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Close strangers or strange friends? The London Olympics and Anglo-Norwegian sports relations in a historical perspective

Abstract

This article studies similarities and disparities between the two nations England and Norway as they could be observed before and during the London 2012 Olympics, and discuss them in the historical perspective of geopolitical and sportive relations. The main perspective is how these relations have been seen and experienced from Norway. The article also studies whether the London Olympics of 2012 did present new forms of relationships between the two geographical neighbours. The article discusses the role of ball games, preferably team handball at the 2012 Games, as one example of where sporting interests differs.

The article reflects upon these matters in a historical context. It builds upon traditional historical methods; document and media analysis. It also looks at the 2012 London Olympics against the background of the former London Games of 1908 and 1948, and the overall historical sports relations between England, 'land of sport' and a small country like Norway, who generally has been on the receiving end of these interchanges. Such asymmetric relationships invites to a critical use of perspectives like cultural imperialism and post-colonialism. The article discusses whether such perspectives can be fruitful also when one discusses matters between so-called 1.World nations. As the title of the article indicates, Norway and England are both close, politically and culturally, while also being strangers to one another, e.g. in parts of the sports culture. The 2012 Olympics seemed to reinforce this impression.

Keywords:

Olympic Games, history, London, Norway, sports, geopolitics

Introduction:

When it comes to Olympic Games, Norway is a winter sports nation. Together with Austria and Lichtenstein, it is the only country with a better medal record from the Winter Games than from the Summer Games.¹ – It is perhaps one of those slightly ironic cases of history then, that the only 'winter' event that has been presented at any London Games; the ice skating of 1908, happened without Norwegian participation. Yet, Norway's relations to the three London Olympic (Summer) Games and to the English

sport in general, provides special cases of cultural and geopolitical links between two politically and culturally close, albeit very different sporting nations. In 1908 the difference came out on the ice; the English favoured figure skating, which was the Olympic event, while the Norwegians preferred speed skating and stayed home. In 2012 the Norwegians dominated (women's) team handball, while the English fancied other ball games. Behind it all is the Norwegian *anglofilia*; the uncritical idolisation of English football, and the distinction between Englishmen playing cricket and Norwegians who like skiing.

This article will attempt to analyse similarities and disparities between the two nations England and Norway as they could be observed historically and during the London 2012 Olympics, and discuss them in the perspective of geopolitical and sportive relations. Did the London Olympics of 2012 present new forms of relationships between the two geographical neighbours? The main perspective will be the bilateral relations – ‘the bridge over the North Sea’² – as seen and experienced from Norway. The article is based upon primary and secondary literature and recent media observations.

Theoretical and methodical perspectives on an uneven relationship

In the history of sport, England has been the recognised epicentre for centuries. England was the ‘land of sport’; the inventor of modern sports and the governing body of many sports. The British sports club became a model for organizing local level sports in several countries, if not all. In sport Britain was the nation to look up to, to admire, to emulate, to be recognised by, and eventually to challenge and demand some respect from. Most of the world's sports nations can relate to an asymmetric history of that kind. Also Norwegians came to find themselves at the receiving end of their relations with the English.

However, the Norwegian sports movement emerged from the late 19th century in much the same way as it grew up in other nations; as a mix between homemade, traditional physical exercises, and impulses from abroad. In Norway this meant that the local *idrett*, in the form of winter activities like skiing and ice-skating, together with maritime exercises like rowing and sailing, plus rifle shooting, met with *gymnastics* from Sweden, *turnen* from Germany, and most notably *sport* from England.³

The process when impulses from abroad are introduced, integrated or rejected in new cultures is a familiar topic in history and social sciences, and has been studied through all sorts of theoretical perspectives. The spread of modern, competitive sport in its Western form, has been portrayed as cultural diffusion, cultural imperialism, cultural hegemony or the broader; modernisation, globalisation, or simply development. Allen Guttmann has discussed the use of these terms, but mostly applied to development- or Third World-countries, as they were once called.⁴ One question implicit in this article, is whether such perspectives also can be used to understand sports relations between so-called First World nations. One argument for attempting this would be that inside the field of sport England held a particularly dominating role, and that small countries like Norway, in the late 19th and early 20th century, can be said to have been in an extremely one-sided relationship with England. Even though the Norwegian situation was neither postcolonial

nor post-imperial, such perspectives could provide interesting questions. E.g. what were the long term effects of this cultural meeting with the English sport? What happened after the dominance was gone, or not longer so obvious? Is there a legacy, a 'colonisation of meaning'?⁵

For England, Norway was obviously not the 'significant', in the meaning relevant, 'other'. Norway was too small and insignificant. What if we turn the question around? England held a special role for all sporting nations. But the contrast was too big for England to be called relevant in that sense for the Norwegians. For Norway, the significant others were their Scandinavian neighbours; Sweden and Denmark, by whom they could be accepted as a challenger and hope to beat, occasionally. The English were in another league, looked upon as a master to be treated respectfully.

Hence, in general, the Norwegian relations to the English in sports were characterised by attitudes of inferiority. The English were the experts and authorities who knew it all, while the Norwegians were the students, eagerly admiring their masters.⁶ This general impression was arguably valid for most sports, except for winter sports on snow and ice, where the Norwegians felt they had less reason for feeling secondary. The superior-inferior relationship is obviously a historical relationship.

The geo-political history

Norway and England are geographical neighbours with a very different historical impact on the world. One is a former world power, though the last half century in relative decline. The other is a small nation, poor at the time the other was great, the last hundred years, however, economically prosperous and regularly scoring high in UN and OECD polls on where the "better life" is.⁷ England/Great Britain and Norway share the North Sea as border area and a field of economic interest (oil, fisheries). They cover somewhat uneven geographical areas; Norway, stretching far to the North, is clearly the larger,⁸ covering 323,802 km², England 130,395 km². In all other respects; population size, political, economic and military power, England has been the bigger and the dominant.

After close cultural contacts during the early Medieval Ages,⁹ Norway bore less strategic interest for England until the Napoleonic wars, when they ended up as enemies. Denmark/Norway was pitted against Sweden/England in 1812. That was however, the last time war waged between the two nations. The last two hundred years have been characterised by peaceful coexistence and political alliances.

At the same time, the two countries experienced a very different political and economical development. While England saw industrial revolutions on its land and grew to become the world's leading military, economic and political power during the 18th and 19th centuries, Norway remained a poor and sparsely populated place on earth. England had 8,3 million inhabitants in 1801, in 2011 53 millions, while Norway only had 0,880 millions in 1801, and reached 5 millions in 2012.¹⁰ Politically Norway became a subject of the Kingdom of Denmark until it gained a political independence in 1814. From then on till 1905 Norway found itself in junior role in a royal alliance with Sweden. There

have, however, been areas where Norway has scored higher than their population should indicate. Norway was a major shipping nation during most of the 20th century. The merchant fleet was the fourth largest in the world at the outbreak of the 2. World War, and played a vital role in bringing supplies to the isolated Britain during the war.

The general cultural development in Norway during the late 19th and early 20th centuries had seen broad German-friendly tendencies: after all, the nation had presented the great philosophers, composers, poets and scientists to the world. In Norwegian schools German was the most taught foreign language and in science it was the lingua franca. However, this did not hinder Norway and England from being on friendly terms, and cultural impulses like the Boys' Scouts, the Salvation Army – and the sport – from reaching Norway.

