

Fighting strategic homophobia in football

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Abstract

Homophobia among certain men could be understood as a reactionary form of social resilience, insofar as such resilience can work against adaptation and social transformation. Resilience is again closely related to the concept of 'sustainability'. Many fans position the expression of negativity towards gays as a heroic struggle against 'political correctness' and in defence of freedom of thought and speech. But it should also be seen as a strategic action to manipulate the feelings of opponents in order to win. In a time of global hyper-commodification, the paramount goal of winning stimulates strategic actions that contribute to shaping norms and values.

Introduction

Why is it so difficult in Norway to eradicate homophobia in football? Among many football fans in this country, a public display of negativity towards homosexuality is still not uncommon. This is particularly puzzling when seen in relation to other sectors of Norwegian society, including some other sports. The persistence of negative attitudes towards male homosexuality among certain male football fans hints at causes with deep sociocultural roots. It is also an indicator of how football has played an important role in producing and reproducing negative attitudes towards male homosexuality.ⁱ Internationally, several studies of football fans have found that these attitudes are rapidly shifting andⁱⁱ only a minority of fans now express homophobic views.ⁱⁱⁱ Cleland highlights the important changes that have been taking place since 1990, but also stresses the need for continued efforts to support homosexual players.^{iv}

Little research has been done, however, to understand how and why negative attitudes and homophobia still seem to be reproduced by some Norwegian football fans. This article contributes to a deeper understanding of the reproduction of negative attitudes towards homosexuals in football by investigating media and football fan communication online. The research builds first on quantitative methodologies in order to analyse trends in online discourses on homosexuality, before moving on to critically examining the evolving discourse of anti-homosexuality among football fans online.

By focusing on fan communication online, the article connects with previous studies which have found that the anonymity of the Internet permits certain men to employ a homophobic and sexist discourse.^v

Literature review and background

The sustainability discourse draws on ecosophy and ecology and owes much to deep ecologists such as Arne Næss and Sigmund Kvaløy.^{vi} For Næss and Kvaløy 'sustainability' was closely related to diversity and resilience. The term, however, has increasingly come to mean exploiting natural and human resources while maintaining a supposed balance. The term has thus gradually become associated with a conservationist or conservative discourse of anthropocentric exploitation of resources in order to maintain a supposed status quo. In this article I understand 'sustainability' not as 'conservation' but, rather, as closely related to radical perspectives on 'resilience'. Greater resilience is associated with the ability to self-organise, and associated with social learning as part of a process of adaptation and transformation.^{vii}

In the heat of the moment, football fans can be heard hurling all kinds of abuse at opponents and their fans. Some of it will probably be found to be shocking by an unknowing passer-by. Most of it, however, should not be taken at face value but should rather be seen as a form of ritual acted out in the carnivalesque atmosphere of the football ground.^{viii} From a carnivalesque perspective, abuse aimed at opponents is used as a tool for subversion and liberation from the dominant norms of communication and style.

There is an inherent danger in taking football fans too seriously. In fact, a recent study of fans of British association football found homophobia to be rapidly decreasing.^{ix} Nonetheless, we need to recognise that homosexuals have over the years been subjected to all kinds of exclusion, discrimination and violence in a myriad ways.^x The current backlash against homosexuality in countries as diverse as Jamaica, Uganda, Russia and India demonstrates just how deeply-rooted negative attitudes against homosexuality are in many societies and cultures.^{xi}

This article employs a critical realist perspective on homosexuality, drawing in particular on Bhaskar^{xii} and Sayer.^{xiii} From a critical realist perspective, a social phenomenon (for instance, homosexuality) can be real even though it is not a visible part of a particular society's discourse. While some political leaders find it opportune to claim that 'we don't have homosexuals' here, this should not be taken to mean that homosexuality does not exist. It should rather be interpreted as yet another attempt to make homosexuality invisible.^{xiv} Critical realists insist that a reality exists outside and independently from our discourse about it, 'while fully acknowledging that the only access we have to this reality lies along the spiralling path of appropriate dialogue or conversation between the knower and the thing known'.^{xv} Structural violence, for instance, can make a real phenomenon invisible.

