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Regulating Sin in the City: The Moral Geographies of Naval Port Towns in Britain and Germany, c.1860-1914¹

Abstract

Naval towns were regarded as potent symbols of imperial power. Beneath this image however, contemporaries were concerned about the prostitution and heavy drinking which were associated with the sailortowns of naval ports. While historians have analysed merchant ports to explore social structures and economic networks, this study will evaluate how imperial and national discourses created distinct moral geographies which separated sailortown from the more ‘respectable’ urban spaces. We shall argue that while the naval and civic authorities in Portsmouth and Kiel shared the concern that a sailortown culture had the potential to undermine naval effectiveness, they imagined and regulated urban space differently. In imagining, analysing and regulating sailortown, the British authorities and social reformers drew inspiration from colonial missionaries in their Empire. In contrast, their German counterparts focused on national and moral degeneration and followed a more continental European tradition in regulating urban space. Although, historians have prioritised economic forces in shaping urban space, this article will argue that imperial and national cultural discourses were critical in how contemporaries imagined and regulated moral geographical boundaries in the nineteenth-century city.

Introduction

This article will explore how civic and naval authorities attempted to regulate the districts where sailors sought entertainment two of the principal naval ports of Britain and Germany during the late nineteenth century. Both Portsmouth and Kiel harboured so-called ‘sailortown’ districts which had gained a justified reputation for hard drinking, prostitution,

¹ An earlier draft of this paper was presented at the “International Approaches to Naval Cities and Dockyards” conference at the Swedish Naval Museum in Karlskrona in October 2017. We would like to thank the organisers and participants for their positive and constructive feedback. Many thanks also to the *Britain and the World* editors as well as the two anonymous reviewers for their constructive feedback.

and an exuberant and excessive leisure culture. While historians have analysed sailortowns to explore globalisation, migration and permeable borders, few studies have explored how civic and naval elites created moral geographical boundaries that separated sailortown from the rest of ‘respectable’ society.² Moreover, historians have largely focused on mercantile ports and thus the importance of naval authorities in shaping and manipulating the social and cultural character of urban space in port towns has largely been neglected.³

Naval sailortowns were subject to similar reputations as their merchant counterparts. Contemporaries would witness naval sailors stepping ashore flushed with months if not years of pay, liberated from the ship’s confinement and harsh discipline, and free to indulge in excessive pleasure seeking. Certain districts and streets such as ‘The Hard’ in Portsmouth, Union Street in Plymouth, or Hinter der Mauer in Kiel had become infamous for their public houses, bars and brothels. British and German naval ports towns in the nineteenth century exhibited some important similarities as the state invested in similar military infrastructure that shaped the nature of the urban districts adjunct to the naval bases.⁴ It is thus of no surprise that British and German naval authorities took an active role in policing naval towns. In Britain dedicated naval units were created to patrol civilian urban areas while the Admiralty in Kiel were in regular contact with the local police force to ensure that law and order in and around sailortown was maintained.⁵ Navies operated beyond the confines of naval bases and therefore played an important role in determining the use and perception of civic districts in port towns.

What is much less understood are the processes at play which shaped the moral and geographical segregation of sailortown from the rest of ‘civil’ society. Nonetheless, social

² The few studies that have explored the gendered and social aspects have ports have focused on merchant shipping ports which had a very different cultural landscape to naval base ports’ see Valerie Burton, ‘Boundaries and Identities in the Nineteenth-Century English Port: Sailortown Narratives and Urban Space’, in *Identities in Space: Contested Terrains in the Western City since 1850*, eds. Simon Gunn and Robert J. Morris (Aldershot, 2001), p. 137; Sherylynne Haggerty, Anthony Webster, and Nickolas J. White, eds., *The Empire in One City? Liverpool’s Inconvenient Imperial Past* (Manchester, 2008); Graeme Milne, *People, Place and Power on the Nineteenth-Century Waterfront: Sailortown* (Basingstoke, 2016).

³ For a good summary of this trend see Gordon Jackson, ‘Ports 1700-1840’, in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, Volume II, 1540-1840, ed. Peter Clark (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 705-31.

⁴ Brad Beaven, ‘The Resilience of Sailortown Culture in English Naval Ports, c.1820-1900’, *Urban History*, 43, no. 1 (2016): pp. 72-95.

⁵ For Britain see for example Eugene L. Rasor, *Reform in the Royal Navy: A Social History of the Lower Deck, 1850 to 1880* (Hamden, CT, 1976), p. 89. For Germany see for example the letters between the naval station in Kiel and the local police authorities: Bundesarchiv Freiburg (hereafter BAF), RM31/970, Letter ‘Schreiben an den königlichen Polizei-Präsidenten vom Kommando der Marinestation der Ostsee’, Kiel, 16 September 1905; BAF, RM31/970, Letter ‘Schreiben des Polizei-Präsidenten an das Kommando der Marinestation der Ostsee’, Kiel, 27 October 1905.

theorists and historians have made some headway in exploring the moral geographies of urban space in relation to prostitution in the nineteenth-century city. Early research on urban space emphasised the importance of capitalism. For Henri Lefebvre, urban space was a direct product of capitalism, bourgeois domination and state regulation.⁶ Indeed, Patrick Dunae echoed Lefebvre's emphasis on capitalist imperatives and argued that prostitutional space in British Columbia between 1860 and 1914 was characterised by economic factors. Dunae contends that urban space was zoned by local authorities for what Foucault described as 'illegitimate sexualities'.⁷ This interpretation produces a rather one-dimensional model that casts capitalism as the fundamental dynamic in shaping the regulation of urban spaces. While acknowledging the importance of capitalism, other historians have shown that factors such as the culture of empire were important in shaping the regulation of prostitution. Philip Howell argued that 'the Contagious Diseases Acts were actually imperial legislation, rather than a temporary domestic measure derived from Continental models'.⁸ For Howell, understanding the historical geography of regulation requires one to question the conventional relationship between the imperial metropole and colonial periphery. The categorisation of race, class, sexuality and gender were forged in the empire and employed to understand the British urban domestic sphere at home. In contrast to Britain, as Peter Baldwin has argued in his comparative study on public health policies, the regulation of diseases in Germany was predominantly shaped by ideas about public health which developed in Continental Europe during the late eighteenth and nineteenth century.⁹ Lutz Sauerteig and Paul Weindling have both argued that for German social reformers there was a clear link between moral, social and

⁶ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, 1991), p. 23.