Through the first half of the 20th century the English connection grew visibly stronger. It was part of this picture that in 1905, when Norway gained full independence after the dissolution of the union with Sweden, and Norwegians had voted for monarchy as their constitutional form and a new royal family had to be established, that the candidates to this coming Norwegian royalty were found in Denmark and England. The new Queen of Norway was the daughter of the English King Edward VII. This strengthened the already existing historical relationship; the Norwegian royal family was, and has continued to be kin to the English royal family. Of symbolic interest in some cases maybe, however sport is a field where precisely the presence of royalties as national symbols can give the occasion a different level of meaning.

The 2. World War and the German occupation of Norway from 1940, linked Norway to England stronger than ever before.¹¹ After the war Norway and England continued to be political allies in the NATO. During the first post-war decades they also shared scepticism to the European Union (EU). This is however, where they have parted company. Britain became a member in 1973, while Norway is still on the outside. Related to this is a geopolitical situation which makes control over the seas and their natural resources a key point. Possible conflicts on fisheries and oil/gas have made borders on the ocean important. However, the bilateral relations have been mostly harmonious, with a slight exception of environmental issues.¹²

The EU question has, however, made the political atmosphere of 2012 less tight than the case was in 1948 when both nations were members of the European trade organisation EFTA, both were heading for NATO membership, and both had just come out of the 2. World War as close friends and allies. Still, the overall relationship has been one of neighbourly friendliness, familiarity, mutual understanding – and cultural contrasts; e.g. do the English distinctions of social class appear to be oceans apart from Norwegian equalitarian social democracy. This has enabled all kinds of relations in the fields of sport – ranging from Norwegians performing pilgrim travels to English football grounds to mutual ignorance of many other sports.

Norway at the London Olympics 2012; historical context and present challenges

After some initial reservations more than a hundred years ago, Norway has shown great interest in the Olympic Games, both as applicant to be host, as host and as participant. It is the only Nordic nation which has accommodated the Olympic Games more than once (though Winter Games; 1952 and 1994), and Oslo, the capitol, is currently involved in a public debate on whether to announce its candidacy as host city of the Olympic Winter Games of 2022. The London 2012 Olympics led to a rising interest for another Norwegian application. A growing curiosity for the ideas, plans and strategies that made the London Olympics relatively successful could be observed. In other words, were there yet again things to be learned from the English? This is an ongoing debate, the end of which is unclear at the moment.

Although Norway was a keen Olympic participant nation with close connections to England, the two nations split sides in 1980, when the Norwegians joined the American led boycott of the Moscow Olympics, while the British chose to take part. On a large scale this is the only time the two nations have gone separate ways.

For the 2012 London Olympic Games the Norwegian Olympic Committee selected 64 athletes (31 women and 33 men). They came home with a disappointingly modest medal harvest (2-1-1).¹³ Seen numerically; in participants and medals, the 2012 Games did not differ dramatically from the former London Games.¹⁴ However, the three contingents did not only represent very different historical versions of the Norwegian society and three different sport systems regarding the organisation of top level sport. They also came to London in three different international situations. The 1908 Games took place only three years after a dramatic dissolution of a very unpopular union with Sweden. The 1948 Games came just three years after the 2. World War. The 2012 Games, for Norway's part were the first to happen in 'normal' times, without dramatic political events preceding the Games.

Former London Olympic Games

More than a hundred years ago the Norwegians' self perception in most sports was that of a keen beginner. Sports leaders realised they were inexperienced newcomers; hence, they were eager to learn, especially from the English. They established relations, travelled to see and study, invited clubs and coaches in a variety of sports. The first national association to do so was the Norwegian Rowing Association, who hired a coach to prepare for the London Olympic Games 1908.¹⁵ At that time, Norway was a fresh nation on the international scene, after in 1905 having come out of an unpopular union with Sweden. The main concerns of the union, seen from the Norwegian side, had been that Swedish authorities were responsible for foreign politics and that the Swedish king also was king of Norway. The London Olympics in this situation was a chance to display the Norwegian flag among equals. That is also why the extra-Olympic Games of 1906 has been given prominent place in early Norwegian sports history; it was the first time Norway participated as a totally independent nation. It was also the first time Norwegian athletes came home with Olympic gold medals. Norway had attended the 1900 Olympics in Paris, demonstrating the difference between political geography and sports geography;

while showing that Norway had established a fair degree of autonomy in the union with Sweden, perhaps also illustrating that sport was not an overwhelmingly important matter for Swedish foreign relations.¹⁶

However, in 1908 the aftermath of the dissolution of the union with Sweden was still visible and alive, even though the separation ended peacefully, after threats and military mobilisation had been a heated issue on both sides. Nevertheless, a fierce rivalry with the former union partner emerged, above all in sports.¹⁷ Antagonisms before the dissolution had provoked a first Norwegian sports boycott on political grounds, when Norwegian skiers refused to travel to Sweden to compete in the Nordic Games in the winter 1905 – an action which prompted a Swedish response in the form of a boycott of Swedish-Norwegian sporting collaboration in the years to come. This last boycott was mostly enacted in the nationally symbolic-laden winter sports; hence the 1908 Games became an international scene on which this rivalry could be displayed. The importance of the performance in London was perhaps more emphasized on the Swedish side than the Norwegian. According to historian Jan Lindroth, Swedish politicians on a broad scale were eager to provide conditions so that Swedish athletes could demonstrate who was the ‘big brother’ in Scandinavia. State economic support for Olympic participation was increasing in both nations, although not rising particularly above the symbolic gesture level. With clear national arguments Swedish politicians had voted to grant 15000 Swedish Crowns, many times the amount their Norwegian colleagues agreed upon. ‘We do not wish to be passed by Norway in such a matter, do we?’ Swedish minister of ecclesial affairs Å. H. Hammarskjöld argued.¹⁸

Norwegians too, with some exceptions, were eager to participate in London. However, after a hammering by the Swedes 11 – 3 in the first football international ever played by both nations, a more sombre and realistic tone seems to have dawned upon the otherwise highly patriotic Norwegians. Alas, expectations were not very high, and disappointment was not too big, when the Swedes could triumph in the Olympic sports, by being ranked the third best nation in the medals table. The Norwegians placed eight best and seemed to be happy to be allowed to show their flag at the Olympic arena. The outcome was still that the Norwegian athletes had made a performance of which the nation could be proud. Two gold medals were won in rifle shooting, a coming Olympic stronghold for Norwegian Olympians, and six other medals were also conquered. Sports officials claimed, with a certain impact, that it, also in the future, would be important for a small nation to be present when youth of the world was gathering. Hence, during the next four years Norwegians tried to collect their athletic strength; Parliament granted three times more money for the next Games, money that amongst others was spent by hiring more British coaches and by presenting the third largest contingent of all participating nations in the Olympic Games in 1912 – which by the way took place in Sweden.¹⁹

However, not everybody inside sports had been ardent supporters of Olympic participation. Especially among sports officials who feared for the development of the Norwegian ‘idrett’,²⁰ there was both reluctance and resistance to the idea of staging Olympic Games every fourth year. Sports leaders from the gymnastic and rifle shooting associations controlled the existing umbrella organisation for Norwegian sports.²¹ One of them, Johan Martens, the gymnasts’ leader, meant that Olympics every fourth year was ‘too frequent’.²² Instead he and others aimed for a sport in the service of overall physical

health and not the least; defence of the fatherland. Another opponent, Jacob Grøttum stated that at the Olympics ‘there are no requests for the participant’s physical development in a healthy and harmonious direction’.²³ Olympic Games were portrayed as sensationalism, unhealthy specialisation and record hysteria causing immoral prioritising inside sports. These military oriented sports leaders were on the losing side, however. The positive impressions from the first London Olympic Games would instead contribute to growing discontent with the way Norwegian sports had been organised, and lead to the foundation of a new national sports federation – an organisation which was quite differently positive to international competitive sport – in 1910.²⁴ – In that sense the first London Olympics contributed to the argument of national honour gaining terrain.

