; whereas the kitchen, hall, bathroom, and one or two bedrooms face the back yard.

All apartments originally had a small maid's room (*pikeværelse*) close to the kitchen. But because the building is more than one hundred years old, many changes have been made over the years. One or two bathrooms and water closets have been installed in every apartment, usually close to the kitchen, using part of the former 'maid's room,' part of the narrow hallway close to the door to the kitchen stairs, and, in some cases, part of a bedroom. The kitchens have also been modernized at different times, and the apartments differ primarily as a function of how and when all of this was done. Some apartments are in need of further refurbishing and some have recently been totally renovated. In the 1970s, fashion went against high ceilings; therefore the ceiling has been lowered in some apartments, hiding the stucco. In one apartment, large dark brown wooden beams have even been installed in the ceiling to provide a different and more 'rustic' effect.

The apartments were previously heated by a huge 'Swedish stove' – a sumptuously decorated stove made of glazed off-white earthenware, which were replaced by radiators when the boiler was installed in the basement. The ceilings used to be decorated with stucco trimming and a rosette. Some apart-

apartments still have the glazed stove and the original stucco, and some have been returned to a condition similar to the original.

The apartments vary not only concerning the level of renovation, but also in the individual tastes demonstrated by the interior decor, due to the age differences of the residents; their stage in life (influencing when most of the furniture was bought); their life style (bohemian or conventional); and their education, financial situation, and personal style. The differences can be exemplified by an interest in minimalism and modernist design (especially among the younger couples) versus a darker and more sumptuous bourgeois style with heavy and comfortable furniture and an abundance of objects. Both styles, and any combinations of them, can be accomplished with cheaper or more expensive objects. These stylistic differences are exemplified in many ways. Walls can be painted white or off-white or in striking red, blue, and yellow, or can be covered by expensive wall paper in so-called natural colors; windows can be curtainless to emphasize their beautiful framing, or they can have simple white or off-white curtains or rich arrangements of patterned materials; decorations can be antiques or new objects made to look traditional (for example modernist designer lamps, old chandeliers, and new versions of old-looking chandeliers); artwork ranges from old paintings to wall decorations that are bought in frame stores; some apartments have almost no books and others are lined with bookshelves; some have a piano and some do not (in January 2003 there were four pianos in the building). To some extent the differences are merely a matter of style; however they also express differences of cultural and economic class. Some of the interiors cost more than others, and some take part in the professional knowledge of designers, artists, museum curators, and art historians, and thus, in Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) sense, exemplify cultural capital.

Like most Norwegians, the residents value privacy. But living in an apartment building makes one dependent on others, and vulnerable to occasional invasions of noises, smells, dust, and liquid. There is minimal insulation between each floor, so sounds of running and jumping children and women's high heels can easily be heard. The vent ducts sometimes channel smells from one apartment to another, advertising what the neighbors intend to eat for dinner. Furthermore, when new residents are remodeling their apartment, both dust and cement water may trickle down to those who live underneath.

The people

In January 2003, the owner-occupants were three middle-aged couples with grown-up children who have left home and five families with children of dif-

ferent ages. One middle-aged couple has lived in the building since 1976; he runs a bar and she runs a small one-woman beauty parlor. Another middle-aged couple has lived in the building since 1991; he is a retired self-employed business man and she has stayed at home to raise their four children. The third and younger couple has lived in the building since the mid-1990s. She is a pop singer and he is a musician, and they have four school-aged children; three are hers from a former marriage and one is his. Since 1997, the remaining five of the eight apartments have changed owners. The first apartment was sold in 1997 by a couple with one small child; the husband is a middle-aged college professor starting his second family and the wife is the chief accountant of a large firm. They moved because they wanted their child to grow up outside the city center, in a single-family house with a garden. Their dream was that the child should "get in touch with nature." Their apartment was purchased by two middle-aged academics; he is a university professor and she is a senior researcher. The second apartment was sold in 1999 by an eighty-year-old widow with a small pension who created a nest egg for herself by buying a smaller, cheaper, and more practical place to live. Her apartment was purchased by a couple with a small child; he is a novelist and full time writer and she is a medical student. The third apartment was sold in 2000 because the owners divorced after more than thirty years of marriage. Both of them are artists, and they sold the apartment to a couple in their thirties with a young child; he runs a small computer programming firm with two employees and she is a physiotherapist. The fourth apartment was sold in the summer of 2002 by a middle-aged couple; he is an office worker and she was a part time sales clerk before she became ill and had to go on a disability pension. She occasionally imports decorative objects that she sells on specific days from the old stable in the back yard. They, too, sold their apartment in order to create an economic nest egg by buying a cheaper home. It was purchased by a couple with five children, four of whom still live at home and run a restaurant in Oslo. The fifth apartment was sold in the fall of 2002 by an elderly couple because her rheumatism no longer allowed her to mount the stairs to the third floor easily; he is the retired manager of a large company and she stayed at home to raise their children. The buyers are a couple with three school-aged children; he is a business executive and she is currently a student.