Following Bhaskar's advice to start discourse analysis from the identification of a social problem, this article starts from the assumption that the apparent invisibility of male homosexual footballers is a social problem. Football is the most popular sport among Norwegians. Approximately 10 per cent of the population is registered with the Football Association of Norway. When close to 500 000 Norwegians play football regularly, it should be safe to assume that thousands belong to sexual minorities. Quite a few female footballers have come out of the closet, plus one or two male players in the lower divisions, but no male players in the top divisions have made such a move. Some structural mechanism must be in play to exclude and discriminate against sexual minorities in men's football.

A growing body of literature helps us to understand some of these culturally embedded structural mechanisms that have historically functioned to exclude, discriminate and make homosexuals invisible in Norway.^{xvi} At least two structural mechanisms must be considered in order to understand this aspect of Norwegian football: on the one hand, stereotypes and negative attitudes that tend to make football an unattractive or unpleasant place for homosexuals, which causes gay

players leave football; on the other hand, mechanisms that tend to discourage homosexuals from being open about their sexual preferences.

Anthropological research on gender and homosexuality has highlighted the diverse and intricate ways that gender and sexuality are shaped by cultural processes. Homosexuality and homophobia are visible in different ways in different societies.^{xvii} Thus, negative attitudes and homophobia should be understood in their particular historical and sociocultural context. In this article, then, I set the interpretation of recent expressions of negativity towards homosexuals in Norway within a Norwegian framework with its particular social and cultural environments, in addition to interpreting such expressions as contributors to the production of a Norwegian social and cultural environment.

Compared to other countries, Norway can be considered a relatively liberal country. This does not mean that homosexuality is, or has always been, accepted. There is a long tradition of discrimination and exclusion of homosexuality in Norway, as is evident in the large number of recently published life stories and biographies of gay activists.^{xviii} According to some media studies, however, important changes have taken place over the last two or three decades: 'Whereas before they [the attitudes of discrimination and exclusion of homosexuality] were totally absent from the media, they are being regularly featured in contemporary media.'^{xix} A majority of Norwegians, for example, no longer openly express negative attitudes towards homosexuals.^{xx} However, men tend to have a more negative perception of sexual minorities – particularly of men who have sex with men – than do women. A similar split is visible in sport itself. No Norwegian top sportsmen have come out as gay, whereas a significant number of female world-class athletes have done so. Marketing research demonstrates beyond doubt that coming out of the closet for these women athletes has not had a negative effect on their popularity or market value.

Although the carnivalesque aspect of fan culture must be considered when trying to understand abusive taunts against the opposition, other possibilities should also be assessed. A range of researchers employ Baudrillard's radical postmodernism to explore 'cultural identities within the context of consumerism and intensive media simulation'.^{xxi} Research on emergent trends in fan culture can similarly be grounded in critical perspectives on consumerism and the rapidly expanding global economy of football, for instance as proposed by Adorno and Habermas.^{xxii} Habermas contends that modern sports can have profound influence over the ethical and moral dimensions of our social lives. According to this author, modern sport inspires strategic action that undermines mutual understanding between social agents, thus 'entailing one agent manipulating others, as if they were mere objects to be treated instrumentally'.^{xxiii} Other researchers have built on Adorno to critically examine modern sport as it has 'become debauched as it is subsumed to the logic of the marketplace'.^{xxiv}

A particularly interesting phenomenon in this regard is the development of parallel discourses on ethics. While the opponents are judged by one set of norms and values, a privileged position is consciously or unconsciously sought for oneself or one self's community. Doidge, for instance, has demonstrated how inter-club rivalry is fuelling player abuse and racism in Italian football.^{xxv} African footballers in particular have become targets of abuse from rival supporters as fans adapt to an increasingly multicultural environment. Racist taunts from fans, however, should not be uncritically taken as expressions of racism. The same fans who in one moment shout racist abuses against an opponent, can in the next celebrate the brilliance of one of their 'own' African players. The action is strategic in the sense that it is intended to hurt and, thus, manipulate the feelings of particular players on the opposing team, with the intention of negatively affecting their performance.