⁷ Patrick A. Dunae, 'Geographies of Sexual Commerce and the Production of Prostitutional Space: Victoria, British Columbia, 1860–1914', *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, 19, no. 1 (2008), pp. 115–42. While this Foucaultian view rightly stresses the dominance of the bourgeoisie in defining and regulating urban space in the nineteenth century, it leaves little room for actor agency. Louise Settle's recent study on the social geography of prostitution in Edinburgh in the early twentieth century questions whether civic authorities were successful in zoning prostitution away from the more affluent respectable districts. Settle argues that prostitutes were not confined to the margins of the city but exhibited an 'extraordinary ability' to 'transgress class and gender boundaries'. See Louise Settle, 'The Social Geography of Prostitution in Edinburgh, 1900–1939', *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, 33, no. 2 (2013), p. 234.

⁸ Philip Howell, 'Prostitution and Racialised Sexuality: the Regulation of Prostitution in Britain and the British Empire before the Contagious Diseases Acts,' *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 18 (2000), p. 336.

⁹ Peter Baldwin, *Contagion and the State in Europe, 1830–1930* (Cambridge, 1999), in particular Chapter 5 on the regulation of syphilis. For brief overviews on different approaches to regulating prostitution see also Roger Davidson and Lesley A. Hall, 'Introduction', in *Sex, Sin and Suffering: Venereal Disease and European Society Since 1870*, eds. Roger Davidson, and Lesley A. Hall (Florence, KY, 2001), pp. 1–14; Melissa Feinberg, 'Sexuality, Morality, and Single Women in Fin-de-Siècle Central Europe (review)', *Journal of Women's History*, 24, no. 3 (2012): pp. 173–81.

national degeneration.¹⁰ For imperial Germany, discourses on morality, prostitution and venereal disease were closely connected to ideas about social, and later racial, hygiene. This had an impact on how red light districts were regulated and moral geographies constructed. The state, in the form of local authorities and the police, confined brothels and prostitutes to certain areas or streets, where the lives of the women who were accused of prostitution were closely monitored.¹¹ Lynn Abrams has highlighted that these policies, in conjunction with bourgeois ideas of sexual morality, excluded prostitutes from certain public places in the bourgeois city.¹² This shows us that social constructions as well as regulations impacted on how urban spaces were perceived and used.

In general, historians have identified policies which shaped the regulation of ‘sin’ in the city but few studies have explored how these issues shaped urban space within an international comparative framework. Both British and German naval and urban elites shared the notion that sailortown was a danger to civic society as well as the moral health of the nation. Both navies were certainly concerned for naval effectiveness if sexual immorality, disease and ‘racial degeneration’ were left unchecked. However, while the British and German navies and civic elites shared these anxieties they differed on how to best contain and regulate naval-urban spaces. Indeed, national traditions and contexts were important in determining the creation of moral geographical boundaries. This article will argue that naval urban space and its regulation was influenced in Britain by their experience of empire, while in Germany Continental European traditions regarding public health determined the moral geographies of naval towns. Drawing on lessons from the empire, the British civic and naval authorities viewed sailortown through an imperial prism and attempted to regulate, colonise and civilise a ‘heathen’ population. For example, the Contagious Diseases Acts, which were designed to counter the military’s widespread use of prostitution, had been inspired by regulations which were already operating in the Empire.¹³ In Germany, the discussion about Kiel’s sailortown was predominantly shaped by national discourses on moral and social hygiene which

¹⁰ Lutz Sauerteig, ‘“The Fatherland is in Danger, Save the Fatherland!”: Venereal Disease, Sexuality and Gender in Imperial and Weimar Germany’, in *Sex, Sin and Suffering: Venereal Disease and European Society Since 1870*, eds. Roger Davidson and Lesley A. Hall (Florence, KY, 2001), pp. 76-92; Paul Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics between National Unification and Nazism, 1870-1945* (Cambridge, 2002).

¹¹ Richard J. Evans, ‘Prostitution, State and Society in Imperial Germany,’ *Past & Present*, 70, no. 1 (1976): pp. 106–129.

¹² Lynn Abrams, ‘Prostitutes in Imperial Germany, 1870-1918: Working Girls or Social Outcasts’, in *The German Underworld: Deviants and Outcasts in German History*, ed. Richard J. Evans (London, 1988), pp. 189-209.

¹³ Howell, p. 336.

predated Germany's rise as an imperial power. The way in which prostitution was policed by local authorities and confined to certain streets dated back to practices which were employed in Germany and across Continental Europe from the turn of the nineteenth century.¹⁴ Thus German urban elites were less imperial in scope and more focused on the health of the nation. In stressing these powerful national and imperial forces, the article challenges the notion that urban space was simply replicated by economic forces which created generic urban landscapes and social enclaves.¹⁵

Portsmouth and Kiel: Local and National Contexts

Both naval port towns were similar in size and experienced rapid population growth in the nineteenth century as Kiel's population had reached 211,000 by 1910, while Portsmouth's stood at 188,000 in 1911. However, there were some key differences. Portsmouth's naval tradition stretched back to the early modern period whereas Kiel's only began in the second half of the nineteenth century.

By the late nineteenth century, Portsmouth was a compact island town of 9 square miles and comprised distinct and often separate communities. The middle-class enclave of Southsea, with its large villas and high-class shops made for a stark contrast to Landport, an area north of the dockyard that was home to a large proportion of casual dockyard workers. Meanwhile, skilled artisans, such as shipwrights, began settling in the new and expanding eastern and northern districts of the town such as Eastney and Kingston.¹⁶ The expansion of the dockyard had largely been responsible for Portsmouth's population growth. By 1901, the dockyard employed almost 8,000 workers, representing 53% of all male industrial workers in Portsmouth.¹⁷ Despite the importance of dockyard workers to the Portsmouth economy, it was the naval sailors who were the most visible and animated workforce on the streets of Portsmouth. In the late nineteenth century, sailors tended to reside in boarding houses and sailor homes based in Portsea, a district that surrounded the dockyard and which suffered severe social and economic deprivation. However, not only was a large proportion of the

¹⁴ Evans, pp. 108-11; Victoria Harris, *Selling Sex in the Reich: Prostitutes in German Society, 1914-1945* (Oxford, 2010), p. 10.

¹⁵ Lefebvre, p. 23.

¹⁶ Vivien Fulda, 'Space, Civic Pride, Citizenship and Identity in 1890s Portsmouth' (PhD Thesis, University of Portsmouth, 2006), pp. 1, 33.