The next London Olympics in 1948 also came at a special time. The London connection had grown strong during the 2-World War. The Norwegian government and the Royal family had managed to escape from occupant German soldiers in 1940 and lived in the English capital as refugees for the rest of the war. The ‘London government’ was the name of the Norwegian exile authorities. The state run Norwegian Radio broadcasted from London and ‘the voice from London’ became an important and well-known symbol for the resistance movement. Many personal relationships with British culture were also established. E.g. Prince, later King, Olav V, who also was a former student of Balliol College at Oxford, strengthened his sympathies for the Arsenal Football Club.

That only three years had passed since the 2-World War was valid for (almost) all participating nations. However to Norway this held a special relevance. Norwegian sport had come out of the war, arguably more marked and weakened than other nations, since it in addition to war’s ‘normal’ ordeals, had carried through a five year sports strike – a boycott of and a protest against the German occupiers and the Nazi rule of Norway. The ‘sports’ strike’ meant no competitions and no training for the overwhelming majority of Norwegian sportsmen and –women from late autumn 1940 till May 1945. This obviously handicapped their sports performances the first years after the war. And it made the London Games even more welcome, as an international return to normality among friends – an amity that was felt stronger not only by the absence of the Axis powers in 1948, but also by the fact that Norwegian relations to Britain, due to the alliances made during the war, were closer than ever before. It was hardly accidental that Crown Prince (later King) Olav, cousin of the English King George VI, had a prominent position in the Olympic contingent, as leader for the relatively successful sailors – another traditional Norwegian stronghold in Summer Olympics – who came home with Norway’s only gold medal.²⁵ Among friends one could live with achievements that were not always as wanted. Hence, any medals that Norwegians could bring home were welcomed. The London Games cemented the friendly relations, which were demonstrated also during the coming Winter Olympics in Oslo 1952. Then, the death of King George VI just before the Games were about to start – a death in the family so to say – prompted a court mourning in Norway. At the opening ceremony in Oslo there was a two minutes of silence to honour the English King, and neither the Norwegian King nor Crown Prince was present, something which made an impression on the English audience, according to the London correspondent of the newspaper Aftenposten.²⁶

London 2012

When London invited to Olympic Games for the third time in 2012, the situation obviously was different. But what had changed? Did the London Olympics of 2012 present new forms of relationships between the two geographical neighbours, and if so how? The two had lived through the Cold War as NATO allies. England had, in contradiction to Norway, joined the ‘new Europe’, the European Union. Regarding their economic and geopolitical situations, England, the former dominant of the world was no longer a world power, in all or most areas, although it was a member of the UN’s Security Council and a self-evident member of the G-7 and G-20 groups. Norway on the other side, as an oil producer, had become more affluent and managed to maintain a welfare state. The fact that it is not a member of the European Union – regardless of the prospects concerning Britain’s relations to the EU – has not impacted its situation in the world to a degree one could perhaps expect. Today its non-membership is more a sign of sovereignty on the symbol-level than it is an impact on real geopolitics.

Another element that had been added to the bilateral relations was the popular cultural dimension. This became particularly evident during the closing ceremony on the final day of the Games, when symbols of ‘Englishness’ of all sorts and branches of popular culture were distributed to the world. The Norwegian TV audience was indeed a grateful assembly of receivers, a great part of them having lived with these trademarks of English culture since the 1960s, when television came to Norway. TV was in itself one of those new inventions established between the second and the third London Games which substantially reinforced Anglo-Norwegian relations. English TV has – perhaps until it was challenged by American youth series during the last two decades – been dominant in the TV market in Norway. Humour programmes especially, but also drama series and children’s programs were transmitted on what could be called a common cultural wavelength and became immensely popular. Not to mention pop music, where the influence has been overwhelming.

To this body of popular cultural influences one can also add sports. Norwegian TV in its early years (the 1960s) annually televised the Grand National steeplechase from the Aintree Racecourse and the Oxford vs. Cambridge Boat Race at the Thames; two significant signs of spring on the Norwegian TV menu, and two introductions to a manifold and different English sports culture. More influential however; from 1969 the Norwegian state broadcaster NRK directly transmitted English football games. Every Saturday afternoon in the half year of winter (so as not to collide with the Norwegian football season) an English league game could be watched by Norwegian TV viewers. This established a firm bond of interest across the North Sea – in one direction; from Norway to England.

The common interest in football was, however, the big exception. Even though the two countries were on friendly terms politically and in many ways culturally close, they also displayed dissimilar sports cultures. Hence, the two nations very rarely have been rivals on particular sports fields. This was demonstrated also in London 2012. One of two gold medals for Norway in the 2012 Olympics came in women’s team handball. This sport can serve as an example of the lacking similarities in the practice field between the two neighbours, also when it comes to ball games, football apart. While Britain cultivates cricket, net ball, rugby and field hockey as natural games to play, these sports are more or

less absent in Norway. Norway on the other side nurtures team handball – a ball game which is rather non-existent in Britain, but quite popular in Continental Europe. Although clearly not the biggest ball game in the world, it has substantial international following: Korea, Russia, Eastern and Central Europe, Scandinavia, Germany, France (who won the two last Olympic gold medals in the men's game), Spain and Northern Africa are international strongholds. To a surprising degree Norway, in the women's game, the last twenty five years has been an international championship contender with gold medals from the last two Olympics, 2008 and 2012. The 'handball girls' have become immensely popular Norwegian icons, winning national sports awards regularly. The sport has also become a popular children's and hence, mass sport in Norway.

The English situation in this sport was markedly different. The British Handball Association had to engage in active recruiting, also internationally, to be able to field the national team expected from an Olympic host nation. This even gave Norwegian handball players from the lower divisions a chance to become Olympians, not for Norway, but for Great Britain, if they could provide some sort of British origin.²⁷ British media also had to try to educate the local spectators in the basics of the game and what to expect.²⁸ Such predispositions gave the Norwegian media a chance to be not just slightly patronizing over the British, who simply did not know or understand this game. Media reports amused themselves and their readers over English spectators who obviously had no clue of the game and hence, displayed the un-correct kind of reactions at the 'wrong' situations of the game.²⁹ This was a rare occasion which the Norwegian media could not let slip away. Better though, the even rarer appreciations – handball became a spectator success in London – of a sport many Norwegians due to the success of the women, to a certain degree tend to see as 'ours', or at least partly ours, disregarding the fact that the game was a German/Danish invention, and that the Soviet bloc dominated, particularly the women's game, for decades.

Nonetheless, the 'handball girls' salvaged the London Olympics for the Norwegians, by defending their Olympic title from 2008. By doing so they also contributed to a sportive self esteem which, in spite of overall disappointment, continued to be at quite another level than what it had been for most of the 20th century. Since 1992 Norwegian athletes had been performing on a broader and higher level than before, bringing home an increasing number of medals from both Summer and Winter Olympics. According to most observers the modern elite sports system adopted by the Norwegian Sports Federation; 'Olympiatoppen', was highly influential in this relative success, creating a belief in continued achievements.³⁰ The support apparatus of Olympiatoppen was undoubtedly behind both the Norwegian gold medals of 2012.

