Author's accepted manuscript (postprint)

Youth Sport 2.0? The development of eSports in Norway from 2016 to 2019

Introduction

Digital technology has deeply impacted the ways in which youth play and consume sport as part of their leisure activities. Central to this topic is the rise of new virtually played sports – eSports (electronic sports)[1]. According to Jonasson and Thiborg (2010), the origin of eSports is said to be the launching of the internet in the late 1980s. On the other hand, Billings and Hou (2019) argue that eSports date back to arcade games in the 1970s. In other words, it is difficult to pinpoint where competitive video gaming stops and modern commercialised eSports begin. There are many definitions of eSports, and some are more detailed than others. One definition that we find fruitful is provided by Hamari and Sjöblom (2017:213): '*a form of sports where the primary aspects of the sport are facilitated by electronic systems; the input of players and teams as well as the output of the eSports system are mediated by human-computer interfaces*'. There are a variety of games and, according to Hamari and Sjöblom (2017), it is common to organise eSports competitions around specific games genres. Examples of such genres are: (1) games that simulate sports (e.g. FIFA), (2) multiplayer online battle arenas, or MOBA, (e.g. League of Legends), (3) first-person shooters (e.g. Fortnite), (4) real time strategy (e.g. StarCraft II) and (5) collectible card games (e.g. Hearthstone).

As eSports are generally free to watch (Llorens 2017), and sometimes also to play, they represents a widely available leisure activity for young people around the globe. The popularity of eSports amongst youth globally has been noted by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), which is now working towards including eSports in the Olympic Games. As a first step, an eSports tournament for games that simulate sports will be organised alongside the Summer Olympic Games in Paris in 2024 (IOC 2018; Morgan 2019). The intention to include eSports in the Olympic Games is part of the IOC's current political and strategic aim to make the Olympic programme more 'youth-friendly'. The Paris 2024 hosts have also expressed interest in the possibility of adding eSports to the Olympic programme, stating that '*the youth are interested, let's meet them*' (BBC 2017). While the IOC is positive towards including eSports in its organisation, the idea of counting eSports as 'real' sports is met with excitement

---

[1] We have noted that there are different ways of spelling eSports. Although the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) spelling is 'Esports', most scholars seem to use 'eSports' (e.g. Hamari and Sjöblom [2017]; Jenny, Manning, Keiper and Olrich [2017]; Thiel and John [2018]). Therefore, to be in line with the spelling that is most evident in the field of research, we use 'eSports' throughout the article.

and curiosity, but also scepticism and resistance from stakeholders, sports leaders and scholars worldwide (Hebbel-Seeger 2012; Jenny et al. 2017; Parry 2019; Thiel and John 2018).

Even though eSports are already recognised as sport in more than 60 countries (Witkowski 2012), this is not yet the case in Norway. The Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports (NIF) has remained somewhat sceptical to eSports, despite their increased popularity amongst Norwegian youth over the last four years (NRK 2019b; 2019d). The resistance to including eSports in the NIF and a surge in unofficial youth eSports teams, competitions and activities (Altaposten 2018; Fjordenes Tidende 2019; Fredrikstad Blad 2019) are the starting points for our exploration of the development of eSports in Norway from 2016 to 2019. We begin in 2016 because this is the year the first Norwegian upper secondary schools introduced specialised eSports courses as part of their elite sport programmes (Bydelsnytt 2018; NRK 2018). Consequently, 2016 represents the year in which eSports started to be noticed by regional and national sport organisations and the regional and national media.

As pointed out by Reitman, Anderson-Coto, Wu, Lee and Steinkuehler (2020), eSports research has developed from being almost non-existent in 2002 into a field of study spreading across disciplines such as business, sports science, cognitive science, informatics, law, media studies and sociology. However, yet there is no empirical research on eSports in Norway, although some studies suggest that Norwegian youth spend an increasing amount of their leisure time playing computer games (Bakken 2018). For instance, a national youth survey from 2018 reveals that 96% of Norwegian boys and 63% of Norwegian girls aged 9 to 18 years play videogames on a weekly basis (Children and the Media Survey 2018), which is almost twice the proportion of youth regularly involved in organised sports (Bakken 2019). The same study highlights that 60% of the Norwegian youths who play videogames do this every day. However, there is no information as to how many of these youths are 'casual gamers' or how many could be described as eSports athletes.