¹⁷ Ray C Riley, *The Industries of Portsmouth in the 19th Century* (Portsmouth, 1976), p. 9.

population dependant on the navy, but the town's physical environment was unmistakably stamped with a military character. By the mid-1870s, the dockyard occupied over 300 acres of the west side of Portsmouth while the 1901 census recorded that over 7,000 men were stationed in army barracks or navy ships in the harbour.¹⁸ The main thoroughfares through Landport were, as E.S. Washington noted, 'full night and day of men in naval uniform', while 'many large barracks with parade grounds were constant reminders of the naval and military presence in the town'.¹⁹

Contemporary voices in Wilhelmine Kiel describe their town in a similar fashion. The blue and white uniforms of German naval sailors dominated the streets of the *Altstadt* (Old Town) and the city.²⁰ The urban development of Kiel in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was a direct product of the expansion of the Imperial Navy. Until the 1860s, when Kiel became part of Prussia in the wake of the Second Schleswig War and the Austro-Prussian War, Kiel had been a small town with a university and a merchant port which was catering mainly for regional trade across the Baltic Sea.²¹ Urban development significantly changed pace after the founding of the naval port in 1865 and the creation of the German Empire in 1871, when Kiel was chosen as one of the two main bases for the newly established Imperial Navy. Together with Wilhelmshaven on the North Sea coast, it served as *Reichskriegshafen*, the empire's major naval base with dockyards and all the necessary supporting naval installations. The arrival of the navy propelled Kiel from a provincial merchant and university town to a large city dominated by its naval function. Population growth accelerated in the following three decades, from 18,000 inhabitants shortly before the establishment of the naval base to 100,000 at the turn of the century. As a result of Admiral von Tirpitz's ambitious naval building programme, launched with the two Naval Bills of 1898 and 1900 which lead to a rapid expansion of the Imperial Navy, Kiel's population more than doubled again within a decade. By 1910 the city's population had reached 200,000. Kiel's growth was accompanied by the incorporation of surrounding villages and municipalities which gradually had been swallowed up by the expanding city's dockyards

¹⁸ Ray C Riley, *Portsmouth: Ships, Dockyard and Town* (Stroud, 2002), p. 41.

¹⁹ E.S. Washington, *Local Battles in Fact and Fiction: The Portsmouth Election of 1895* (Portsmouth, 1985), p. 6.

²⁰ See for example Ferdinand Hoff, *Erlebnis und Besinnung: Erinnerungen eines Arztes* (Berlin, 1971), pp. 61-4.

²¹ For Kiel's urban development see: Vera Stoy, *Kiel auf dem Weg zur Grossstadt: Die städtebauliche Entwicklung bis zum Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Kiel, 2003), pp. 31-44; Peter Wulf, 'Kiel wird Grossstadt (1867 bis 1918)', in *Geschichte der Stadt Kiel*, eds. Jürgen Jensen und Peter Wulf (Neumünster, 1991), pp. 207-71.

and naval installations which were mainly located to the north and the east of the old town. These rapid changes provided the framework within which Kiel's urban-maritime culture existed and was debated.

The urban development of Portsmouth and Kiel in this period showed many similarities but there were notable differences as Britain and Germany had adopted different recruitment strategies. The British Navy introduced continuous service in 1853 while the Germany military relied on conscription which obliged men to serve for three years, usually from the age of 20.²² Every year about one third of the naval sailors were replaced with new recruits. For these conscripts, basic naval training as well as naval exercises in home waters were crucial.²³ Compared to their British counterparts, German naval sailors spent more time in and around their home port. This had an impact on the demography of the city itself. In an 1896 report on the state of morality within the city, the police noted that Kiel had a 'predominantly male population' due to the navy, the naval dockyards as well as the university.²⁴

Constructing Moral Geographies

The spatial geography of Portsmouth and Kiel was also shaped by the urban authorities' anxieties over the impact that the large sailor populations had upon moral condition of their towns. Significantly, while civic elites in Portsmouth and Kiel drew moral boundaries around sailortown denoting its separation from the rest of the town, British and German authorities employed a range of narratives and strategies to monitor and regulate sailortown. The British urban elites explored sailortown through an imperial lens, alarmed that at the heart of the Empire's principal naval town, there existed a heathen and godless people who required Christian instruction. In Germany, the discourses had a different focus. Social observers were more concerned that sailortown vice would degenerate the quality and alleged purity of the nation. They drew less from an imperial vision but placed discussions about the ills of sailortown, within the wider national discourses on the social and racial hygiene of the

²² Oliver Walton, "'A Great Improvement in the Sailor's Feelings towards the Naval Services': Recruiting Seamen for the Royal Navy, 1815-53', *Journal of Maritime Research*, 12, no. 1 (2010), p. 46.

²³ *Kiel: Lücks Führer durch Deutschlands grössten Kriegshafen*, 3rd edn (Kiel, 1909), pp. 13-5.

²⁴ Stadtarchiv Kiel (hereafter StdA Kiel), IX.9, 2527, Die sittlichen Zustände in Kiel und die Handhabung der Sittenpolizei 1896 - 1903, Report 'Die Polizei-Behörde berichtet über die sittlichen Zustände in Kiel', 12 October 1896.

German *Volk*.²⁵ Moreover, the different strategies adopted to regulate and control sailortown were important factors as to whether sailortown was contained, grew or migrated to other urban areas. Thus, attempts to regulate vice and entertainment in Portsmouth ultimately failed and, by the early twentieth century, sailortown had encroached unhindered into the heart of the town's civic quarter. In contrast, the German navy's adoption of a modern port for its naval base in 1865, combined with a restrictive public health legislation, enabled the authorities to keep a tight control of the existing sailortown and site military installations away from areas of vice and temptation. As a result, the location of Kiel's sailortown remained static.

In the nineteenth century, Portsea was a fortified section of the coast-line cut adrift from the civic hub of the town. It was here that naval sailors and locals lived, worked and socialised beyond the reach and influence of the centres of civic leadership that were based in the heart of Portsmouth. By the 1890s, a flamboyant religious missionary, Father Robert Dolling, had coined Portsea's waterfront as 'The Devil's Acre' due to its high density of public houses and brothels. Behind the 'Devil's Acre lay a labyrinth of courts that became the focus of religious missionaries who undoubtedly emulated their counterparts in the wider British Empire.

During the height of British New Imperialism of the late nineteenth century, contemporaries perceived that Portsmouth possessed a special connection with the empire which also brought some unwelcome repercussions. One commentator noted that, from its connection to the navy, Portsmouth's

relationship to the life of the Empire is of an unrivalled description, and the fact that so many of its adult male population are, in one sense or another, servants of the State, and are not under private employment, seemed to direct special attention to its crying needs on the part of the National Church.²⁶

Just as there was an absence of an indigenous philanthropic leadership in London's East End, the state's dominance as an employer meant that Portsmouth lacked a cluster of wealthy

²⁵ Sauerteig, pp. 77-8; Weindling, pp. 181-8.