The other gold medal came in men's kayaking, admittedly not a big sport in Norway, nor internationally. Perhaps therefore, it was a sport where the knowledge and the strategies of the elite sports system could excel and prove its value. All the same, Eirik Verås Larsen could add another Olympic medal to the ones he already had from 2004 and 2008.³¹ More of a sensation, however, was the achievement of Bartosz Piasecki. Piasecki, son of a Polish immigrant who was also his coach, brought home a silver medal in the hitherto relatively unknown sport of fencing. Representing a national sports association with barely one thousand members, he created a totally new situation.³² Never before had a Norwegian athlete progressed to an Olympic final in this sport. Nor had they been

anywhere close, for that matter. The best Olympic performance so far was an 11th place from 1984. When Piasecki fenced for Olympic gold in the men's épée final on the evening of 1 August 2012, it led the biggest TV network in Norway to throw away its original schedule for this Olympic Wednesday, to show fencing primetime – a slightly surreal situation for Norwegian fencing enthusiasts. Piasecki's performances on the *piste* attracted so many viewers during the evening that this final match – where he lost to the Venezuelan Ruben Limardo – ranked among the top ten of Olympic TV-events in Norway.³³ In fact, it made fencing the third most popular Olympic TV sport, beaten only by team handball and athletics.

These pleasant individual achievements could not deter however, that the general impression was one of discontent. The amount of medals was far below expectations. What could be the reason? The elite sports system, 'Olympiatoppen', for the last twenty years had seemed to work after its intentions; to improve Norwegian top level sports achievements. One of its acknowledged advantages has been its flexibility and will to bring the different sports together in order to make cross-sports learning possible. Particularly the smaller sports seem to have benefitted from this.³⁴ Did the meagre harvest of medals in London 2012 mean an end to this success story? It is, of course too early to tell, but one thing it did lead to was renewed evaluation work. A so-called 'heavy' committee was established by the Norwegian Sports Federation to once more scrutinise the elite sports system. Their report will not be available, however, until spring 2013.³⁵

That the English performed well in their own Olympics was easily observed from abroad. Many of these triumphs can be called usual success stories from sport with their individual twists. However, Bradley Wiggins' gold medal in cycling's time trial was especially noticed in Norway, as it was in England, where he from 2013 became 'Sir' Bradley Wiggins. His gold medal in the otherwise not particularly attractive event, from a spectator's view at least, individual time trial, generated the peak traffic moment of the whole Olympics on the BBC online services.³⁶ Also in Norway his feats attracted interest. Why? Cycling is a relatively recent link in the Anglo-Norwegian sporting relations. In both nations cycling has seen a significant increase in popularity over the last years. The interest for races like Tour de France, particularly, has accelerated, and both nations have seen talented riders rising to fame. While the English for the first time can boast an overall Tour de France winner, the Norwegians have gone to cycling heaven over (green) jersey wins and stage triumphs. Such feats are not to be despised in a young and fresh cycling nation, simmering with interest during the summer season. One of the young Norwegian prospects; Edvald Boasson Hagen, rides on the same professional team as English hero Bradley Wiggins. Hence, the link is clear: They are team-mates. Norwegian media likes to remind people of this. Also, Norway had other promising riders from which the nation had hopes. One of them, Alexander Kristoff, actually seized a bronze medal in the road race.

The London 2012 Olympics was also called 'The Digital Games'. As was the case in England, the Games in Norway saw a new reality for wired and televised sports events. The Norwegian public was given more offers to watch and experience Olympic sports than ever before. However, 'offering everything isn't enough in the age of multiple devices', as one BBC spokesperson stated:³⁷ The Norwegian state public broadcaster,

NRK (the Norwegian equivalent to the BBC) who had the rights for TV- and web-broadcasting, distributed live images from the Games via two main TV channels and seven so-called event channels on the web. The new technological opportunities made possible ambitious statements from the NRK people: it was possible ‘to geek out in all directions’.³⁸ The Olympics should be accessible wherever people were – ‘on the beach, at the cabin, anywhere’³⁹ and whenever they wanted, on all sorts of platforms; TV, PC, tablet and mobile. NRK also provided extensive radio coverage. And the viewer interest lived up to expectations. Viewer figures were higher than from any recent Summer Olympic Games. Saying something about Norwegians’ sport preferences, an NRK representative informed that only the ratings from the Winter Olympics in Vancouver 2010 could beat the figures from London 2012.⁴⁰ Typically perhaps of Norwegian summer habits, large portions go to their family cabins at the seaside or in the mountains, unavoidably some Norwegians complained about receiving conditions for streaming by mobile phones outdoors at the high mountains.

However, in the Norwegian summer of 2012 nobody could beat handball. Athletics, which is usually a main sport during summer Olympics, had to face the role of being the second most popular. The Norwegian handball women went into the Olympic tournament as favorites. They were also TV favorites, pulling the sport of handball along. Among the ten most watched events at the Olympics, six were handball games where Norway was involved; the final against Montenegro not surprisingly, topping the list. The men’s 100 meters final, a secure international bet on most watched Olympic events, only ranked fourth among Norwegian viewers, beaten by three games of Norwegian women performing the, for the English, obscure game of handball. The no.2 athletics event, seen from a Norwegian TV perspective, was the men’s javelin final. Here, Norway could list one of the favorites, former multiple Olympic, world and European champion Andreas Thorkildsen. Even though he disappointed his followers, it seems fair to say that – English affections nonetheless – the Norwegian viewers let their national emotions be their guiding principles.⁴¹

The extended TV- and web-coverage made it possible to see all the ‘minor’ sports to an even greater sense than what is normal during the Olympics. It also made possible more reports and features from the local environment and the locals. It could be said, as well, that these reports were done journalistically, with the desired ‘human touch’. The reporters would, in principle, have done the same thing if the Games were hosted by another country. At the same time, the digitalisation of the Games, and the massive BBC transmissions, also meant that much of the production and editing work could be done from the home base in Norway. NRK had relatively less people on the ground in London, compared to earlier Olympic Games. In that sense, London risked being just another facade or backdrop against which spectacular sports performances were staged.

One other question remains. Why did not Norwegian TV, or the BBC for that matter, follow up on an opportunity inspired by the 1996 European championship in football, when the all-conquering slogan was ‘Football’s coming home’? To state that ‘sport is coming home’ would perhaps not go well together with the role of a welcoming Olympic host embracing the entire world? It could be interpreted as not appropriate for polite English hosts, and as bragging better suited for the football culture. Perhaps popular knowledge is not that clear when it comes to the historical ownership of modern sport in

general. Is it more challenging to state that England is the 'land of sport', as opposed to the commonly held view that England is the home of football? This was an opportunity missed, but not rued.

The English sports' impact

The three London Olympics have also taken place in the larger sports historical context of the impact of the English sport in general. This context has to be taken into consideration if one aims to understand the whole role of the London Olympics of 2012. The impact partly rested on structural connections that saw Norwegians travelling to Britain for work or studies and Britons coming to Norway for work (sailors and engineers) and for recreational purposes. The Norwegians would pick up a sport they had never experienced at home, while the Brits in effect introduced English sports to Norway.