Over the past five years the prices of the apartments have virtually doubled. Having steadily increased until the summer of 2002, the prices now seem to be leveling off. The last three apartments were sold for NOK 5.2 million (630 000 EUR), NOK 4.3 million (521 000 EUR) and NOK 4.1 million (497 000 Euros) respectively.

Thus turnover has been high, and there has been little time for the present residents to establish relationships with each other. Yet there is much social

interaction among several of the residents and especially among the couples with children. Because most of the adults are working or studying, there is relatively little time to engage in house maintenance, but more money to pay for various services. Over the past five years the average income in the building seems to have become somewhat higher and the average age is considerably younger. In January 2003 there were 12 children and young people living in the building. This would seem to indicate – and I think it does – that a change is taking place, at least among certain parts of the Norwegian population, concerning the value of bringing up children in an urban environment. To more and more people, it seems, the city is seen as a good place to raise children.[27] Four out of eight couples are formally married, the other four live in stable common-law unions *(samboerskap*), which is common in Scandinavia.[28]

Among the present eight couples who are owner-occupants, one of the sixteen has a family background from South Africa (originally from India), one from Iran, one from Sweden, and one from the USA. One could thus say that the building exhibits a certain multicultural variety. Nevertheless, the pluralism of life styles that manifests itself among the residents does not follow ethnic lines, suggesting that much of what is considered 'cultural' or 'ethnic' is a matter of social class. In this building, age, stage in the life cycle, aesthetic taste, relative affluence, and differences between a conventional versus a more bohemian life style are more prominent than is ethnicity. In terms of housing standards, the residents are, almost by definition, upper-middle class. For most of them the apartment is their most valuable possession. In terms of education, autonomy in the work situation, and access to money (income, investments, and inheritance), they represent the Norwegian middle-middle and upper-middle classes. Being typically middle-class, none of the residents possess specialized knowledge about house maintenance, and few of them are particularly handy and knowledgeable when it comes to repair work. Nevertheless, whereas women generally do not see it as their responsibility to develop these types of technical skills, men often feel that this is something they ought to be able to handle.

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27 One could, of course, also argue that it is because of egoism or narcissism that the couples remain in the city center after they have children. In that case, the argument would be that they stay on in spite of what they consider to be best for the children.

28 For three of the couples, the partners have the same surname; the partners of the other five couples have different last names.

The association of owners

The owner-occupants and the absentee landlord are organized into a board and an association – an 'administrative organ' – with articles of the association (*vedtekter*), with which the residents must comply. The board has a chair, an accountant, a secretary, and a substitute member (*varamann*), usually three men and one woman, all elected among the adult residents. The board meets relatively often, whereas the entire association usually meets three or four times a year, but at least once a year. Both adults in most apartments try to attend the association meetings, which take place in the home of the chair, where coffee and cakes are served. First names are normally used. The board prepares the meetings, but the members of the association make all important decisions, such as those about major repairs and improvements, communally. This building is too small to be administered professionally, yet too large to be managed by amateurs. With a building of this age, size, and complexity, it is difficult to evaluate what needs to be done and to negotiate appropriate deals with the specialist craftspeople who are hired to do the work. There are, therefore, some unhappy stories in the association. When the hallway was painted some years ago, for example, the painters used a poor quality paint that soon started to flake off. Another problem, recently discovered, is that the kitchen ventilators in two apartments and the kitchen fireplace in a third apartment are all illegally linked to the same vent duct.

Just as among the *vaktmesters*, the focus in the association is on practicalities, which is related to the masculine dominance in the board and to the technical complexity of the tasks. But the meetings in the association also give the residents a forum in which to get to know each other, and thus a ground for developing social relations if they choose to do so. To speak of practicalities can, to some extent, also be a way to talk about morality and community.