²⁶ Charles Edward Osborne, *The Life of Father Dolling* (London, 1903), p. 58.

philanthropic industrialists from the private sector that were common in manufacturing towns and cities.²⁷ Portsea itself had, until the early nineteenth century, been a walled community for military defence purposes which had increased its isolation and ‘Otherness’ from the rest of the town. Tightly-packed with poor-quality housing, inadequate sanitation and a labyrinth of courts that lay behind the main thoroughfares meant that Portsea became the focus of religious missionaries that undoubtedly took their cue from their counterparts in the wider empire. For example, the urban missionary Reverend Reginald Shutte established the ‘Mission of the Good Shepherd’ in Portsea to save fallen women in 1866.²⁸ Shutte was a flamboyant ritualist and was not afraid to court either religious controversy or publicity for his cause.²⁹ Indeed, Shutte’s pamphlets spoke directly to his middle-class readership in sensational terms that would both intrigue and appal them. An imperial theme ran through Shutte’s texts as he placed himself as a daring explorer who warned his readership of the dangers of crossing the moral boundary from the respectable main thoroughfares into dark rookeries of Portsea. Shutte first demanded from his readers as to whether they ‘know Portsea’ or ‘walked up and down the leading streets’ near the dockyard. If so he noted that they would be familiar with the:

Bloated, draggled women in dirty print frocks, who lounge along in twos or threes without bonnet or shawl, and who in broad daylight make your flesh creep with their loathsome words and gestures. These are some of the companions of our soldiers and sailors, in whose society they spend their hours of leisure. They are just now sunning themselves on the Hard or Queen Streets, and are waiting to pick up the latest gossip about the Channel Fleet, or drink a dram with a friend. Their name is legion, and, as you look into their faces, each one seems fouler than the last.³⁰

²⁷ Brad Beaven, *Visions of Empire: Patriotism, Popular Culture and the City, 1870-1939* (Manchester, 2012), p. 14.

²⁸ For a more detailed analysis of Portsmouth ‘outcasts’ see Rebecca Denyer, ‘The Bitter Cry of Outcast Portsmouth: Poverty and Crime 1860-1900’ (BA Dissertation, University of Portsmouth, 2004).

²⁹ *Hampshire Telegraph*, 15 October 1892.

³⁰ Portsmouth City Record Office (hereafter PCRO), 11A/J/5, Reginald N. Shutte, ‘Mission of the Good Shepherd, Portsea’, 1870, p. 1.

Shutte, then, described these prostitutes in Portsea in bestial terms and depicted their public displays of immorality as bringing disgrace to the main thoroughfares of Portsea. Moreover, their presence also had repercussions for the empire since they drew the armed forces into their depravity. The brothels of Portsea, according to Shutte, had become ‘infamous from the Baltic to Japan’.³¹ Shutte then took on the role of urban explorer to venture into the ‘rookeries’ that his readership would have feared to tread:

All I can say, is that if you have penetrated into the dens of lust and violence which are closely packed within the slice of brick and mortar that lies between St George’s Square and Queen Street, your heart will have been sickened, and you will be giddy with sights and sounds which your brain refuses to forget...our work is to deal with the poorest and most depraved of the classes that haunt these lanes and alleys.³²

There can be little doubt that Shutte’s mission was fuelled by a sense of imperial exploration as he invited African imperial missionaries to speak to his congregation to mark the official opening of his new chapel buildings.³³ Indeed, the African explorers were in popular demand in Portsea since a similar chapel in Penny Street also invited the group which included the Bishop of Maritzburg in South Africa and the African explorer Commander Cameron. After the Bishop had outlined some of the ‘heathen’ superstitions and immoral practices, Cameron urged his audience to support the quest of civilising inferior populations since ‘these people [Africans] might go forward without seeing a church or clergy-man, and it was highly important, therefore, that the English people should, by every measure in their power, seek to develop their Christian missions’. It could not have escaped the Portsea missionaries in the audience that they were charged with a similar task in the empire’s chief naval port.³⁴

The missionary zeal in Portsmouth’s slums did not end with Shutte’s death in 1892.³⁵ Inspired by the University settlements in London’s East End, Winchester College established

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

³³ *Hampshire Telegraph*, 13 December 1876.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Hampshire Telegraph*, 15 October 1892.

St Agatha's Mission in Portsea which was led by Father Dolling from 1885.³⁶ Dolling was apprenticed in missionary work in the East End and recognised in Portsea a similar urban and immoral decay that he had witnessed in Stepney. However, for Dolling the significance of empire was even greater in Portsea due to its naval strategic importance and he saw the symbols of navy and empire inscribed into his new environment. He noted that 'the streets are, most of them, very narrow and quaint, named after great admirals and sea-battles, with old world, red-tiled roofs, and interiors almost like cabins of ships'. Turning his attention to the inhabitants Dolling remembered 'sailors everywhere, sometimes fighting, sometimes courting' and 'slatternly women creeping out of some little public house.'³⁷ However, like his African missionary counterparts, it was important to describe in some detail the shocking heathen customs of the natives to both appal the reader and illustrate how the mission eventually brought light and civilisation to a dark and corrupted area. For example, Dolling imitated missionaries in Africa in describing the shocking heathen customs of the 'natives' of Portsea. Dolling recounted what he described as the 'Landport Dance':

Two girls, their only clothing a pair of sailors' trousers each, and two sailor lads, their only clothing the girls' petticoats, were dancing a kind of breakdown up and down the street, all the neighbours looked on amused but unastonished, until one couple, the worse for drink toppled over. I stepped forward to help them up, but my endeavour was evidently looked upon from a hostile point of view, for the parish voice was translated into a shower of stones...³⁸

In another passage, Dolling complained the poor lighting in Portsea courts and the abundance of slaughter houses in the area had helped foster a savage population. He claimed that among the Portsea boys 'it is no uncommon thing to find one who eats raw meat and drinks blood'.³⁹ These descriptions of natives with their mysterious semi-naked dances, primitive rituals and implicit references to cannibalism glamorised Dolling's mission and drew readers into an

³⁶ Osborne, p. 55.