One example of how personal knowledge of British culture could lead to local initiatives to promote British sports could be seen in the city of Bergen, on the Norwegian west coast, where shipping lines to Britain were frequent. Here, the English language teacher Johan Dahl in 1874 wrote several pieces in the local newspapers where he advocated the advantages of living the sports life that the British did. He was convinced that it was only a question of time before the English conditions would spread to Norway. With deep concern he expressed: "It would be strange if the neighbour (i.e. Norway) for all eternity would be content to sit passively, indifferent and satisfied with a weak resonance of the jubilation which regularly reaches us from near and distant neighbours".⁴²

Dahl was proven right. It did not take many years before the historical phenomenon that was called "the English Sport" also reached Norway. From around 1880 through the turn of century new sports clubs were founded. From England came the introduction of new and hitherto unknown sports, like football, (lawn-) tennis and others. Also new ideas and ways were introduced to sports which were already known, as rowing and sailing. They were given new frames, new equipments and new ways of competing.

Transferred to a new culture, the English sport was given a distinct and different meaning. This led to an ideological schism in the development of the broad movement of Norwegian sports, based upon national-political cleavages. Traditional "idrett" with its values and virtues derived from the national culture and its claimed needs, stood against the foreign 'Sport', a newcomer and a stranger in the cultural landscape.

Did the English sports influence bring about a 'colonization of meaning' of what had previously been known by the Norwegian equivalent 'idrett'?⁴³ The historical discourse around the two words can be indicative here. The English sport was, by Norwegian nationalist conservatives, seen as the contrast of what Norwegian sporting life ought to be. In the word 'idrett' there was an implicit moral (value) and ideological element, which the Norwegian conservatives could not find in their understanding of the English sport. The main difference lay in the goal of the physical activities, or in other words; what was considered important in sporting exercise. The Norwegians chose to see the English sport as 'sport for sport's sake', and could not or would not see any deeper purpose in its performance. This antipathy to the 'foreign' sport was connected to an

ideological contrast between versatile and specialised sport. The versatile sport, according to the Norwegians, was better suited for cultivating healthy young men with a sound constituency to make them good soldiers capable of defending the fatherland, all the things the nation needed from their youth.

The English sport would only lead to a ‘sporting celebration of extraordinary and amazing abilities’, with no other serious purposes attached to it.⁴⁴ It was portrayed as a dangerous physical practice coming from abroad; “the sport madness [...] brings us nothing good”, Laurentius Urdahl said. He was supported by the polar explorer and national hero Fridtjof Nansen who put it another way: “Practice healthy idrett. Despise sport and modern competitive exaggerations”.⁴⁵ Skiing was a good example of a healthy activity. According to Nansen: *Nothing strengthens the muscles, renders the body so strong and elastic, teaches the qualities of dexterity and resource, calls for decision and resolution, and give the same vigour and exhilaration to mind and body alike...*⁴⁶ The English sports on the other side were the negation of all this. This, of course, was a caricature with small resemblance to how British sports ideologues portrayed their activities; as athleticism promoting character-building, morality and manliness.⁴⁷

In spite of all this, there existed people, amongst others educators, with a more favourable view of the British sports.⁴⁸ And among young males from the middle classes, less bothered with ideological hang-ups, interest for English sports grew. Particularly football became popular as a class-transcending activity, while the other English sports; athletics, cycling, lawn-tennis, rowing and sailing had a tendency to fit into a class-based sports distribution; many of them evolving into typical middle or even upper class sports. English sports in that sense became tools for creating social and cultural distinctions.

However, the transfer of foreign expressions into a new culture was uncertain business. A sportsman risked being interpreted as a ‘dandy’ who had nothing better to do with his time and money than to show off with purposeless pastimes, in other words; the definition of an economic elite, with its ‘conspicuous consumption’ according to Thorstein Veblen.⁴⁹ Even though the English sports were portrayed in disapproving ways, this is not to say that favourable characteristics of “the Englishman” were downplayed. In the 20th century he was presented in rather admiring ways, as the fair and energetic gentleman.⁵⁰ Jørgen Juve offered a much used stereotype in his (by Norwegian standards) ambitious work on football from 1934 when he reported that among English football’s foremost characteristics were its “stoic calmness, tactical sense and fairness”.⁵¹

Practice and symbols: cricket and skiing

Hence, there was a deep Norwegian admiration for many things English. However, with the exception of football, there were not that many contact points or activities in common. The practice of British sports was in many ways markedly unlike the Norwegian. Team handball in 2012 and ice skating in 1908 were examples of this. Cricket and skiing can provide further insight into how dissimilar the same sports can be experienced even among neighbours.

Until recently cricket has been presented as the unchallenged provider of British culture in the sports field. Invented as a modern sport in England, with Marylebone Cricket Club (f.1787) for long being the sport’s governing body, cricket, played the right way, presented attitudes and virtues which were characterised as typically English. Cricket

vocabulary went into the national lingo. Cricket expressions came to mean more than their technical translations should indicate. 'A level playing field', 'Keep a straight bat' and 'Play the game' are some of many expressions that have become catch phrases in a wider vocabulary expected to be understood on a broad basis inside the English culture.

Cricket actually seems to have been the first of the new English sports to reach Norwegian shores in the 19th century, almost twenty years before football. Not much historical evidence is left to cast light on cricket's first phase. It is fair to say, however, that cricket struggled to catch a grip on the population. Some initial attempts occurred in 1866, when British engineers working in and around Oslo played matches probably against each other. Christiania Cricket Club played Britisk (sic) Cricket Club in a 'match' over six hours, the newspaper *Morgenbladet* reported.⁵² Apart from another match two weeks later little or nothing is heard from the Norwegian cricket scene after that.

More than a hundred years passed, before this symbol of Englishness and the Empire was taken up once more in Norway, now by another group of immigrants. People from India and Pakistan mainly, as well as from Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, re-introduced cricket. Again as a typical immigrant sport, however the difference from the first attempt is that cricket now is beginning to make a presence in the Norwegian sports landscape, with an aim to attract also native Norwegians.

Hence; the re-introduction of cricket in Norway more than a hundred years after its first landing, was contingent upon postcolonial conditions. The first time representatives from Britain themselves tried to introduce the foreign game to Norwegians. The second time Britain's former colonial subjects, now Commonwealth associates, with more success have re-introduced their former colonial master's game – after having made it into a game of their own. That Norway's population today has a substantial element of immigrants not from Britain, but from the former British Indian Empire (the British Raj) is an obvious element in this story.⁵³ They have been eager to display a game which now symbolise Indian, Pakistani and other identities, thus demonstrating a post-colonial and globalised world.