This type of abuse puts affected players in a bind. A player who complains will run the risk of revealing that the abuse is having an effect on his or her performance. According to Butler, 'linguistic injury appears to be the effect not only of the words by which one is addressed but the mode of address itself, a mode – a disposition or conventional bearing – that interpellates and constitutes a subject.' 'To be injured by speech is to suffer a loss of context, that is, not to know where you are.'xxvi

While some of these theoretical perspectives might look grim, the article also builds on earlier research on Norwegian football fans which has demonstrated that communities of fans do have the potential to react and adapt to global flows by 'questioning borders of identity and community, inviting in new members and reconstructing imagined communities, while facilitating the de-ethnicisation of the local community.xxvii Norwegian football fans have sometimes been first movers as local communities react and adapt to a changing environment.xxviii

Methodology

This article builds on results produced mainly through qualitative research, although the first step of the research was to produce a statistical overview of some trends in the public debate on football and homosexuality. This part of the research, however, is intended to indicate some main trends in the discourse on homosexuality in Norway. First, using the World Values Survey, an online database on 'values and cultural changes in societies all over the world',xxix I produced a dataset on Norwegian attitudes on homosexuality from 1982 until 2007, in addition to a comparative dataset on attitudes on homosexuality between 57 countries in 2006/2007. In the quantitative part of the research, Retriever, a Norwegian media survey service, is employed to search for keywords in newspapers and online media over the last 30 years. The keywords identified were 'homosexuality', 'homosexuality and football', 'minorities and football', 'racism and football', 'homophobia' and 'homophobia and football' (the search was performed in Norwegian). These two quantitative methodologies helped to produce an understanding of sociocultural change in the perception of homosexuality in Norway.

The next step was to select a few particularly interesting recent media articles that triggered online debates on homosexuality and football. Based on the quantitative part of the study, 12 articles published online were selected: '– De er redde for å bli Norges første fotball-homo' (on TV2.no), 'Ut av fotballboblen' (Bergens Tidende), 'Lettere å stå frem som homofil fotballspiller' (Aftenposten), 'Hylles for at han står frem som homo - Premier League' (VG), 'Homofile i fotballen' (fotball.no - Norges Fotballforbund), 'Hitzlsperger synes synd på Alex etter homo-utspill' (VG), 'Fotballsupport' (LLH), 'Fotball - homofobiens siste skanse' (Bergens Tidende), 'Flertall av fotballfans vil støtte homofile spillere' (forskning.no), 'Flere homofile topp-fotballspillere' (Gaysir.no), 'Er én av svært få åpent homofile fotballspillere' (Ringblad_files) and 'Eg likar ikkje football' (Norsk Skoleforum). The selection was not meant to be representative. It contained a diversity of media outlets: the main Norwegian commercial television channel (TV2); the largest online newspapers (vg.no and aftenposten.no); a major regional newspaper (Bergens Tidende); online sites for national gay and homosexual organisations (gaysir.no and LLH); and a site dedicated to science news (forskning.no). The purpose was to capture the greatest possible variety of arguments and counter-arguments in the current debate among football fans.

Each of these articles triggered a diversity of responses from readers. The main purpose of this part of the research was to analyse the arguments made by readers in the commentary fields and see if and how the arguments formed patterns relating to each other. The third step of the research was a

close reading of online debates among fans of Vålerenga and Rosenborg, two of the most popular clubs in Norway. We will return to these disputes in more detail later. In total, approximately 700 individual contributions to these debates were studied.

Shifting values and attitudes

The World Values Survey documents development and change in a large number of values and beliefs in 87 countries from 1981 to the present. The survey indicates significant changes in attitudes regarding homosexuality. In Norway, the changes have been more radical than in most other countries. In 2006 (the most recently published survey), only in Sweden, Andorra and Slovenia did respondents have a more tolerant view of homosexuality than in Norway. Forty-four percent of Norwegians found homosexuality 'always justifiable' while 6 per cent answered 'never justifiable'. According to the World Values Survey, then, negative attitudes against homosexuals are still held by a significant number of people in Norway, but significantly fewer than in France, Great Britain, United States, Spain and other countries with which Norway is often compared. More importantly, Norwegians expressed a considerably more liberal view of homosexuality after 1990.