³⁷ Robert R Dolling, *Ten Years in a Portsmouth Slum* (London, 1903), p. 18.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Osborne, p. 126.

underworld which paralleled contemporary African expeditions. It was perhaps no accident that reviewers of the book and biographers of Dolling consistently cited the ‘Landport dance’ incident as it firmly set Dolling in the role of intrepid imperial slum explorer.⁴⁰ His biographer likened him to the British imperialist Cecil Rhodes, reclaiming his heathen brethren street by street and planning ever fresh developments from his missionary ‘watch tower’.⁴¹ Underpinning Dolling’s sense that a heathen population lived in sailortown was a concern that British racial stock was under threat to urban degeneration. He was a Liberal imperialist and firmly supported the Boer Wars in the 1890s. For Dolling, an imperial war ‘with its defeats, was a great corrective to national indulgence’, and Portsea and his mission would provide the ideal base to contribute to a national rejuvenation.⁴²

Although imperial narratives could be found in Germany too, the discourse was more inward-looking and shaped by notions of a healthy nation.⁴³ Anxieties over the alleged quality of the racial stock became one of the central issues for the moral geography of Kiel’s sailortown. For social reformers in Kiel there was a clear link between moral and national degeneration. In the perception of social reformers, Kiel’s sailortown embodied a space in which alcoholism, prostitution, and venereal disease could flourish. It became a spatial and cultural symbol for everything which posed a threat to the nation’s moral and physical health. A popular novel of the time chose Kiel’s sailortown as the place where the main character’s brother ruined his life by contracting a venereal disease. *Helmut Harringa* was published in 1910 by Hermann Popert, who was part of the *völkisch* movement.⁴⁴ The novel’s main protagonist, Helmut, is a young judge who, after the suicide of his older brother Friedrich, dedicated his life to fighting alcoholism, extramarital sex, and racial degeneration. Popert’s novel blamed the tragic death of Friedrich on the dangers which were lurking in the shady streets and houses of sailortown. One fateful evening Friedrich, a student of medicine in Kiel,

⁴⁰ For example: Joseph Clayton, *Father Dolling: A Memoir* (London, 1902), p. 23; London Quarterly Review, 27 January 1896; *Leeds Mercury*, 8 July 1896; *The Speaker*, 22 August 1896.

⁴¹ Osborne, p. 85.

⁴² Clayton, p. 56.

⁴³ Brief references to Germany’s “place in the world” can be found for example in Dr Fuchs, ‘Der Alkoholismus als Gefahr für die deutsche Weltstellung’, in *Vereine gegen den Mißbrauch Geistiger Getränke: Bericht über die 27. Jahresversammlung zu Kiel* (Berlin, 1910), pp. 41-50. The imperial narrative seemed to be more pronounced in debates on (merchant) sailors who were abroad, see David Brandon Dennis, ‘Seduction on the Waterfront: German Merchant Sailors, Masculinity and the ‘Brücke zu Heimat’ in New York and Buenos Aires, 1884-1914’, *German History*, 29, no. 2 (2011): 175-201.

⁴⁴ Hermann Popert, *Helmut Harringa: Eine Geschichte aus unserer Zeit*, 16th edn. (Dresden, 1912). On Popert and his *völkisch* thinking see for example: Kai Detlev Sievers, ‘Antialkoholismus und Völkische Bewegung: Hermann Poperts Roman Helmut Harringa’, *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur*, 29, no. 1 (2004): pp. 29-54.

was walking along one of the town's main thoroughfare, close to the waterfront.⁴⁵ The streets of sailortown were running parallel to the thoroughfare, separated only by the remnants of the crumbling town wall. The novel described how Friedrich, who had drunk too much, gave in to the temptation of sailortown vice on the promise of exquisite sparkling wine and women. Persuaded by one of his fellow students, he and his friend quietly vanished into the dark streets of sailortown. As a result of visiting a brothel in the notorious street Hinter der Mauer, Friedrich contracted a venereal disease and drowned himself out of shame in the Baltic Sea. Popert's novel had strong racial undertones. Helmut Haringa, the crusader against alcoholism and extramarital sex, was portrayed as the archetypal Germanic hero – tall, blond, blue-eyed and of pure blood. In contrast, Kiel's sailortown with its pubs and brothels was the source of sinful temptation which contaminated the blood of pure German men. For *völkisch* thinkers such as Popert, the struggle against moral and racial degeneration played out on the streets of sailortown.

This literary motif of Kiel's sailortown as a place where innocent and physically healthy German men were corrupted, was echoed by social reformers, with the tone of the local debate informed by ideas which were expressed on a national level. In particular Kiel's role as a naval port added to the perception that Germany's future was at stake. As a result of imperial Germany's system of military conscription, naval sailors were drawn not only from traditional coastal seafaring communities but came from all occupational and geographical backgrounds.⁴⁶ In the eyes of moral movements, these young recruits were in particular susceptible to moral corruption. Christian groups such as the *Bund vom Weissen Kreuz* (League of the White Cross), which advocated moral purity through abstaining from pre- and extramarital sex, were keen to point out how moral corruption of individual recruits could have a serious impact on their home communities.⁴⁷ For these social reformers moral and national degeneration went hand in hand. When vending machines for condoms and other preventative remedies against sexually transmitted infections were introduced in some military barracks, the League of the White Cross lobbied the Ministry of War to ban the installation of these vending machines. They argued that the availability of these remedies

⁴⁵ Popert, pp. 165-9.

⁴⁶ Holger H. Herwig, *'Luxury' Fleet: The Imperial German Navy, 1888-1918* (London, 1980), pp. 131-9.

⁴⁷ For Christian activism in imperial Germany see: John C. Fout, 'Sexual Politics in Wilhelmine Germany: The Male Gender Crisis, Moral Purity, and Homophobia', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 2, no. 3 (1992): pp.388-421; Edward Ross Dickinson, 'The Men's Christian Morality Movement in Germany, 1880-1914: Some Reflections on Politics, Sex, and Sexual Politics', *The Journal of Modern History*, 75, no. 1 (2003): pp. 59-110.

would suggest to conscripts and reservists that intercourse outside marriage would be morally sanctioned by the military authorities. This moral corruption of young recruits had the potential to contaminate the entire nation, as returning recruits would bring the immorality back home to their rural communities in the hinterland. The League of the White Cross concluded that this would 'fill every patriot with sadness because the population of the cities degenerates more every year'.⁴⁸ Local debates surrounding Kiel's unruly sailortown area were thus often tied up with the notion that the moral and social corruption of sailortown culture would put the future of the German nation in danger. When the war broke out in 1914, Kiel's *Christlicher Verein Junger Männer* (Young Men's Christian Association, YMCA) was among a number of Christian societies which were deeply concerned about the immorality of sailortown and its impact on Germany's military prowess. In a letter to Kiel's naval governor from 1914, the YMCA complained that 'partially or fully intoxicated sailors' were drawn to the prostitutes in the maritime red light district.⁴⁹ This, they pointed out, seriously undermined the military readiness as well as the strength of the German *Volk*. Continuing in the tone of the pre-war discourse, the morally pure German conscript had to be protected from vice and immorality under these wartime circumstances. In fin-de-siècle Germany, fighting sailortown was portrayed as a fight about the future of the German nation and race. By connecting ideas of military strength, national health, and race, Christian groups saw nothing less than the nation's future at risk.

