

Challenging the News Ideals – Sports, Journalism and Media Rights

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Background:

Journalism as a social institution

- *Main argument: Sports and the relations between sports and the media challenge long established ideals of journalism as a social institution*
- In Norway, there is currently no thorough discussion among the media representatives and representative organisations regarding how these ideals should be implemented in relation to sport
- Challenges from internal as well as external interests
- These challenges are not taken seriously
- These challenges might have severe consequences for journalism as a social institution



"The medium is the exposure"

- In the 1960s Marshall McLuhan coined the dictum "the medium is the message"
- When it comes to relations between sport and the media I will argue that "the medium is the exposure"
- It is the exposure which provides added value to the "sports product", and which makes the media key in the sports-/media complex
- Paradox: The media institution is powerful as an instrument of exposure, but weak as an instrument for guaranteeing journalistic ideals

COMMERCIAL RELATIONS BETWEEN SPORT AND THE MEDIA ARE STRONG AND LONG ESTABLISHED



8. Fans arriving in London for the Cup Final, 1912





Publicist ideals

- The press shall protect the freedom of speech, the freedom of the press and the principle of access to official documents. It cannot yield to any pressure from anybody who might want to prevent open debates, the free flow of information, free access to sources, and open debate on any matter of importance to society as a whole.(Code of Ethics of the Norwegian Press, para. 1.3)
- Each editorial desk and each employee must guard their own integrity and credibility in order to be free to act independently of any persons or groups who - for ideological, economic or other reasons - might want to exercise an influence over editorial matters.(Code of Ethics of the Norwegian Press, para. 2.2)
- A threatened convention: The "news right" of broadcasters



..... versus propaganda

- Media rights
- Exclusivity as a business strategy
- The combination of media rights, exclusivity and external demands on the media institution to publish pre-produced propaganda material from the owner of the media rights is a powerful one
- A strategy from, i.e., FIFA in relation to World Cup, and IOC in relation to The Olympic Games
- This is powerful propaganda



Discrepancy between journalistic ideals and media rights: Norwegian football

A confidential document from the Norwegian Football Association stipulates these requirements for the holder of their TV rights:

- To produce at least 120 matches per season
- To produce at least 20 "football magazine programmes" per season
- To use studio design elements from the Norwegian Football Association (NFF)
- To broadcast a 10 second "profile programme" (advertisement for the "football product") at the beginning of each programme
- To broadcast advertisement for all matches: 15 seconds five times a day the last three days before each match
- Leagues and cups to be mentioned by sponsor names
- NFF determines where players are to be interviewed (sponsor exposure)
- NFF determines which matches to be broadcast



Editorial advertising 1:

- Reject any attempt to break down the clear distinction between advertisements and editorial copy. (Code of Ethics of the Norwegian Press, para 2.6)
- Never promise editorial favours in return for advertisements. The material is published as a result of editorial considerations (Code of Ethics of the Norwegian Press, para. 2.7)
- It is a breach of good press conduct to let sponsorship affect editorial activity, contents and presentation. (Code of Ethics of the Norwegian Press, para. 2.8)



Editorial advertising 2:

- The credibility of the media depends on a clear distinction between editorial content and advertisements/sponsorship. The public must be ensured that the editorial content arise from *independent journalistic assessment*, and that content and the presentation thereof do *not have ties* to external interests.
- Advertorials: Products and commercial interests are exposed in the editorial space or receive positive editorial comments based on considerations other than those based in independent and critical journalism.
- Advertorials constitute a *breach of good press conduct*. All kinds of sponsorship which might lead to advertorials must be avoided.