In the early 1980s, things looked different. A large majority of Norwegians held negative attitudes about homosexuals, with a mere 19 per cent finding homosexuality 'always justifiable'. According to the World Values Survey, negative attitudes dominated throughout the 1980s, but changed markedly between 1990 and 1996 when, for the first time, more respondents answered that homosexuality was 'always justifiable' than 'never justifiable'. A cultural change had happened, quite abruptly, over a few years in the 1990s, from predominantly negative to positive views of homosexuality.

The shift in attitudes is even more marked in the media discourse on homosexuality. Until the early 1970s, 'invisibility' dominated, and only a handful of newspaper articles mentioned the issue at all – and when they did the context was almost always negative.

However, the media should not be seen as merely reflecting values and attitudes in society. The relationship is much more complex than that. Most Norwegians, for instance, did not personally know openly gay men or women. What they knew or believed to know about homosexuality was mainly built on secondhand sources such as the media. From this perspective, the media coverage from the mid-1970s is interesting as it perhaps contains the seed that later contributed to the shift in values and attitudes. For the first time, openly homosexual men and women were sometimes represented as fully human with intelligence, knowledge, feelings, dreams, successful careers and so on. They certainly paid a high price for coming out of the closet, as is well documented in a number of autobiographies from this period. Nonetheless, from a media studies perspective, it is notable to see a new media discourse appearing, at least as a possibility for framing homosexuality: gays and lesbians as 'normal' or 'just like you and me'. A key aspect of many of the articles from the 1970s and 1980s is precisely to represent gays and lesbians as 'not so different after all'. This was, for many Norwegians, the first time they had encountered information and knowledge that made it possible to reflexively reconsider values and attitudes regarding homosexuality.

The emergent frame of homosexuality as 'normal' was followed by the emergence of another and gradually more important frame: the anti-discrimination frame. It is noteworthy, however, that the media discourse about discrimination and the stigmatisation of gay and lesbians gained momentum much later than the struggle against the discrimination of women and ethnic minorities.

These struggles were also played out in football. The struggle to end discrimination against women in football had already begun in earnest in the 1970s and was still visible in the media discourse throughout the 1990s and later. In the 1990s, a similar type of discourse, this time against racism, developed both inside and outside football. A new term, 'homophobia', started to appear regularly in the Norwegian media in the mid-1980s in the context of growing public concern about HIV and Aids. It was mainly used, however, by activists and public intellectuals who sought to counteract a possible backlash against gay men. For instance, six articles in two leading national newspapers (VG and Aftenposten) had already used the term 'homophobia' by 1984. It is a sign of a deeper shift in the media discourse which was to come a few years later.

Gradually, more and more of the discourse on homosexuality came to be framed as struggle against discrimination, exclusion and violence against gays and lesbians. Negative attitudes towards gay and lesbians became news in themselves. From 1996 until 2014, I found 496 newspaper articles employing the term 'homophobia' to discuss discrimination and the exclusion of gay and lesbians in football. Every third article in Norwegian newspapers that used the term 'homophobia' related to football.

These, then, are some of the overall trends in the values and attitudes towards homosexuality found in Norway over the last decades. This historical sociocultural context is necessary to make sense of the resilience of anti-gay attitudes in football.

Emergent structures of negative attitudes

A qualitative analysis of homosexuality and football, focusing on texts and debates, can contribute to a deeper insight into the persistent homophobia. First, a paradox needs to be discussed: on the one hand, a large number of texts refer to various types of displays of negative attitudes towards homosexuality – for instance abusive taunts during games or posts online. Some also implicitly display such feelings in the online debates among fans. On the other hand, very few fans are willing to support their negative attitudes by presenting arguments.