The different responses to sailortown in Portsmouth and Kiel indicate that urban elites were significantly influenced by their own imperial and national debates. During the nineteenth century, social reformers drew on existing narratives of empire and nation when assessing the perceived immorality of sailortowns and its populations. The importance of wider, national discourses but also of existing national attitudes and legal policies towards regulating urban spaces can also be seen when looking at the civic authorities' attempts to control and contain sailortown vice.

Urban spatial containment and regulation of Sailortown 1850 to 1914

⁴⁸ BAF, RM31/970, Letter 'Abschrift Schreiben des Deutschen Sittlichkeitbundes vom Weissen Kreuz an das Staats-und Kriegsministeriums', Berlin, 8 November 1911.

⁴⁹ BAF, RM31/970, Letter 'Gesuch der Christlichen Vereine Junger Männer Dammstrasse 18 und Gartenstrasse 12, an Gouverneur der Stadt Vize-Admiral von Bachmann', Kiel, 7 September 1914.

In town halls across Britain and Germany's port towns, civic leaders agreed that sailortown needed clear and enforceable boundaries. Otherwise sailortown culture could spread and take hold amongst those sections of the local population which were deemed susceptible to temptation and immorality, chiefly the working classes and the sailors. How the two civic authorities approached the issues depended on two factors; the location of sailortown within the townscape and national legal frameworks on the regulation of prostitution. As a result, the two town councils adopted different strategies in their attempt to contain sailortown and its culture.

The topography and the urban developments in Portsea rendered it isolated from the 'civilising influences' of the city's civic fathers. In the early part of the nineteenth century, Portsea was defended by battlements that circled the town and separated it from Portsmouth's civic and religious centres. While these had been removed in the 1870s, by the late nineteenth century parks and military recreational grounds separated 'sailortown' from the town hall and the rest of Portsmouth.⁵⁰ The civic elite of Portsmouth consciously placed their new civic quarter of monumental municipal buildings away from Portsea's sailortown which continued to cross unacceptable moral boundaries. At a national and local level, the civic and naval authorities identified prostitution as sailortown's 'greatest evil' and sought to ensure that it was contained and regulated well away from civic and naval spaces. The Contagious Diseases Acts in the 1860s were implemented in naval ports and garrison towns and allowed police to arrest women who they suspected as being prostitutes. Women were then subjected to a medical examination and if infected with venereal disease were confined to a lock hospital for between three months and a year.⁵¹ Significantly, Portsmouth councillors, the Admiralty and the local press strongly supported the Act. For example, the *Portsmouth News* proclaimed the Act 'an unmixed good'. However, it was the issue of prostitution that marked the unconventional moral boundaries between those who lived in sailortown and those who resided in its urban hinterland. In traditional working-class communities women were often barred from the public house and women who openly engaged in prostitution were often shunned by their own neighbourhood.⁵² However, sailortown fostered a moral framework in which the visibility of women on the streets and in the public houses was *the* convention. Margaret Hunt has shown that naval wives grouped together to publicly confront the

⁵⁰ Riley, *Portsmouth*, p. 41

⁵¹ Catherine Lee, 'Prostitution and Victorian Society Revisited: The Contagious Diseases Acts in Kent', *Women's History Review*, 21, no 2, (2012), p. 312.

⁵² Robert Roberts, *The Classic Slum* (Manchester, 1971), p. 22.

Admiralty over pay, exercising a public freedom that was denied their husbands. Indeed, she argues that the sailors' long absence from home and erratic lifestyle gave an 'especially strong incentive for women to develop independent sources of income'.⁵³ The ubiquity of women on the streets and in the public houses inevitably drew comments from social commentators. Dolling noted that 'girls sinned because their mothers had sinned before them, often their grandmothers too, unconscious of any shame in it, regarding it as a necessary circumstance of life.'⁵⁴ The normalisation of women drinking in public and prostitution prompted Dolling to complain that when ashore, sailors often returned to the same prostitute. He noted that, 'sometimes I have known sailors to marry those whom they knew had been bad characters'.⁵⁵ Sailors would often get to know prostitutes and cite their 'kindness' as they were 'always willing to help you', with one sailor countering the popular perceptions of prostitutes by insisting they were 'good women'.⁵⁶ When Dolling asked the sailors why they had married a 'fallen women', they replied, "“Oh! The girl was unhappy; I thought I would make a home for her” or “I was afraid she might go wrong” or “even I wanted someone to leave my half-pay with”".⁵⁷

In Kiel's case it is important to note that the sailortown was not physically separated from the rest of the town. Unlike Portsmouth where the Devil's Acre was geographically removed from the civic heart of the city, Kiel's sailortown was only a stone's throw away from the central marketplace of the Old Town. The entrances to the notorious lanes at the heart of sailortown were branching off from the main thoroughfares which connected the waterside with the market square. In addition, one of the main roads connecting the train station in the south of the city with naval installations and bourgeois districts in the north was only separated from sailortown by the crumbling old town wall. The red light district's position within the townscape was not the product of a process where shadow economy grew near the landing bridges or naval establishment but the result of civic attempts to regulate vice. Similar to many other German towns, prostitution was closely policed and managed.⁵⁸ This was usually done by a so-called vice police who had the right to force any women under

⁵³ Margaret Hunt, 'Women and the Fiscal-imperial State in the Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries' in *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain, 1660-1840*, ed. Kathleen Wilson (Cambridge, 2004), p. 31.

⁵⁴ Dolling, p. 108.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Imperial War Museum (hereafter IWM), cat 728, David G. Lance interview with James George Cox, 1976.

⁵⁷ Dolling, p. 108.