The Norwegian equivalent to cricket when it comes to the symbolic role of the sport, is skiing – also a sport which is very small with the (English) neighbour's, while it holds all sorts of symbolic and historic importance in Norway. Skiing was the distinction that made the people living in Norway into Norwegians. National heroes derived their status from their use of skis. Skiing was 'the most national of all sports'.⁵⁴

In winter sports literature Norwegians are given most of the credit for the spread of skiing as a leisure activity and as a sport, to Europe and North America, predominantly.⁵⁵ Skiing clubs were founded in Germany, France and other places on the European Continent. In Britain, however, the situation was different. That had to do with both natural conditions in Britain and a lacking Norwegian interest for Alpine skiing. This, so to say, opened up a field where a British interest for skiing could manifest itself in an independent way. Skiing the Norwegian, or 'Nordic' way, the latter is the present correct term to describe ski-jumping and cross-country skiing, never took off in a degree worth mentioning inside Britain.⁵⁶ Nevertheless British skiers played a central role in the development of Alpine skiing outside of Britain, with The Public Schools Alpine Sports Club and Arnold Lunn as crucial agents, making it an Olympic event from 1936.⁵⁷

Skiing has been named – by Norwegian historians – Norway’s ‘gift to the world’.⁵⁸ This ‘gift’ must have been to live with for the rest of the world, as it came in the form of a small winter sport, which claimed particular conditions; stable snow for a longer period of time, conditions that narrowed and limited the real field of influence.⁵⁹ However, as always with gifts, the Norwegians expected a return; that their values and skiing ideology should govern the sport of skiing. Hence, the Norwegians found it vital to dominate the International Ski Federation (FIS) from where they could dispute British, Continental and American ideas and competitive forms. In the long run, though, as skiing spread to more and more places, the Norwegians fought a lost case. As national symbols, though, skis still stand.

The London Olympics 2012 coincided with the centenary for the ‘Race to the South Pole’. Although this concurrence mainly was passed over by the London organisers, the history of the conquest of the geographical poles as sports achievements provides one of very few Anglo-Norwegian contact fields on snow. When Norwegian Roald Amundsen beat the Englishman Robert F. Scott for the South Pole in 1911-12, this was in Norway interpreted as a victory for a national skiing tradition with its emphasis on practicable and humble attitudes as well as preparing and training for the challenges. While Scott’s ‘defeat’ in conquering one of the few remaining blank spots of the map was taken not only as a national, but also as an Imperial downfall. This may have contributed to an expanding Norwegian self-image when it comes to winter conditions and sports.⁶⁰ – Nevertheless winter culture, snow and skiing, was an exception from the regular sports scene where Britain was the undisputed master and example.

Football as a specific part of the Norway-England relations:

In 2012 Norway is the country in Europe with relatively the largest amount of organised supporters of English football, outside of Britain.⁶¹ The history of this love affair illustrates extraordinary Anglo-Norwegian sporting relations where influence runs one way and affection the other: In 1886 crews from the battle ships Agincourt and Iron Duke and four others introduced football to the two largest cities; Oslo and Bergen, during a visit from Her Majesty’s Navy. They did so however, in ways that on the surface at least, looked far from “imperialistic”. Foremost the football games came about as an offer to restless cadets eager to entertain themselves physically during a long spell at quay. In Bergen a local entrepreneur saw the possibility of making money by transforming this into a show with entrance fees for spectators. Posters advertising ‘For the first time in Bergen ... Grand Football Match’ played between crew members from the English naval ships were put up around the city. Curious spectators were also informed that ‘English Musik’ (sic) would be played during the game. However, through this display early football was brought into close contact with representatives of law and order. The enthusiastic organiser had not bothered to acquire the necessary legal permissions, and it did not help him that during the game there was also sale of ‘beer and champagne’. Alas, for ‘organising a public display of Englishmen playing football’ and hence causing public disorder, he was brought to justice and sentenced to pay a relatively stiff fine in the police court.⁶² – The role of the locals was unclear. In Bergen they were meant to be paying on-lookers. When a similar event took place in Oslo there was also an element of possible learning among the spectators. Here football had been tried out by representatives from

the local youth who had organised themselves in Christiania Football Club – the name reveals the source of inspiration – shortly before. They met the British cadets for football.⁶³

When the fleet departed, they left the part of the Norwegians who had actually watched the display, astounded. This was activity of a different kind compared to what in Norway passed under the heading of 'idrett'. The Norwegian activities were either individual (e.g. skiing) while the collective activities, e.g. group gymnastics, were characterised by discipline and strict movement patterns. Ball games were unknown outside of the children's sphere. Hence, the first impression of football was of a wild, anarchic and violent game. This was a game hard to understand and challenging to emulate. The British were the ones to explain and teach if this was to become more than 'hard and intensive fighting for the ball'.⁶⁴

From the outset it was clear that the game was British, they were the ones to be looked up to and admired – the surprising side of it is perhaps that this has continued to characterise Norwegian relations to English football until today. Anyone who could claim a past experience from the English game was given an almost automatic increase in authority on the field. A romantic picture of the English game was painted. This trans-national fascination and devotion for English football does not only affect the big and glamorous clubs, although they have the largest following. At the time being Norway has around fifty supporters' clubs for all sorts of clubs, from Manchester United to Macclesfield.⁶⁵

Also players on the highest level seem to have been affected by a mentality of willing subordination, to a degree that some journalists found embarrassing. Particularly one episode has stuck with the story of the national team of the pre-1990ies. In 1980 Norway visited England to play a World Cup qualifier. The story goes that inexperienced Norwegian players full of respect for the historical ground they were about to step on to, the green grass of Wembley Stadium, for their first training session brought photo-cameras to eternalise this big moment of their lives. Nobody could deny that it obviously was a big moment. However, there was a backside; the media now could portray them as wide-eyed tourists, not as serious football players.

Since the first years of the 20th century Norwegian newspapers and sports periodicals had presented their readers with the weekend's English football results. It was a strong signal of the position of the English game, that when the Norwegian parliament voted to establish a state controlled betting company in action from 1948, the betting objects were without particular discussion decided to be English football matches. From 1948 then, Norwegians could place their money on Blackpool or Blackburn, Tottenham or Arsenal, with the blessing of Norwegian state authorities. The next step was to show English football on Norwegian TV. Late autumn 1969 Wolverhampton and Sunderland were brought directly into Norwegian living rooms. This match introduced a mighty tradition especially among Norwegian males; every Saturday afternoon in the winter season there was an English game to follow on the TV, linked to the already existing football pools. The TV matches were run on the state public broadcasting system NRK until 1995 when commercial TV2 took over. The last years the tradition has more or less dissolved into pay-tv channels, making the still existing interest change from one particular, almost institutionalised time; three or four o'clock every Saturday and two hours ahead, to commercial TV's needs for diversified and ever changing time slots.

The respect for England and English football is also there to be read from the football itself. Concerning achievements, this was two nations who did not play 'in the same league'. Hence, when Great Britain lost to Norway during the Olympic football tournament in Antwerp in 1920, it came as a major surprise in both countries. Even The Times of London meant this was a rather unexpected result and printed a drawn caricature with the title: 'The Downfall'. The Norwegian reactions could not disguise that the victory came as a shock. But the non-normality of the outcome had to be explained; this was the British (not English) Olympic amateur team. They were not representative for the strength of the real England, which were the professionals. The result caused no major stir in any of the countries. It seemed as if both nations agreed that this was not a representative result. The next decades proved that the footballing inequalities were perhaps stronger than ever.

