

English Summary

The topic of this dissertation is how supporters relate to the increasing commercialisation of football (soccer) in Norway. The point of departure is that football has gained increased popularity, both worldwide and in Norway, but that the growth has also challenged the values and practises of core supporters. Apparently, new middle class supporters have been more attracted to the game, which has resulted in the marginalisation or even exclusion of the traditional working class supporter and the social practices of this particular group. This has especially been a widespread suggestion concerning English football, where ticket prices have multiplied since 1992, and where supporters are not allowed to stand. The traditional terraces have been replaced by all-seater stadia, and the atmosphere of English football is radically different from the seventies and eighties.

In Norway, things have developed in a similar direction, although there are important differences. Among the most important things is the fact that up to 2005, tickets are seldom scarce. This means that ticket prices are comparatively moderate in relation to England, even if they have increased considerably for the last ten years. That supporters are allowed to stand is another significant difference. Yet another interesting fact is that a modern Norwegian supporter culture has developed parallel to the commercialisation post 1990. While the commercialisation of the English game seems to have been connected to the marginalisation of core supporters, supporters and the national Football Association (NFF), the clubs and the directors seem to have cooperated in Norway. The growth of a Norwegian supporter culture may well have been important in explaining the major growth in attendances at top division games in Norway since 2003.

However, conflicts do exist also in Norway. In the dissertation, it is distinguished between three dimensions of commercialisation. First; *commodification* implies that the game, the club and its relation to supporters and spectators are increasingly expressed as a market relationship. This means that spectators are considered as being first and foremost customers, while traditional supporters were often regarded as a part of the club. Secondly, *institutional restructuring* implies changes in tournaments, the rules of the game and possible changes in playing styles in order to satisfy the needs of spectators who dislike scientific or defensive football. And thirdly, *spectacularisation* means that a football game is more than the game itself: In the dissertation, it is defined as all sorts of activities, by the club, by the NFF, by spectators in general or by supporters, that are oriented towards making the game a *spectacle*, something to be attracted to in addition to the game itself. The conscious use of music, screens, cheerleaders etc. are examples, as well as the atmosphere created by the supporters themselves, by singing or the use of visual spectacles (flags, banners, etc.).

Theoretically, the study draws on different perspectives and concepts. In order to understand the fascination of football, chapter 2 discusses the phenomenology of football. It is argued that to supporters, football is something more than just a couple of hours of entertainment. Rather, it involves both rivalry, social solidarity and expressions of identity. In chapter five, it is discussed to what extent concepts from several theories can be utilised in understanding supporters and their relation to the developments of the game. These concepts include parts of the work of (among others) Albert Hirschman (exit, voice and loyalty), Giddens (self-identity and identity work), Bourdieu (habitus, doxa and what is labelled football-cultural capital), as well as a discussion of football as religion. In chapter six, concepts and theories from the sociology of football is discussed, in order to reach a typology of different forms of alignments to football among supporters. A two-dimensional model is developed. The first

dimension distinguishes between traditional and modern orientations, the second between participatory and consumer orientations. These dimensions are the main focus in the analysis, but they also give rise to four different “types” of supporters, which are briefly discussed (exclusive, critics, conformists and innovators).

Methodically, Norwegian internet forums are utilised, both club forums and forums related to the different supporter clubs. The analysis mainly consist of qualitative interpretations of both the attitudes of different participants in these discussions (although some quantitative judgements also apply), as well as interpretations of the discussions as such. In discussing questions concerning the commercialisation of the game, supporters continually negotiate what it implies to be a supporter of a club. This means, for example, that whether or not one should use a replica shirt at games, is important in defining legitimate supporter practises. In this way, questions concerning the different forms of commercialisation are extensively discussed in internet forums.

The analysis of commodification shows that it is by most supporters regarded as illegitimate to the extent that it threatens central symbols or rituals, but that there is limited opposition at the more general level. For instance, that football clubs are trying to utilise their symbols as *brands*, seems to be widely accepted. On the other hand, when sponsors are buying the right to put their logo on the club shirts, supporters dislike it if the colour of the logo conflicts with the colour of the shirt, or if there are too many logos on the shirt. In principle, most supporters prefer one single sponsor on the chest, but they somewhat reluctantly seem to accept that this would lead to financial problems for their club. Supporters are also hostile to the fact that sponsors occupy large parts of the pre-match preparations. This threatens their possibilities for expressing their own rituals before the game. There are also examples that they succeed in reversing these forms of commodification.

When it comes to institutional restructuring, the conflicts are not so much between supporters and club as between supporters and NFF, UEFA and FIFA. The initial observation is that both the rules and the tournaments in football are changing slowly and gradually. The national leagues form the main part of the season in all countries, including Norway, and the rules of the game are very similar to those agreed upon in the 19th century. On the other hand, it is reasonable to assume that in order to reach even larger international markets, it is tempting for football to change both the format of the tournaments and the rules, in order to increase the number of decisive games, and in order to increase the number of goals. Norwegian supporters seem to be quite conservative in both these respects, defending status quo. However, they seem to have problems in arguing for their conservatism. That no dramatic changes are needed in football seems to be part of an internalized *doxa*, more than it is a result of discussions.

The analysis of *spectacularisation* is divided into three parts. The first concerns spectacles that are initiated by the club, such as the use of music or cheerleaders. The second is initiated by spectators that are not defined as belonging to the most self-conscious supporters. “The Wave” (‘bølgen’) is an example. The third part analyses how they relate to different forms of spectacularisation that are initiated by the supporters themselves. Traditionally, Norwegian supporters have been inspired by English football culture, and singing has been their preferred activity. During the latest years, younger supporters are increasingly inspired by latin football culture, and the use of *tifo* and flags have become more frequent. The analysis clearly indicates that the most important norm for supporters is that spectacularisation should be the result of the supporters’ own initiatives. They do not want to participate in activities initiated

by the club, while they are more divided when it comes to activities initiated by other spectators. More concretely, they relate the activities initiated by the club to other sports in which they dislike the atmosphere, as handball or basketball. These sports turn into important symbols of what football should *not* be like, while they for some clubs directors may have been an inspiration for the development of their arrangements.

In the concluding chapter, it is argued that football as a result of commercialisation has become an important part of modern popular culture. However, the intensity of the attachment to the game among the ardent supporters points in other directions. Commercialisation is therefore less straightforward in football than in most other sports, and perhaps also than in most other parts of popular culture.