Minor repairs are covered by a monthly contribution by each member. All the owners pay NOK 1975 (about 240 EUR) a month (the amount has recently risen by 10%). The payments also cover building insurance, water fees, chimney sweeping, garbage collection, cable TV for all the residents, a small payment (NOK 6000 or about 730 EUR) for the board member who manages the accounts, payment to the certified public accountant who manages the accounts (NOK 6000 or about 730 EUR), occasional payments to remove the graffiti from one of the outer walls, payment to the *vaktmester* company that is hired to clear the snow and sand the sidewalk alongside the building after a snow fall and when it is slippery because of cold weather after rain, and, of course, repairs and improvements.

When major repairs are undertaken, the expenses are shared according to an established fraction, depending on the size of the apartment or share. Over

the past few years major repairs of the upper parts of one of the exterior walls have been undertaken. These repairs were so extensive that the owners each had to pay a large extra sum (8250 NOK or 1000 EUR) to cover the expenses. For both minor and major repairs the board usually hires specialist craftspeople. Thus many people are involved in the maintenance of the building.

The man who, together with his partner, has lived longest in the building, has for many years been the accountant member of the board, and he also takes care of the boiler. Because the boiler is old, its maintenance requires a great deal of work. He must order the fuel, see that the boiler is serviced, clean it, sweep the room, fill it with water twice a week, and perform other chores. Recently he has requested that another person in the building learn a little about the boiler and share the maintenance responsibility and that his accounting responsibilities be assumed by a professional firm. A few of the residents seldom pay their dues in time, causing him two problems: first, he must advance the money out of his own pocket and try to collect from his neighbors himself and, second, he is put in a position of having to be tough on his own neighbors, without having any effective sanctions. It is difficult to be a 'good neighbor' and a 'torpedo' at the same time. He has difficulties combining service and control when the residents do not comply with the rules. In the meeting of the association, however, the chair only said that the elected accountant no longer has the time to continue with his tasks.

Accordingly, the few people who do not pay in time are causing him to withdraw from the task, and all the owners will have to pay a higher monthly contribution to hire a professional firm. The complexity and the contradictions of this development confirms the more general trend that social control within personal relations is to some extent replaced by social control by means of the market.

The internal distribution of cleaning and maintenance

Simple maintenance tasks are performed by the residents. Some tasks, such as painting the stairs, tidying the back yard, and cleaning the attic, are done communally on specific agreed-upon days (*dugnad*). This does not happen often, however – only once over the past two years. Apartment dwellers are responsible for cleaning their part of the front and back stairs every other week. Two apartments share the front stairs, and because there are two back stairs, the residents of only one apartment is responsible for each part of the back stairs. A few of the residents have hired a house-cleaning assistant (who then also does the stairs), and one female neighbor has routinely cleaned the stairs for another neighbor for a small payment, but most residents clean their apartments and the stairs themselves. In the younger families, both men and

women, or sometimes a child, do the cleaning. Once a twelve-year-old boy had been assigned to clean the back stairs, and not knowing any better, he just threw a bucket of water down the stairs.

In the meetings of the association, there had been several discussions about whether or not the association should raise the monthly contribution in order to hire professional cleaners to do the front stairs. The proposal was first rejected because some of the residents had more time than money, and wanted to save money by doing it themselves. After they moved, the issue was again discussed; but there was still some resistance. There are two problems: because there is no water tap outside the apartments, the cleaners had to provide their own; and the association needed to choose between the formal and the informal market for such services. On the one hand, the association does not want to break the law by entering the informal market; on the other hand the price difference is extensive. Part of the reason for the resistance may also be the widespread feeling in Norway that it is morally wrong to pay others "to clean up one's own dirt", although this applies to private homes and not to work-places. Thus the semiprivate stairway constitutes ambiguous space. Nevertheless, in January 2003, the members of the association agreed to hire the same *vaktmester* company that does the snowplowing and sands the sidewalk to clean the front stairs.

The owners are also responsible for hosing down (twice a year), sweeping (more often), and shoveling outside the building (the tasks are influenced by seasonal variations: litter must be removed all year round, leaves in the fall, snow and ice in the winter, sand in the spring). Two apartments are responsible for the back yard, two for the entrance and the sidewalk on Garden Street, and two for the parking space and the sidewalk on the other side of the building. All owner-occupants – primarily men, but also women – perform these tasks themselves. As noted, sanding of the sidewalk is contracted out to a *vaktmester* company because it must be done when needed in order to prevent serious accidents. The other tasks can wait until the responsible person or household has the time. However, as we shall see, there is some disagreement among the owners as to how often and how thoroughly these tasks should be performed.