It took until 1981 before a new sensational result occurred, and this time 'sensation' and similar expressions were definitely used. Norway beat England 2 - 1, real professional England, in a serious game, a World Cup qualifier in Oslo. From this game radio reporter Bjørge Lillelien's comments reached international fame, when he reported on the match's dying seconds and really took off in a mix of Norwegian and English:

'There he (the referee) blows (his whistle), there he blows. Norway has beaten England 2 - 1 in football. We are the best in the world! We are the best in the world! We have beaten England 2 - 1 in football! It is absolutely incredible. We have beaten England - England, home of giants: *Lord Nelson, Lord Beaverbrook, Sir Winston Churchill, Sir Anthony Eden, Clement Atlee, Henry Cooper, Lady Diana*. We have beaten them all. We have beaten them all. *Maggie Thatcher, can you hear me? Maggie Thatcher*. I have a message to you, in your election campaign. I have a message to you. We have eliminated England from the World Cup in football. *Maggie Thatcher*. As they say in your language, around the boxing bars at Madison Square Garden in New York: *Your boys took a hell of a beating. Your boys took a hell of a beating. Maggie Thatcher*. Norway has beaten England in football. We are the best in the world'.⁶⁶

What is worth noticing in this 'comment', is not the far-reaching interpretation of the meaning of the victory, 'the gloriously over the top response',⁶⁷ but the use of the inclusive 'we'-form. *We* had beaten all the English heroes that Lillelien could come up with from the English history: *We have beaten them all!* Even if England's national team in 1981 was not what it once had been, Norway had clearly bought into the history, the reputation and the "Football's coming home" tale. When little Norway could beat England in their own game it was the height of sporting prowess. In the years to follow, the match has been remembered perhaps just as much because of the radio reporting, as for the result. Internationally - and perhaps especially in Britain⁶⁸ - Lillelien's outbursts have become an example of national 'patos' and ecstatic joy displayed during football matches.

2012 aftermath: England just another foreign country?

At the 1908 Olympic Games Norway was eager to be an independent nation, waving its flag among other independent nations. In 1948 Norway was an allied, Western nation among friends. While in 2012 Norway displayed itself as an economically strong nation

with an advanced elite sports system, in competition with other modern nations in a situation where there were no dramatic external incidents which could give participation an extra symbolic edge.

In 2012, England still was a close friend and ally, even though, due to the EU issue, the two nations politically had drifted slightly apart. Culturally however, in spite of frequent travelling opportunities and increasing chances of becoming familiar with English society, England in many ways is as distant as it has been. Its class based social hierarchy for once, represents huge contrasts to the Norwegian society, in everything from the role and power of the aristocracy, to social manners. Norway has no aristocracy, and a Norwegian 'Sir' is also impossible. England is as close and as strange as it always has been. For the large amount of football lovers, however, London and England was well-known territory. Perhaps therefore, Norwegian media did not present England and London significantly different than it has presented other former Olympic organisers.⁶⁹

In that way it was the closing ceremony (produced by the English BBC) that again reinforced the cultural bridge across the North Sea. To end the Olympics with an overload of popular cultural symbols has become the norm in the TV age. However, to a Norwegian audience these were symbols to which there was attached a popular resonance.⁷⁰ They brought together generations of Norwegians who were familiar with the sports stars, the pop music, the TV personalities, the movie stars and the other brands and icons of the modern English culture.

To host the Olympic Games always makes the most impression on the home ground. It could change the English impression of the English. On the other side, the 2012 Olympics did not drastically change the Norwegian impression of England. The English still are the fair, polite and humoristic people to which the Norwegians have friendly connections. And the Games did keep alive the memory of how close the two nations historically have been, although the longevity of such reminders is impossible to establish. – For Norway then, does that mean that England has become just another foreign country? No, not yet. England holds a particular place in history and culture, including sports, and especially football.

¹ <http://www.olympic.org/olympic-games> 16.3.2013

² *Idrettsliv* 1928, no.37. Cf Asle Furumo, *Norsk idrett og "utlendingen"*. Hovedfagsoppgave, Norges idrettshøgskole 2003.

³ M. Goksøy: *Historien om norsk idrett* (Oslo: Abstrakt Forlag, 2008). Finn Olstad and Stein Tønnesson: *Norsk idretts historie*. Vol.1-2. Oslo: Aschehoug, 1986, 1987.

⁴ Allen Guttman: *Games and Empires. Modern Sports and Cultural Imperialism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.

⁵ Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*, Allen & Unwin, St.Leonards, 1998, x. As Alan Bairner says, discussing Ireland, the value of postcolonial perspectives is certainly restricted. This can of course be said with increasing strength on Norway. Bairner 2009, p.483, referring to Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory. Contexts, Practices, Politics*. London: Verso, 1997. John Bale and Mike Cronin (eds): *Sport and Postcolonialism*. Berg, Oxford, New York 2003, p.4. Alan Bairner: Sport, Nationality and Postcolonialism in Ireland. In: Bale and Cronin 2003, p. 159-174. John Sugden and Alan

Tomlinson: Football and FIFA in the Postcolonial World. In: Bale and Cronin 2003, p. 175-196. Alan Bairner: Irish Australians, postcolonialism and the English game. *Sport in Society*, Vol.12, no.4-5, 2009.

⁶ E.g. F. Olstad: *Norsk idrettshistorie. B.1: Forsvar, sport, klassekamp 1861-1939*. Oslo: Aschehoug, 1987, 75f; Matti Goksøy og F. Olstad: *Fotball! Norges Fotballforbund 1902-2002*. Oslo: NFF, 2002.

⁷ <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/> 27.11.2012. http://www.ssb.no/ur_ekonomi/ 27.11.2012.

⁸ Also if one does not include Spitsbergen. Norway 385,252 km² (or 148,746 sq mi) including [Svalbard and Jan Mayen](#). Without these two areas, the area of Norway is 323,802 km². Britain (as England, Scotland and Wales) 229,848 km² (or 88,744.8 sq mi), including Shetland, the Orkney Isles, Hebrides and other smaller islands. England constitutes ca 2/3 of the area of Great Britain.

⁹ After the Viking era which according to most historians ended in 1066 with the battle of Stamford Bridge (Not the Chelsea football ground, but a small village outside of York, then 2.largest city in England), where Norwegian Vikings were beaten by English king Harold Godwinsson, who just 14 days later was going to lose the Battle of Hastings to William the Conqueror.

¹⁰ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census/population-and-household-estimates-for-england-and-wales/index.html> (1.2.2013)

¹¹ For a general overview of the political and economical relationships, see Helge Ø. Pharo & Patrick Salmon (eds.): *Britain and Norway: Special Relationships*. Oslo: Akademika forlag, 2012

¹² In 1986 British acid rain and nuclear waste became an issue casting shadows over Prime Minister M. Thatcher's visit to Norway. Pharo and Salmon 2012, 17.

¹³ Norwegian Federation for sport and Paralympics. Board meeting 6.November 2012:

[http://www.idrett.no/omnif/idrettsstyret/Documents/IS-m%C3%B8te%2015%20\(2011-2015\)%20-%20protokoll.pdf](http://www.idrett.no/omnif/idrettsstyret/Documents/IS-m%C3%B8te%2015%20(2011-2015)%20-%20protokoll.pdf) 18.1.2013

¹⁴ For the Games in 1908 Norway sent 58 Olympic athletes . They returned home with 2 gold, 3 silver and 3 bronze medals. In 1948 the figures were 79 and 1-3-3.

¹⁵ Olstad 1987, 159.

¹⁶ Arnd Krüger, 'Forgotten Decision': The IOC on the Eve of World War I. *OLYMPIKAThe International Journal of Olympic Studies*, Vol. 6, 1997, 85-98.

¹⁷ M. Goksøy: "Og så ein svensk-norsk landskamp! Ein blir så patriotisk i slike stunder". Norsk-svenske idrettsforbindelser etter 1905. In: Ø. Sørensen and T. Nilsson (eds.): *Norsk-svenske relasjoner i 200 år*. Oslo: Aschehoug, 2005.