In the fans' discourse, then, displays of negative attitudes towards homosexuality in football are found in numerous ways, but seldom in the form of deliberate argumentation. A few examples will help to clarify this point. First, on several occasions players in the Premier League acted out emotions in a way that could be or was interpreted as anti-gay. In one incident a high-profile player responded to abuse from fans of the opposing team by making gestures usually understood to mean 'homos' – here with disparaging intent. Both fans and the media well understood the intended meaning. The player, however, later denied having had negative opinions about gays and lesbians and said it had not been his intention to offend gays or lesbians by making those particular gestures. Nonetheless, the gestures, as interpreted by the audience and the media alike, built on a historically situated understanding of homosexuality. In this particular understanding, calling someone 'homo' was interpreted as an insult.

Another example is from the online forum Kjernen, an independent group of supporter of Rosenborg. In 2011, a public debate broke out after some Rosenborg fans shouted 'homo' to a Molde player. Juliee commented:

What is going on? Many are criticising Kjernen in Adressaxx and in other debate forums. I feel that Kjernen is creating a good atmosphere, and people should accept a few 'naughty' comments and

proclamations. I see nothing wrong in shouting 'I hate Molde city', or in something as innocent as 'homo'.

In this and a large number of similar comments, supporters implicitly employed arguments inspired by the gay and lesbian movement. Many in that movement have struggled to 'take back' or reclaim the term 'homo', and many young homosexuals are proud to identify themselves as such, sending a message that there is nothing shameful in it. From such a perspective, Juliee could be right to say that the word 'homo' has been emptied of negative connotations. Or, as Juliee puts it rhetorically: 'Is it now also wrong to shout 'hetero'?

From a critical realist perspective, words like 'homo' do not contain fixed or essential meanings, but are socially constructed. 'Homo' can indeed convey different meanings, depending on the situation and the sociocultural context of sender and receiver. The online reactions to the use of 'homo' in this specific context indicate that many football fans, drawing on their particular horizons of knowledge, do interpret this particular use of 'homo' as loaded with negative connotation. The majority of responses indicated that most fans understood the use of 'homo' in this context as an attempt to upset or offend players in the opposite team – as Andreas J put it: 'Calling player "homo" is just sad.'^{xxx}

The two views discussed above are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In football, it is possible to imagine someone who does not have 'anything against homosexuals' using the term 'homo' strategically to achieve a certain goal, for example, contributing to the victory of their home team. In this case 'homo' can be used to psych out opponents because it is expected to evoke memories of earlier stigmatisation and abuse, which in turn can cause or awake negative feelings. The many meanings of 'homo' are not only those that are socially constructed here and now by those present at the moment of communication, but are also embedded in historically situated structures of meaning. The meanings we make today of 'homo' are structured by a sociocultural history of meanings.

A similar example is found in a dispute among members of Klanen; supporters of Vålerenga, after a jury of 'prominent lesbians and gays' awarded Klanen the prize 'hetero of the year' at the 'Gay Gala 2011'. Klanen won the award for, inter alia, wielding a rainbow flag bearing the slogan 'all colours are beautiful' at Vålerenga matches.^{xxxii} 'Ronny La Rock' responded to a news item about the award: 'Well, well. What to say? Not "fucking gay", in any case.'^{xxxiii} 'Cyrus' follows up: 'I can say something, Ronny... At least better to be "hetero of the year" than "homo of the year". OK, so now it's out there:).' Ronny again: 'Heh heh. I totally agree with that!'

In this opening salvo we already get a glimpse of two recurrent themes in the debates on homosexuality among football fans: first, value hierarchies – hetero is better than homo; second, the pleasure of saying what ought not to be said. It is as if Ronny and Cyrus are already looking forward to the many angry replies they know will be coming. 'Loco' is critical: 'In what way is it better?' ('hetero' better than 'homo'). 'Lame Duck' is one of several who want to explain why 'hetero' is better: 'In today's society "homosexuality" is related to something negative. Not much negativity is connected to "heterosexuality" ... You can like it or hate it. But it is a reality.' Lame Duck is quick to mention that 'one of his best friends' is homosexual. 'Ronny La Rock' also claims to have 'homosexual friends' who don't mind his finding homosexuality 'distasteful'.