Examples of pure neighborliness

The residents are united in their appreciation of the architectural value and charm of the building. The building is small enough for the integration of newcomers, in spite of its high turnover. Some neighbors have become good friends, and visit each other mutually. Having children of more or less the same age has brought them together. But when I introduce the notion of 'pure

neighborliness,' I am thinking of sociability and services that are extended or asked for only because one is a neighbor.

Formerly, the borrowing of small household items such as a few eggs or a cup of sugar used to be a typical service extended to neighbors. In this particular neighborhood today, this service is rarely necessary because some of the shops in the area are open until late at night. Nevertheless, it has happened that a neighbor has asked for such a favor. In contrast to the unspoken rule in some other neighborhoods, the eggs and the sugar were not returned – perhaps because the residents are not dependent on each other for such services, perhaps because of the bohemian life style of that particular borrower, or because of present-day affluence. For some young people a cup of sugar may be too little to care about, and they would feel ridiculous if they were to bring it back.

Another service is to be cared for when one is locked out of the apartment. This happened to one of the residents one morning when she took out the garbage. The neighbors on the ground floor let her come in to call her husband and wait until he arrived with his keys. To show her gratitude, she went out that day and bought a large bouquet of flowers for her helpful neighbors.

One year the musician in the building wrote a song that made the Norwegian finals of the Eurovision Song Contest. On this occasion his partner asked everybody in the building to vote for him by phoning the broadcasting company at the appropriate time. She put a friendly little note in everybody's letterbox, asking them to do this, and telling them how to do it. In addition, she came to everybody's door to make the request. In this situation all the residents were a part of their network. Also residents who would normally never watch this kind of television program did so, and voted for their neighbor – who, nevertheless, did not win.

Some time after several new residents had moved in, one of the middle-aged couples organized a reception for everybody in the building and served wine. When an old widow moved out the building, the chair of the board and his wife organized a good-bye party with cream cake and coffee for her in their home. In the summer of 2002 all the neighbors who were not on vacation were often invited into one of the gardens. The gatherings, always hosted by a middle-aged couple, were improvised, and other couples who happened to have some wine at home brought it with them. As we shall see, the women in these hosting couples are among those who complain the most and contribute the most to the others in the building.

Topics of disagreement: the contrast between 'tidiness' and 'taste'

Disagreements among the residents are expressed in the meetings of the association, and also when they meet one-on-one in the hallway or on the street. Tidiness and cleanliness are recurrent topics. Most is said in informal encounters, but sometimes feelings run high during the association meetings. Three of the middle-aged women (one of them has recently moved out of the building) have been particularly abrupt in their complaints that things do not work in the building. They point to dirty stairs and other tasks that are not done well (*ordentlig*). Some of their complaints are easier to understand than others, in particular their reaction to plastic bags filled with garbage that allegedly have a tendency to pile up outside one of the doors in the kitchen stairway. The members of this household do not always bother to take the garbage down promptly to the containers in the back yard. Other complaints may seem less serious, like the pram or the sleigh that some families leave under the staircase on the ground floor rather than carry it upstairs to their apartment after every use. That the stairs are not cleaned often and well enough is yet another example. The critique is summed up in the sad complaint that "nobody seems to care anymore"; "nobody sees what needs to be done." The woman who has lived the longest in the building compares the present situation to a former golden age when the residents according to her expressed more clearly through their actions that they felt responsible for the building – a time when there were pretty flowerpots in the back yard.

The middle-aged women have gathered a few times to informally discuss the maintenance of the building, but they have not been entirely successful in their attempt to influence the other residents with their own vision of good neighborliness. The younger residents express satisfaction with the way things are. They are not willing to sacrifice "peace and quiet"[29] and "good neighborhood relations" for the sake of more tidiness. Their tolerance of untidiness thus seems to be higher than their tolerance of disagreement and relations gone awry.

Prior to moving into the building, the present chair of the board and his family took six months to totally renovate their apartment. Because the family did not live in the building, they did not notice that the stairways were particularly dirty with the constant coming and going of craftspeople. One of the middle-aged women called them before Christmas and asked them to clean the stairs, which they did. Two years later, in the winter of 2002-2003, a new family is renovating their apartment, and the front stairs are particularly dirty

29 See Gullestad 1992, Chapter VI, about the meanings of the notions of 'peace' and 'quiet' in Norway. Norwegians seek certain forms of 'peace' in order to be able to engage socially.

again. The same woman has asked the new chair to call the future neighbors and ask them to come down and clean up after the craftspeople. He answered that he would see what he could do, but that he thinks that they should be allowed to move in and be warmly welcomed, before they are presented with the list of tasks. The next day one could observe him cleaning the stairs himself from top to bottom.