⁵⁸ See for example: StdA Kiel, IX.9, 2527, 'Polizei-Behörde', 12 October 1896.

suspicion to move to designated houses in certain streets. In Kiel, official prostitution was 'contained' in two narrow alleys. Hinter der Mauer and Im Kuhfeld were the centre of the maritime red light district. Once there, registered prostitutes, the so-called 'Controlled Girls', would be subjected to strict rules and had to undergo weekly or twice weekly medical examinations for venereal disease. As in Britain, women diagnosed with venereal diseases were hospitalised. The location of sailortown within the city was therefore directly influenced by decisions made by the local authorities. Everyday life in the red light district was shaped by the presence of naval sailors who spent their pay in the establishments of sailortown. However, the initial decision to establish brothels near the quay walls, at the edge of the Old Town, predated the arrival of the Prussian and Imperial Navies in 1865.⁵⁹

The spatial proximity of sailortown and respectable areas of the city was a regular concern for social reformers, some of who came from within the naval establishment. There were frequent complaints to the civic and naval authorities that the location of the sailortown posed a threat to morality and society. In particular prostitution was regarded as a contagious moral disease which needed to be more closely regulated, with prostitutes preferably moved to the periphery of the town. Friedrich-Wilhelm Wentzel, captain of the armoured cruiser *SMS Prinz Heinrich*, complained in a letter to the commander of the Baltic Sea naval station in 1903 that his sailors were exposed to 'temptation and seduction' every time they went ashore. He criticised the route from the landing bridges to the town centre and the seaman's home as it lead directly past the red light district. Wentzel remarked that a sailor ought to be able to visit the seaman's home 'without asking himself on a daily basis whether he should or shouldn't make a detour via a side road before listening to a talk by a clerical professor'.⁶⁰ His suggested solution was that the prostitutes should be moved to a new location at the periphery of the town, far away from the harbour.

Yet both the naval as well as the civic authorities were reluctant to change the geographic status quo. When challenged about the location of sailortown, the vice police insisted that moving the prostitutes or even abolishing the institution of the 'Controlled Girls' would be not desirable. Firstly, under the current arrangements the problem would remain locally confined and the girls could not morally corrupt other unsuspecting working-class girls. Secondly, it kept prostitution and pimps away who would otherwise operate in the pubs. And

⁵⁹ See StdA Kiel, IX.9, 3381, 'Die Bordelle in Kiel, 1864-1871'.

⁶⁰ BAF, RM31/970, Letter 'Abschrift Brief Wenzel, Kommando SMS Prinz Heinrich an das Kommando des I. Geschwaders Kiel', Kiel, 18 January 1903.

thirdly, in addition to controlling prostitution, the police could also easily monitor the unruly and raucous mass of naval sailors who were naturally drawn to the area.⁶¹ Importantly, this attitude was shared by the commanders of the naval station. The naval station seemed very much aware that it was illusionary to think that sailors could be kept away from drink and women. Confining prostitution to certain streets was preferable because otherwise prostitution might be driven underground. Only a tightly regulated red light district would allow effective prevention of venereal disease and make sure that sailortown culture would not spread beyond the physical boundaries of sailortown.⁶² In the eyes of the local authorities, spatial containment was a crucial element in managing Kiel's naval maritime-urban culture.

In Portsmouth and Portsmouth sailortown was perceived as a world apart, an area which existed outside notions of conventional respectability. To authorities and social reformers it was an area as well as a culture which needed to be controlled and ultimately contained. For local elites the most important cornerstone of regulating sailortown was the strict control of prostitutes. While authorities in both countries implemented strict regimes of medical control, there were significant differences in their approaches. Forcing women who were suspected of engaging in prostitution to live in certain streets was common practice across Continental Europe but not in Britain.⁶³ In this sense Kiel's local authorities could define more precisely the moral geography of sailortown, in particular its boundaries, than their British counterparts. This had consequences on the spatial development of the two sailortowns.

Failure of Regulation and Containment

The location of sailortown was not static. Rather than being limited to a location close to the waterfront, sailortown or at least certain aspects of its culture could reach well beyond the boundaries of traditional maritime red light districts. The nature and extent of sailortown's range was a direct result of the local and national regulations of how to regulate sailortown vice.

⁶¹ StdA Kiel, IX.9, 2527, 'Polizei-Behörde', 12 October 1896.

⁶² BAF, RM31/970, Report 'Sanitätsrath Dr Behr, Polizeiärztlicher Bericht über Quellen für Geschlechtskrankheiten bei den Angehörigen der Marine, an das Kommando der MSO Kiel', Kiel, 3 February 1915.

⁶³ Baldwin, pp. 357-67; Davidson and Hall, pp. 1-14; Feinberg, pp. 173-81. For legislation in Central Europe beyond Germany see also Nancy M. Wingfield, *The World of Prostitution in Late Imperial Austria* (Oxford, 2017).

Both the sailors and the civilians who lived and worked in Portsmouth's sailortown shared a vested interest in challenging any attempts to reform the district. The Contagious Diseases Acts which targeted women in the streets and public houses fostered a great deal of anger among local residents in Portsea. In a large meeting of working-class men convened to oppose the Act in Portsea in 1870, speakers criticised the authorities' interference of sailortown on the grounds that the law was 'one-sided tyrannical and 'infringed liberty'⁶⁴. The mood of the meeting was captured by the Reverend J. Osborne of Southampton who, playing to the audience, declared that 'this was a class legislation' and that 'the police was principally directed to dressmakers and the wives and daughters of working men who were compelled to be out late (cries of "Shame").' In addition, prostitutes in the sailortown districts of Portsea protested 'riotously' and paraded against the Act in the main thoroughfares of the town on a number of occasions. However, while the Contagious Diseases Act cast prostitution as a fixed profession, the reality for many women was that prostitution was a temporary occupation. As Catherine Lee has noted, prostitutes were drawn from the 'labouring poor who lived on their wits, employing opportunistic and often self-directed strategies for self-preservation'.⁶⁵ The Act had the potential to severely disrupt women's survival strategies and sailortown's economic infrastructure that comprised public houses, music halls, lodging houses and brothels.

After local opposition and prolonged national agitation, the Contagious Diseases Acts were repealed in 1886. Moreover, attempts to suppress vice in sailortown only served to entrench drink and prostitution in the area and even extend the geographical district of sailortown. Towards the end of the nineteenth century a number of sailor rest homes were established purposely on the outside of Portsea towards Portsmouth's civic centre.⁶⁶ Portsmouth's new civic square, complete with town hall and civic buildings, was designed to shine as a beacon of civilisation and draw sailors away from the vice of Portsea. However, within the civic quarter, the construction of temperance sailor-rest homes only served to attract new public houses and 'low' places of entertainment. In an ironic twist, sailortown had spilled out from its nineteenth century confines into the heart of the civic centre. A former sailor recalled:

⁶⁴ *Hampshire Telegraph*, 26 November 1870.

⁶⁵ Lee, p. 312.

⁶⁶ Louise Moon, 'Sailorhoods': Sailortown and Sailors in the Port of Portsmouth circa 1850 – 1900' (PhD Thesis, University of Portsmouth, 2015), chapter 6.