In many of the anti-gay posts online we see a similar pattern in which the authors position themselves in contrast and opposition to anticipated counter-arguments. In order to better understand the emergent homophobic discourse, we first need to explore a couple of the most common and effective counter-arguments against homophobia in football.

Criticising homophobia to construct an inclusive community

'Oslo 3' responds furiously to the negative comments on homosexuality on www.klanen.no: 'Yes, we are the club for all, and I mean ALL.'^{xxxiv} A large number of comments are posted online in support of an inclusive community with no discrimination based on race, gender or sexual preferences. Andreas J, referring to the dispute over anti-gay taunts from Rosenborg supporters against Molde players, states: 'What if someone from Rosenborg was gay and learns that some members of Kjernen use it to intimidate one of the players we hate the most? How would he then feel about coming out? And what if someone in Kjernen is gay? How easy will it then be for him to be himself?'^{xxxv}

I have previously published articles on how Klanen and Kjernen deal with racism, ethnic stereotypes and religious discrimination.^{xxxvi} In one instance, negative comments on a player with an African background in another team were met with arguments relating those comments to a player with a similar background in the supporter's own team. If such comments about African-Norwegians in opposing teams were to be accepted, they must also be accepted when made about 'our' players, the counterarguments went on. But negative comments on the background and identity of 'our' players cannot be accepted because they will hurt someone we feel for. Therefore, according to the emerging consensus among supporters of the teams I studied, 'we' cannot make such comments about 'them' either.

This process can be seen, drawing on Archer, as a collective reflexive dialogue on the universality of norms and values.^{xxxvii} It demonstrates that communities of supporters sometimes do have the capacity to critically examine norms and values in order to reconstruct and adapt them to a new context. In these examples, the role model, preferably a player from the team the supporters follow, plays a pivotal part in the process of reconstructing norms and values. What would he [the player in these examples] feel? Departing from this question which calls for empathy and reflection, supporters have been seen transcending the local and partisan, rewriting narratives of belonging and reimagining communities and boundaries.

In these cases, this line of argumentation which leads to a reconstruction of norms of values, overcame all opposition and ended up virtually without opposition. The hegemonic view among these supporters embraces ethnic diversity and tolerance although it does not mean that there is no racism among football fans in Norway today. The disputes on homosexuality stand in stark contrast, however, to the inclusive discourse on ethnic minorities and diversity. One explanation for this difference is the lack of openly gay players in male football. While calls for empathy and solidarity with players affected by racist taunts could be related to someone known and cherished, the calls for empathy with possibly homosexual players continued to be abstract and distant, and for that reason appealing to empathy with gay players did not have the strength to unleash a similar reflexive dialogue on the existing norms and values regarding homosexuality.

Positioning homophobia as a struggle to uphold the freedom of expression

Those who defend homophobic taunts respond to their critics by defending it as a legitimate way of expressing true and real feelings. According to many, such taunts happen spontaneously and should not be judged by the same standards as carefully considered statements. Typical arguments are: 'This is only the way I feel'; 'You can't be blamed for the way you feel'; 'This is just who I am'. With characteristic irony, one member of Kjernen writes: 'And in the terraces, the lack of common

courtesy is revealed in a number of ways. I propose that someone takes this seriously and educates the members in the correct ways to act out behaviour'.xxxviii

This line of argument builds on the notion that feelings are natural and spontaneous – they come from inside, and need to be expressed impulsively. Feelings and emotions locked up inside will sooner or later lead to emotional or psychological problems.

However, another dimension appears a little later in the dispute: the 'rights' of those who belong to the minority that 'hates homosexuality'. 'Ronny La Rock' complains about politicians who want to make people change their minds about racism and homophobia. 'Why should anyone be happy because TinTin, Barbar and Pippi Longstocking will be sued for racism'? He places the dispute on homophobic taunts within a metanarrative where it is no longer tolerated to use words like 'negro' or 'dago'. Others blame an omnipresent 'political correctness'. In a fascinating change of roles, 'Ronny La Rock' reminds other members of Klanen that Vålerenga is the club for everybody, including 'those who hate homosexuality'.