It would be easy merely to dismiss the women's complaints as dissatisfaction due to generational differences or differences of life style. Their children are grown, and they do not want to see prams and strollers in the hallway. One must no doubt consider both generation and lifestyle in order to understand the various opinions about these matters, but I think something else is also at stake. First, talking about cleanliness and tidiness is a way of talking about the loss of certain forms of knowledge; for example, that they are the only ones who seem to know that the pretty tiles in the hallway and on each floor would benefit from some floor wax every now and then. Second, and even more important, it is a way of talking about morality, about 'us' in the building as a moral community. To keep the communal areas tidy and clean is a sign of responsibility. Tidiness and cleanliness can be interpreted as the middle-aged women's idiom for talking about being good, dependable, and trustworthy persons. Independence is a central value in Norway, which often creates strong feelings of vulnerability in situations of dependence (Gullestad 1992). Above all, residents depend on each other for personal safety. If one person in a building causes a fire because of carelessness, for instance, everybody in the building will suffer.[30] If one person forgets to lock the back door, all the bicycles may be stolen, or one or two apartments broken into.[31]

Cleaning and tending to the semi-private spaces within the building and the semipublic spaces outside, is a way for residents to tell each other that they are trustworthy in these matters. In other words, it communicates to people that they can relax at work during the day and sleep safely at night. In addition, the state of the building and its surroundings conveys a message to people outside the building about the kind of people who reside in it. Residents must depend upon each other in order to project a specific image of themselves and their families to the world. Cleaning and maintenance have important symbolic functions for the presentation of self.

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30 Norway has more fires in buildings than any other country in the world.

31 There are several stories of break-ins and burglary in the building. Over the past few years there was one break-in at night in the plumber's workshop and one or two bicycles stolen from the back yard. According to the police, most house burglaries in this area involve break-ins through the kitchen door between 10 a.m. and 1p.m. With few women, no children, and few retired people at home during the day, the building has become more accessible for burglars.

When the women refer to the past, they are speaking of a time when many women did not participate in the labor market or, to put it more precisely, even if they did participate, their gender habitus and the kinds of knowledge they possessed were more thoroughly influenced by their housewife experience than seems to be the case today. The complaints of the three women have many dimensions of meaning and complex reasons. One of the dimensions, as I interpret it, is that they miss a 'housewifely eye' in the semipublic and semiprivate spaces. They seem to mourn the disappearance of a specific kind of watchfulness connected to a time when more people – housewives as well as retired people and children – spent more time in or close to the home, and showed a different sense of responsibility for life in the neighborhood interstices between the home and the city at large. The female watchful eye no longer exists in exactly the way it did in the past. It has turned inwards to the home and outwards towards the place of work and to the networks of friends and relatives. This seems to represent not only a generational difference, but also a historical change.

In their efforts to exercise social control, extend their standards to the other residents, and express their disappointment because they do not always agree, the three ladies do not see or do not want to admit that such standards are relative. When one resident explained that he cleaned the parking space as often as needed according to his standards, one of the women responded that it was "not good enough." The parking space should be tended "properly" (*skikkelig*), she said. Cleanliness and order are associated with universal and 'natural' moral values, independent of such factors as social class, generation, and life style. Within this way of thinking, pluralism is easily turned into deviance in relation to an unspoken norm.

At the association meetings, some topics are easier to discuss than are others. In this respect, 'tidiness' can fruitfully be compared to 'taste'. Taste is not a topic in the meetings, only when neighbors with similar preferences chat among themselves. The contrast between tidiness and taste as topics of discussion was illustrated in relation to the two front gardens that are tended and used by the residents living on the ground floor, but owned communally by the association. Thus they are privately used, but not privately owned. In several meetings the residents living on the ground floor expressed interest in private ownership of the gardens, which they hoped the association would grant them. This proposal was first postponed several times, and then politely rejected.

But the garden issue also has other dimensions of meaning, and these were not openly discussed. Even if the two gardens are privately used, they are open to the gaze of both the other residents and passers-by. They are part of the symbolically important facade of the building, and, according to some people, should be representative of the values and tastes of all the residents.

Residents not living on the ground floor depend on those who do to tend to the gardens and to maintain a certain image that is publicly projected to the world outside the building.