(Norwegian Code of Advertorials)



Additional problems for a public service broadcaster in terms of media rights

- Sport is left to the sports department
- The sports department operates in relation to the broadcaster's media rights to sports
- These sports demand all resources and formats
- In journalistic terms, this is a sophisticated form of editorial advertising



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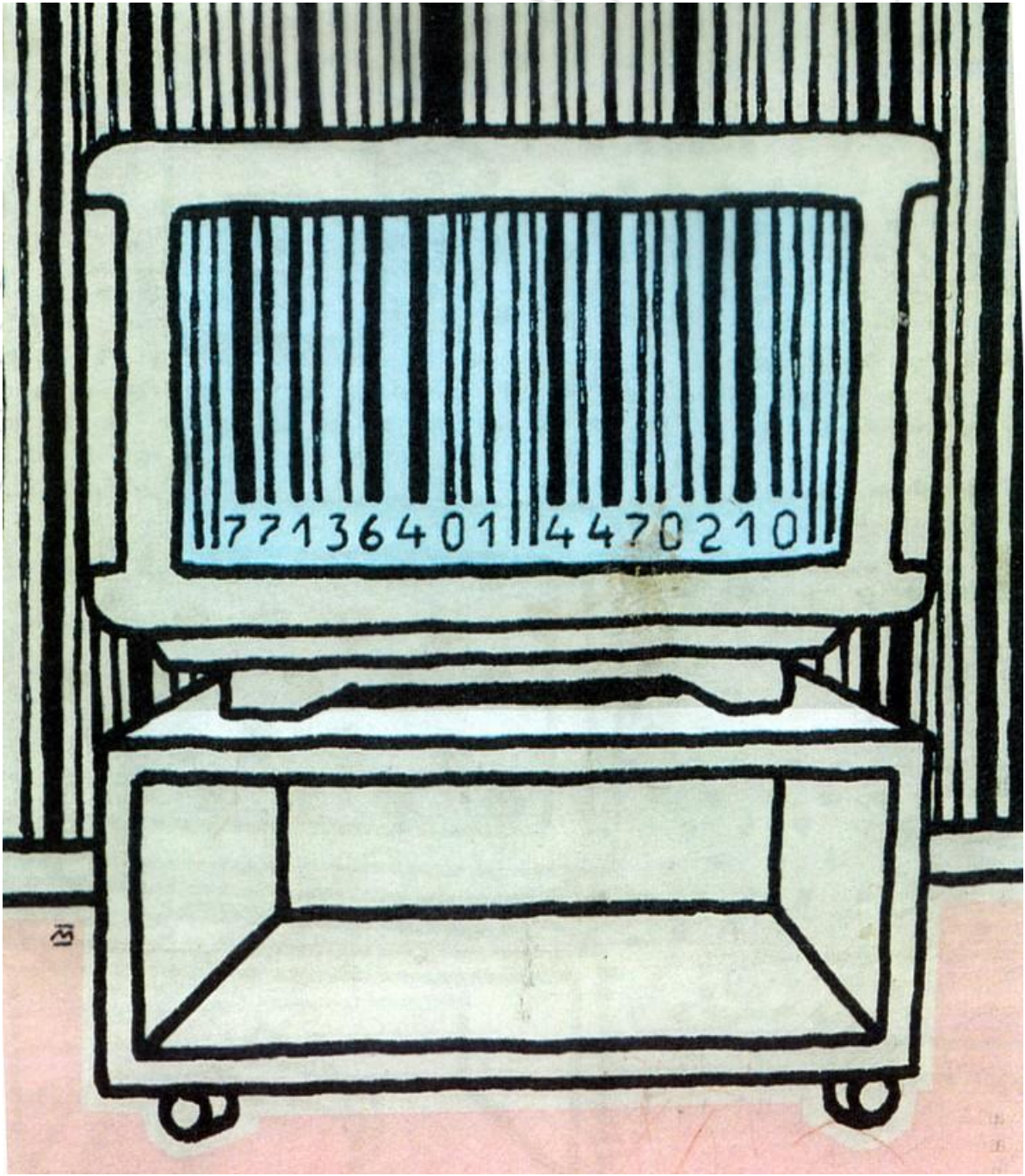
Further implications in relation the Norwegian football deal

- Fight for digital satellite platforms
- Business alliances between old and new actors. Some of these have no tradition in relation to established publicist ideals



Main concern: Publicist ideals, the journalistic institution and its social role and legitimacy

- The publicist organisations are themselves a core part of the sports/media complex
- The media organisations have strong commercial interests in the sports/media complex
- We'd like to think of the news media as independent guardians of social phenomena
- However, such core principles related to the social role of the media are violated in the name of attraction and in the name of the sports/media complex
- *Who should guard the guardians concerning the media's role in the sports-/media complex?*



12

13