The explicit statements of hatred have led the editors of the online forum to exclude 'Ronny La Rock' which, again, leads to a fresh debate. 'Usbenga' notes the paradox in excluding someone for expressing the opinion that homosexuality should not be tolerated. According to Usbenga, something that began with arguments in favour of tolerance ended up in intolerance. For this reason, according to supporters, homophobia must be accepted in order to guarantee diversity of thought and freedom of expression.

It is perhaps best understood as a parody of the parodies recommended by Judith Butler to resist and subvert the power structures which regulate our lives. In this case, however, it is not the minorities that seek to ridicule normative cultural expressions and performances, but homophobes who ridicule the argument of diversity by employing it against those who want to stop discrimination, exclusion and abuse.

The meanings of homophobia

Football supporters can be the first members of local communities to embrace change and reconstruct norms and values – for instance to integrate migrants and newcomers. However, as homophobia in football demonstrates, they can also be the last. The question remains: why football?

Many Norwegian fans do not express any negativity towards homosexuality. In fact, most fans seem to support the inclusion of gays and lesbians in football, and reject the taunts and statements that gays and lesbians are likely to experience as anti-gay. These supporters, however, belong to a subculture with its own normative cultural expressions and performances. It is, to a large extent, socially constructed as a contrast to the 'imagined docile majority', the majority of people who are seen as living conventional lives. The members of Klanen and Kjernen understand fan culture as different, untamed, unconventional, uncontrollable, rebellious, spontaneous, expressive and passionate. Consequently, fans should be expected to be naughty, and to use language that others may find inappropriate and offensive.

In this article I have shown that a significant shift in norms and values regarding homosexuality in Norwegian society has taken place since the 1990s. Nowadays, negative attitudes against homosexuals are seldom expressed publicly, while a number of respected public figures have come out of the closet. Football seems to be the last bastion of resistance where a significant subculture of homophobia continues openly to reproduce a homophobic discourse.

I have argued that this discourse, while claiming to be spontaneous and non-deliberate, builds on and contributes to reconstructing historically produced structures of homophobia. From studies of collective resilience, we know that resistance to change can sometimes succeed in impeding adaptation to change and social transformation. Collective resilience can hinder necessary action and produce a social reaction. In this case, the subculture of football fandom is sometimes seen as being in opposition to hegemonic social norms and values. Shocking behaviour, including homophobic taunts, contributes to producing identities and a community imagined to be untamed by power structures and 'political correctness'. Reflection on the issue of homophobia reveals the reasons a critical approach to 'sustainability' is necessary. Many other ecophilosophers continued to advocate 'non-violence' and to emphasise social harmony. Kvaløy, in contrast, argued that the conflict model of social change should guide activism: 'I'm all for polarisation. That's the only way we get deeper discussions'.^{xxxix} Resilience studies have also demonstrated that collective processes of autonomous organising and self-learning have sometimes led to the breakdown in cascades of existing structures of norms and values.^{xl} In the case of homophobia, the counter arguments have not succeeded in the same way and to the same degree as in the case of racism. This is most likely due to the lack of role models which hinders feelings of empathy and global solidarity.^{xli}

Another urgent question for research is related to the conditions in football and football fandom that make the reproduction of homophobia possible. I would suggest that Adorno and Habermas did anticipate some of the current troubles in football in their critique of modern sport subsumed under a capitalist logic. Today, more than ever, winning is the ultimate goal that will bring both pride and money in professional football. Players and fans alike are tempted to break norms and regulations if this is seen to further the campaign to subdue the opponent.

A large number of fans in this study claim to have nothing against homosexuals, claiming to have a number of homosexual friends. They argue that homophobic taunts are part of a strategic communication that will psych out the opponent, a device that can be used against the opposition. Others have previously noted that some men use strategic sexism to sustain masculinity, or strategic racism 'to turn the race to their advantage'.^{xlii}

While the large majority of supporters continue to struggle for a more inclusive fan culture, some football fans have found a space where they can reproduce oppressive power structures and coldly try to use them to help their team to win.

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