The two gardens were cared for and used by two of the women who have voiced most of the complaints about the other residents' untidiness and lack of interest in the building. One garden is impeccable. The users of the other garden, who moved from the building in the summer of 2002, also tended their garden well, but filled it with objects that, from the point of view of people with a different taste, either did not belong in a representative front garden (an old and rusty grill and, from time to time, a rack to dry clothes) or were simply indicative of 'poor taste' (figurines in the grass, decorative objects on the wall, small tables in addition to the main table, lamps and other 'cute' objects). The woman in this household takes a special interest in interior decoration. Pictures of her apartment have even been featured in a popular women's magazine. When she lived in the building she placed several objects in the communal areas: for example, a painted flower pot that functioned as an ashtray and two richly decorated vases on the granite posts of the entrance stairway, a table and a mirror in the inside hallway, and a decorated plastic tree at Christmas, also in the inside hallway. This was her way of showing concern and making a contribution to the aesthetics of the building.

Unfortunately, these objects and their arrangement did not correspond to the taste of every resident. But as far as I know, nobody ever reciprocated her many complaints by complaining to her about her taste as expressed in the garden and in the communal hallway. This reticence can be interpreted as a part of a general strategy to maintain good relations. Critique of the grill and the occasional rack to dry clothes could be framed as a critique of untidiness, but there are strong taboos in Norway about explicit criticizing a person's taste. For this woman, the garden was carefully decorated with many objects. Her ability as a decorator is a central part of her femininity. To tell her that her efforts as a decorator were not appreciated would be a particularly offensive thing to do.

Differences of taste are, in principle, horizontally ordered in people's minds, but act in practice as unacknowledged (but still present) reminders of hierarchical differences of social class. Tidiness is often seen as a universal (and unevenly, but horizontally distributed) value, whereas taste seems to be implicitly associated with unwanted – and in a certain sense illegitimate – differences of social class. They exist, but one does not speak of them, or one speaks of them only in specific ways in specific contexts. Often differences of social class are translated into moral terms. Criticizing other people's lack of order is, to a limited extent, acceptable, but criticizing their 'bad taste' is considered to be deeply arrogant and offensive.

Conclusion

The title of this article is 'changing relations of neighborhood service, sociability, and social control.' By presenting three different perspectives and three different kinds of empirical material, I have tried to pinpoint some of the complexities involved in the changing organization of urban living in Norway. Compared to France, the tasks connected to the semi-private and semi-public spaces between the apartment door and the street are clustered somewhat differently, and the teams that perform these tasks are organized somewhat differently as well. Early in the article I referred to the observation by two colleagues that Norway does not have a role comparable to the *concierge* (Gulbrandsen and Torgersen 1978). In an unpublished manuscript from 1983, Gulbrandsen adds that the lack of janitorial authority may be due to an extreme Norwegian individualism: Because of their individualism, the residents have not been willing to grant authority to the *vaktmester*. On the basis of my work in Norway, I can subscribe to this idea, and also want to add two more values: equality (conceived of as sameness) and a widespread 'do it yourself' ideology. The organization of urban tasks, including the changing role of the *vaktmester,* has developed within the particular brand of egalitarian individualism in Norway, with its focus on independence and its associated resistance to dependence and to hierarchies of social class. In addition, my analysis suggests that two processes rather than one are operating simultaneously. On the one hand, egalitarianism has often worked against hiring people to do jobs that the residents can do themselves. On the other hand the *vaktmester* has withdrawn from the obligation of being available at all times. Among other things, the recent history of the organization of urban tasks demonstrates the Scandinavian way of associating personal service with unwanted class hierarchy.

In addition, the material presented in this article demonstrates the continued gender division of tasks, in spite of the extensive transformation and restructuring of these tasks. What happens in the neighborhood also reflects the fact that the Norwegian educational system and labor market are among the most gender divided in Europe. At the same time, there is a sharpened bound-

ary between the home and the neighborhood, with an increased focus on the home. When women entered the educational system and the paid work force in large numbers in the 1970s, they started a series of social revolutions that the social sciences have so far only started to describe and theorize upon. They entered new arenas and assumed new responsibilities. Much attention has been given to women's prominent role in Norwegian politics, to the so-called feminization of the welfare state, and to women's difficulties in entering power positions in private business. Relatively little attention has been paid to the loss of a specific kind of watchful eye in the neighborhood. Since informal social control in the neighborhood is both civilizing and leveling of the eccentric or the exceptional, many people experience ambivalence: to the extent to which they are able to act independently and withdraw from the intrusive gaze of their neighbors, a strong feeling of freedom and relief; and, to the extent to which they find that people do not care anymore a sense of loss.

Appendix I

Training program for the former *vaktmester* evening school[32]

The program assumes that class demonstrations are given for the most important subjects – supervision and maintenance of technical equipment. Other subjects will be covered by lectures.