You had your choice of prostitutes, there was plenty of those around in those days... It was outside the Town Hall, they used to call it 'Prostitutes' Parade' and all the women used to be there...they'd ask you if you were coming home with me for the night...⁶⁷

By day the town hall square was the crucible of civic parades but by night the square became transformed into sailortown which hosted the 'prostitute parade'. Such was the fluidity of Portsmouth's sailortown.

In Kiel two phenomena were observable. On one hand, visible prostitution remained largely confined to sailortown due to restrictive regulations. On the other hand though, excessive drinking by sailors and the pubs and taverns catering for them could be found well beyond the boundaries of sailortown. While the location of sailortown did not migrate, certain aspects of its culture did. The main aspect behind this development was the local urban topography. Importantly, naval barracks and installations were not in direct proximity to sailortown. Many lay to the north of the city, close to the naval harbour or guarding the entrance of the Bay of Kiel. Most German ratings would either be housed in barracks at the outskirts of the town, in the casemates of the many forts which surrounded Kiel or on the naval ships themselves. This meant that sailors had to travel to sailortown by foot or by taking the ferries which connected the town with the naval ships and establishments. Controlling prostitution was made easier by the distance between sailortown and sailors' accommodations. In fact, the navy was acutely aware that by building naval barracks away from sailortown they could police the interaction between sailors and the population of sailortown more effectively. The vice police as well as the naval authorities closely observed the vicinities of naval installations to monitor if prostitutes worked or rented rooms nearby. Any registered prostitute who tried to leave sailortown and operate closer to the barracks was arrested.⁶⁸ Of course, the naval and civic authorities were well aware that many sailors formed casual relationships with working-class women who lived outside sailortown. However, with regards to official prostitution, sailortown remained geographically static. Unlike in Portsmouth, the authorities managed to contain it in the original red light district.

⁶⁷ IWM, cat 661, interview with Reginald Claude Ashley, 1975.

⁶⁸ BAF, RM31/970, 'Schreiben an das königliche Polizei-Präsidenten vom Kommando der Marinestation', 16 September 1905; BAF, RM31/970, 'Schreiben des Polizei-Präsidenten an das Kommando der Marinestation', 27 October 1905.

Yet when we look at drinking, arguably the other defining element of sailor culture, we can see that the authorities struggled to contain some facets of sailortown. Drinking establishments which catered to naval sailors could be found both in and outside sailortown. One naval sailor, who joined the Imperial Navy as a ship boy and worked his way up to the rank of *Maat* – the lowest rank of non-commissioned officers – described in his memoir how and where sailors were entertaining themselves. Occasionally he would take the steamboat to Kiel and visit sailortown but when he had no money the entertainment on offer there was simply unaffordable. Instead he and his fellow sailors were regulars at a pub outside of Kiel, close to the fort in which they were stationed.⁶⁹ Even when he had the financial means and went into Kiel, he did not always end up in the streets in and around sailortown. Countless dance halls, cafes, beer halls, pubs and Grog taverns could be found beyond the red light district. The sailor mentioned the popular beer hall *Brunswicker Bierpalast* [Brunswick Beer Palace] on *Holtenuer Strasse*, the main road connecting the town with the naval installations in the north of the town. He described it as a place where 'seamen were in their natural element. They were swimming in beer.'⁷⁰ As the evening progressed, people would drink beer out of barrels (this might be large pitchers) and sang so loudly that the walls were shaking. The places sailors frequented weren't even limited to the town and its suburbs. The countryside was popular with sailors too. Ferdinand Hoff, who grew up in Kiel at the turn of the century, remembered how sailors would regularly venture out into the countryside at weekends in order to visit cafes, beer gardens, and dance halls.⁷¹ Kiel's naval sailors sought entertainment beyond sailortown. Similar to Britain, naval culture affected and spilt out into 'respectable' areas. In Portsmouth this was one the unintended consequences of the authorities' attempts to suppress vice. However, the fact that the German sailors were not living and working close to sailortown pushed some aspect of naval lifestyles into other areas of the town. In Kiel the topography of sailortown culture and the town's moral geography were influenced by Germany's strict public health regulations as well as Kiel's urban geography.

Conclusion

⁶⁹ BAF, MSG 2/10602, Unpublished memoirs, 'Aus meinem Leben: 2. Band, 1906-1913', pp. 105-6.

⁷⁰ BAF, MSG 2/10603, Unpublished memoirs, 'Aus meinem Leben: 3. Band, 1913-21', p. 22.

⁷¹ Hoff, p. 63.

There is a growing body of work on the social policies that attempted to regulate vice in the city during the nineteenth century. Historians such as Baldwin have demonstrated that Britain and Germany developed two distinctly different legislative paths in regulating public health.⁷² These legal traditions proved to be the bedrock from which the narratives of moral geographies were constructed in urban spaces. However, few studies have attempted to explore how urban-maritime space was imagined and produced within an international comparative framework. This article has argued that imperial and national narratives informed the way in which space was perceived, structured and used. Indeed, the Portsmouth and Kiel case studies indicate that imperial and national cultures had a more defining influence on how civic elites perceived and regulated urban space than the demands of capitalism.⁷³ Moreover, the imperial and national gaze was undoubtedly more pronounced in naval ports due to their importance to notions of empire and naval power. Civic and naval elites in Britain and Germany were equally concerned about the corrupting influences of sailortown and its culture on wider civic society. As a result, the authorities in Kiel and Portsmouth tried to manage and contain sailortown. While British social reformers understood naval sailortowns in the manner of a colonial missionary, their German counterparts drew on traditions found in Continental Europe which focused on delivering a healthy nation. In addition, the position of sailortown within a townscape was influenced by local topography. Portsmouth's sailortown was transient and it moved from its waterfront location towards the civic heart of the city. In contrast, Kiel's maritime red light district remained geographically static due to more restrictive policing. While Portsmouth's sailortown was allowed to grow unchecked around the naval dockyards, Kiel's red light district was contained and located away from naval installations. Imperial and national imperatives, then, were not only embedded in symbols found in a town's architecture and street furniture, but these powerful cultures influenced how civic elites viewed, regulated and contained the most undesirable districts of their urban landscape. This study has shown that the analysis of how the authorities imagined and regulated urban space provides an insight into the cultural imperatives which influenced their thinking and decision making. It also sheds light on those who transgressed 'respectable' boundaries and provides new perspectives on how urban power was employed and contested in the nineteenth-century city.

⁷² See for example Baldwin; Davidson and Hall; Feinberg.

⁷³ Lefebvre, p 23.