¹⁸ Jan Lindroth, *Unionsupplösningen 1905 och Idrotten. Den svenska idrottsrörelsen i en utrikespolitisk krissituation*. Sveriges Centralförenings för Idrottens Främjande årsbok 1977.

¹⁹ M. Goksøy: *Staten og idretten*. Oslo 1991.

²⁰ The closest Norwegian equivalent to 'sport', though at that time not exactly the same.

²¹ Centralforeningen for Utbredelse av Idrett (The Central Association for the Spread of Sport ('Idrett')).

²² J. Martens in: Olstad 1987, 124.

²³ In *Dagbladet* 6.4.1913. Quoted in: Olstad 1987, 159-160.

²⁴ Norges Riksforbund for Idræt (1910-1919).

²⁵ Thor Thorvaldsen with crew won sailing's dragon class. He came back to do the same in Helsinki 1952.

<http://www.olympic.org/sailing-equipment-and-history> 1.3.2013

²⁶ *Olympiaposten/Aftenposten* 22.2.1952.

²⁷ 'Britain indeed found quite a lot of female players in Scandinavia'.

<http://www.britishhandball.com/2012-olympics/#> 2.2.2013.

²⁸ E.g. <http://www.timeout.com/london/events/handball-guide-london-2012-olympic-games> 2.2.2013.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/olympics/7904229/London-2012-Olympics-handball-guide.html> 2.2.2013

²⁹ <http://www.dagsavisen.no/forside/hands-heter-det-pa-engelsk/> 26.7.2012.

³⁰ S. S. Andersen, and L. T. Ronglan (eds.): *Nordic Elite Sport: Same Ambitions – Different Tracks*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2012.

³¹ I.e. a gold and a bronze from Athens 2004 and a silver from Beijing 2008.

³² 1059 members in 2010. Norges Idrettsforbund, årsrapport 2010.

³³ <http://www.nrk.no/ol2012/nyheter/handball-finale-var-seervinner-1.8279580> (posted 13.8.2012, loaded 18.3.2013)

³⁴ Andersen and Ronglan (eds.) 2012.

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- ³⁵ Board meeting: Evaluation of the Olympic and Paralympic Games 2012. <http://www.idrett.no/nyheter/Sider/EvalueringavOLPL2012.aspx> (16.2.2013). On the new committee: <http://sport.aftenposten.no/sport/idrettspolitik/article256586.ece> (5.11 and 6.12.2012). On mandate: http://www.nif.no/nyheter/Sider/evalueringutv_toppidrett.aspx (posted 17.10.2012, loaded 16.3.2013).
- ³⁶ http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/internet/posts/digital_olympics_reach_stream_stats (first posted 13.8.2012. loaded 18.3.2013)
- ³⁷ Cait ORIordan, head of product, BBC: The story of the digital Olympics: streams, browsers, most watched, four screens. http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/internet/posts/digital_olympics_reach_stream_stats (first posted 13.8.2012. loaded 18.3.2013)
- ³⁸ <http://nrkbeta.no/2012/07/25/ol-strommene/> (posted 25.7.2012. Loaded 18.3.2013)
- ³⁹ <http://www.nrk.no/ol2012/nyheter/stralende-fornoyd-med-apningshelgen-1.8262594> (posted 30.7.2012, loaded 18.3.2013).
- ⁴⁰ <http://www.nrk.no/ol2012/nyheter/handball-finale-var-seervinner-1.8279580> (posted 13.8.2012, loaded 18.3.2013)
- ⁴¹ <http://www.nrk.no/ol2012/nyheter/handball-finale-var-seervinner-1.8279580> (posted 13.8.2012, loaded 18.3.2013)
- ⁴² Bergensposten 1874, no.126. Dahl, as many Norwegians until today, quite openly mixed, or diffused the two terms English and British, seemingly without particular awareness.
- ⁴³ Gandhi 1998.
- ⁴⁴ Norske Turnnotiser, no. 19-20, 1891. Quoted in Olstad 1987, 85.
- ⁴⁵ Laurentius Urdahl, in: Idrætsbladet no.41, 1892. F. Nansen, in: Centralforeningen for Udbredelse af Idræt. Aarsberetning 1902/03. Kristiania 1902/03.
- ⁴⁶ Fridtjof Nansen: *Paa Ski over Grønland*. Kristiania: Aschehoug 1890.
- ⁴⁷ Richard Holt: *Sport and the British. A Modern History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 1989; James A. Mangan: *The Games Ethic and Imperialism. Aspects of the Diffusion of an Ideal*. Viking Adult 1986.
- ⁴⁸ E.g. Hans Hegna: I Centralforeningens Aarbok.
- ⁴⁹ Thorstein Veblen: *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. (1899). Dover Thrift Editions 1994.
- ⁵⁰ Asle Furumo 2003.
- ⁵¹ Jørgen Juve: *Alt om fotball*. Oslo: Johan Grundt Tanum, 1934, 19.
- ⁵² Morgenbladet 1866,
- ⁵³ <http://www.ssb.no/innvandring/> 1.2.2013. Britons are not by 1.1.2012 among the 15 largest immigrant groups in Norway, while Pakistanis constitute the third largest group.
- ⁵⁴ Fritjof Nansen 1890. Olav Bø: *Skiing throughout history*. Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget 1993.
- ⁵⁵ E. John B. Allen: *The Culture and Sport of Skiing from Antiquity to World War II*. University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst 2007, 36-70.
- ⁵⁶ Except a limited, climate-dependant activity in the mountain areas in Scotland.
- ⁵⁷ Allen 2007, 102-106..
- ⁵⁸ J. Vaage: *Norske ski erobrer verden*. Oslo 1952.
- ⁵⁹ To say that the diffusion of the sport of skiing is to some extent dependent on climatic conditions and in the end to the amount of snow present, is not to give in to the influence of environmental determinism which John Bale discusses: J. Bale, "Lassitude and Latitude: Observations on Sport and Environmental Determinism". *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 2002: 37, 147-158.
- ⁶⁰ Today it seems to be the ultimate humiliation to be beaten by a Brit on cross country skis. E.g. <http://www.dagbladet.no/2012/01/27/sport/nm/musgrave/langrenn/19974258/>.
- ⁶¹ 105 590 organised supporters pr 31.5.2012. <http://www.supporterunionen.com/> (16.3.2013).
- ⁶² Goksøy og Olstad 2002.
- ⁶³ At this instance, rules were unclear; one played one half with a normal football and on half with a 'ellipse-shaped' rugby ball. Much of the later newspaper comments dealt with what Norwegian observers found to be a violent and un-sophisticated game. Goksøy og Olstad 2002.
- ⁶⁴ Goksøy og Olstad 2002.
- ⁶⁵ Matti Goksøy and Hans Hognestad: "No Longer Worlds Apart? -British Impulses to the Creation of a Norwegian Football Tradition", in Gary Armstrong (ed.): *Football, Cultures and Identities*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1999.

⁶⁶ NRK, radio. Here the whole part is translated. The italicized are the parts that also originally were in English.

⁶⁷ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/sport/2002/oct/06/sixnations2008.features>.

⁶⁸ E.g. did the Observer Sport Monthly in 2002 rank it as no.1 in their 'ten greatest bits of commentary ever'. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/sport/2002/oct/06/sixnations2008.features>.

⁶⁹ Even though the main broadcaster; NRK, presented more hours of TV-production from an Olympic Games than ever before.

⁷⁰ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds) (1983) *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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