The Caretaker School is linked to the Oslo Trades School and takes place as an evening course, 2 days per week over 13 weeks between 1 September and 1 December, and from 15 February until 15 May. (Estimated number of teaching hours: 234).

A. *Technical courses and lectures:*

I. Technical installations and equipment

1. Elevators, supervision, and maintenance: 8 hours
2. Electrical panels, switchboards, accumulators, lighting, intercom: 24 hours
3. Water and sewage equipment, drains: 10 hours
4. a) Heating and sanitation equipment, insulation, and ventilation: 24 hours
   b) Coke units, warm air, and hot water equipment: 12 hours
   c) Oil-fired ovens: 12 hours
   d) Electric heating: 6 hours
   e) Heating technique: 12 hours
5. Laundry equipment: 12 hours

   120 hours

II. The Caretaker's duties

1. Maintenance of buildings, care of roofs, gutters, pipes etc.: 4 hours

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32 (1960: 54- 55).

2. Cleaning and cleaning equipment: 4 hours
3. Oil, varnish and paints, and their use: 8 hours
4. Gardens and their care: 8 hours
5. Reports to the owner/management, completion of forms including maintenance reports when vacating apartments: 12 hours
6. Presentation of apartments to new tenants, pest/insect control. Use of disinfectant: 2 hours
7. House regulations and enforcement of these: 4 hours
8. Consumables and maintenance statistics: 4 hours
9. Debt collection (rent), register of payments. Coin-operated machines: 4 hours

III Relationships with tenants: 10 hours

160 hours

B. Practical solutions

1. Different types of central heating, boiler cleaning: 24 hours
2. Tap washers and pipe joints; insulation of pipes and heaters. Control of doors and windows, replacing glass, repairing locks etc.:20 hours
3. Excursions. Conclusion: 10 hours

54 hours

Total: 234 hours

The number of course participants will be restricted to 30–35 because of space and teaching loads. Caretakers currently in practice will be given priority in enrolment.

Appendix II

Vaktmester: Work Instructions from the Norwegian House Owner's Society (Full-time post)[33]

The caretaker's responsibility is to ensure that the owner's interests in the property are protected in every respect. He shall conduct normal supervision of the property, keep order at all times, and ensure that tenants follow the regulations. The following responsibilities shall receive special attention:

Doors, lighting

1. The gate and outside doors are locked at 10 p.m. and opened at 7 a.m. The courtyard and staircases will be checked before closing. The main doors to the loft and the cellar shall be locked at all times. The stairway lighting is switched on at dusk and switched off when daylight permits. The caretaker has a reserve of light bulbs and fuses in a storeroom and will ensure that all light bulbs and fuses that are not the responsibility of the apartment owners are functioning at all times.

Cleaning, maintenance, etc.

2. The courtyard and the entrance are to be swept twice a week. Snow is to be cleared from the pavement following a snowfall. The same applies to the courtyard when necessary, and the courtyard must also be gritted under icy conditions. Icy patches and melt water are to be re-

33 These are the current standard instructions of the Norwegian House Owners' Society, translated from the Norwegian.

moved from the pavement in mild weather and draining and runoff channels kept free of ice. When there is a danger of snow or ice falling from the gutters, warning poles shall be placed on the pavement and removed when the danger is past. Furthermore, the caretaker shall ensure that overhanging snow and ice on the roof be removed as soon as possible. The lamps shall be cleaned regularly.The caretaker will ensure that garbage and other waste is placed only in the designated containers and will ensure that the garbage is collected in accordance with the contract. He is responsible for cleaning the staircases and other common areas, insofar as this is not the responsibility of the tenants. He shall arrange for a thorough cleaning of the loft, cellar, and staircases in accordance with the owner's instructions. During the winter he shall ensure that all skylights and cellar windows are locked, and boarded in where applicable, and that all exposed water pipes are properly insulated. If a pipe is frozen, he must immediately arrange for it to be thawed. In the summer half-year, he will ensure airing through the skylights and cellar windows, both of which must be covered with the appropriate netting.

Common rooms (laundry room etc.)

The caretaker has the keys to all common rooms and will place them at the disposal of the tenants in turn after one of these has compiled a list. He will ensure that the tenants leave the room in a clean condition following use and that the inventory is used in a proper manner. He will make sure that no objects, materials, or items not belonging to the room are deposited here.

Maintenance

3. He will personally undertake such small reparations in the building and yard as fixing hinges, locks, and catches; lubrication and small repairs to locks and inventory, insulation of pipes and stopcocks; cleaning of drains and sewer pipes; inasmuch as these tasks are not the responsibility of the tenants. Such tasks are to be undertaken without extra remuneration. He is obliged to carry out such tasks for the tenants, for which a reasonable payment may be made. He shall supervise any maintenance and repairs conducted on the property and inform the owner any untoward happenings. Any complaints or enquiries by the tenants regarding maintenance etc. shall be forwarded to the owner.

New tenants; tenants vacating the premises

4. The caretaker shall present the vacant apartments and premises. When the new occupants move in, the owner must be presented with confirmation of cleanliness for absence of insects or vermin. Prior to vacation of the premises, the caretaker shall undertake an inspection for any deficiencies that are the responsibility of the tenant and that, in accordance with the contract, are obliged to be rectified; and shall present it to the owner without undue delay. Upon vacation of the premises, he shall ensure that the apartment has been properly cleaned and that everything belonging to the apartment or premises, including keys, ovens, and stoves, including accompanying fixtures and fittings, are present and in proper condition. He shall demand the completion of the formal notice of vacation from the persons(s) vacating the premises. He shall inspect if the apartment is used for subletting or if unregistered persons are permanently in occupation, and in such an event, shall inform the owner.

Central heating

5. The caretaker has responsibility for the central heating and hot water system, and shall at all times follow the instructions for maintaining them and other technical equipment belonging to the property.

6. Other instructions.
7. The present instructions are incorporated as part of the contract on salary, working hours, holiday, termination of contract etc.???

The instructions and contract are issued in two examples and accepted when undersigned by both parties.

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Tittel/Title
Changing relations of neighborhood service, sociability, and social control in Oslo

Summary
The present report is the Norwegian contribution to the comparative project about urban living 'Loges et gardiens', based in Paris. The point of departure is the functions of the French concierge (now often called gardien). The report is divided into three parts. The first part is a general discussion of the changing relationship between people and space in urban Norwegian neighborhoods. The general tendency in the Western world is that local moral communities of significant others are not lost within modernization and globalization; rather, they assume more voluntaristic forms, sometimes with a wider territorial basis than the small neighborhood had, and with less time-depth for the creation of common norms and mutual knowledge. I regard the neighborhood as a moral community functioning as a buffer between the household on the one hand, and the state and the market on the other, and I argue that this role is changing in the present stage of modernity. Citizens increasingly rely on technological solutions, state agencies, and the market to conduct some of the surveillance, the practical tasks, and the care work they no longer have the means and, most crucially, the time to undertake. The line between public and private life is a diffuse, historically and situationally changing, and constantly renegotiated moral boundary. The parameters within which these negotiations occur have changed dramatically over the past three decades. Part of this development is due to the changing relations between women and men. Since the 1970s, women and children have left the neighborhood during the day. At the same time, the division of both paid and unpaid work is still largely gender divided. In the second part of the article, I change perspective, in order to present empirical material about the vaktmester – an institutionalized work role in Norway that is not identical to the concierge/gardien in France, but that can fruitfully be brought into the comparison of tasks and teams. The vaktmester's work role is presented from the point of view of the vaktmesters themselves. As noted, the vaktmester's job is focused on technical maintenance and repairs. Over the years there has been a change in this work role in the direction of greater professionalization, which results in regulated work hours, specified task descriptions, and less personal relationships with the residents. Thus the vaktmester has changed from a kind of servant to a provider of specified services. In the third and last part of the article I again change perspective and level of analysis in order to focus on how the whole range of tasks connected to the space between the apartments and the street is organized in one building in an upper-middle-class area. The organization of tasks is now seen from the point of view of the residents.

Index terms
Urban living, neighborhood, vaktmester, gender, tidiness, taste.

Sammendrag
Denne rapporten representerer det norske bidraget til et komparativt byforskningsprosjekt kalt 'Loges et gardiens, som er basert i Paris. Utgangspunktet er de funksjonene som gjøres av den franske concierge (nå ofte kalt gardien). Rapporten er delt i tre deler. Den første delen omhandler mer generelt de endrede relasjoner mellom mennesker og fysisk rom i norske nabolag. Den andre delen er en diskusjon av vaktmestrenes rolle, og hvordan organiseringen av denne rollen har endret seg siden vaktmestrene organiserte seg i 1935. Den tredje delen beskriver hvordan beboerne i en bygning på 'beste vestkant' organiserer og utfører sine fellesoppgaver.

Emneord
By, nærmiljø, vaktmester, kjønn, vedlikehold, ryddighet, smak.