This study represents a modest contribution to the growing international literature on eSports, which as Hamari and Sjöblom (2017:213) note is '*rare and dispersed*', and a first contribution to an empirical exploration of the eSports phenomenon in Norway. The research question guiding our exploration is: How have eSports developed in Norway from 2016 to 2019 and what characterises eSports in Norway today? Our study aims to shed light on the following sub-questions: Which key incidents have shaped the development of eSports in Norway? Why do local sports clubs incorporate eSports in their repertoires when the NIF does not recognise eSports as sport? Which genres of eSport games are the most professionalised in Norway?

In the following we first provide a brief overview of the current research on eSports. We then describe the context of our study and our methods and materials before presenting our analysis of the development of eSports in Norway.

Previous research

The cultural development and expansion of eSports worldwide is often associated with the emergence of professional tournaments and eSports mega events (Ward and Harmon 2019). International competitions, such as the annual World Cyber Games (WCG) that are comparable to the Olympic Games, attract substantial media coverage and corporate sponsorships because they gather large audiences and many participants (Hutchins 2008). Moreover, the degree of institutionalisation and commercialisation of such professional tournaments has increased (Elasri-Ejjaberi, Rodriquez-Rodriguez and Aparicio-Chueca 2020; Finch, Abeza, O'Reilly and Mikkelson 2020). The number of players, spectators, eSports leagues and organisations has also increased in the last decade. Examples of such leagues and organisations are the Cyberathlete Professional League in the US, the Korean eSports Association and the European Electronic Sports League. The emergence of leagues and associations like these reflect an increasingly internationally institutionalised eSports governance (Seo and Jung 2016).

As a relatively new field of research, many conceptual papers have been published on this topic. These texts have mainly been concerned with the question of whether eSports can or should be seen as 'real' sports or not (Hallmann and Giel 2018; Heere 2018). Many scholars (Keiper, Manning, Jenny, Olrich and Croft 2017; Thiel and John 2018; Witkowski 2010) seem to agree that eSports share enough characteristics with other sports that they could be considered as sport. On the other hand, some scholars argue that eSports should not be considered as sport at all (Hallmann and Giel 2018; Parry 2019). In their discussions, Parry (2019) as well as Hallman and Giel (2018) highlight that eSports lack a level of physicality and the necessary organisational structures for a competitive activity to be considered a sport. As Parry (2019:16) notes, through their 'non-physicality' eSports do not contribute to *the development of the whole human*'. This argument relates closely to the belief that video gaming is anathema to athletic competition (Bowman and Cranmer 2019).

As Hamari and Sjöblom (2017) have noted, empirical research on eSports is still limited. However, as this is a rapidly growing research field it is possible that by the time our article is published this short summary of previous research will be somewhat outdated. Reitman et al. (2020) demonstrate how eSports research has developed from being non-existent in 2002 to an

established field spanning academic disciplines such as business, sports science, cognitive science, informatics, law, media studies and sociology. So far, eSports research is dominated by informatics, media studies and business perspectives (Reitman et al. 2020). Hence, there are few sport sociologists who have studied eSports as we do here.

The multitude of academic fields concerned with eSports research means that thematically, eSports research is dispersed. For instance, business studies have explored the motivation of eSports fans and players, the networks and organisations surrounding the players and effective marketing strategies (Hamari and Sjöblom 2017; Seo and Jung 2014). Research in cognitive science and psychology has investigated player performance and cognitive and behavioural differences between novices and experts (Gray 2017; Gray, Vuong, Zava and McHale 2018). For instance, Huang, Yan, Cheung, Nagappan and Zimmermann (2017) studied the habits of StarCraft II players and found that expert players developed good in-game habits in consistent ways, but that these habits varied from player to player. Research in media studies has focused on relationships between eSports, sports and the media (Reitman et al. 2020). Several studies have explored the eSports communities through the phenomenon of live streaming in order to investigate how communities are formed and how eSports athletes interact with streamers (Burroughs and Rama 2015).

eSports research in the field of sociology, which we find most relevant for our study, has explored questions around live eSports events and the interactions between audience and gameplay (Taylor and Witkowski 2010) as well as gender and identity in eSports (Bjørner 2014; Ruvalcaba, Shulze, Kim, Berzenski and Otten 2018). Sociological studies have highlighted gender differences and found that eSports are overwhelmingly for males (Bjørner 2014; Ratan, Taylor, Hogan, Kennedy and Williams 2015). Several contributions point to the discrimination and marginalisation of female players and argue that eSports represent a male dominated sporting culture (Jansz and Martens 2005; Ruvalcaba et al. 2018; Zolides 2015). For instance, the works of Ratan et al. (2015) and Ruvalcaba et al. (2018) indicate that women are a minority in eSports in general and that they often experience sexual harassment from other players. Similarly, Arneberg and Hegna (2018) have identified gender stereotypes in the game League of Legends (LoL) and argue that 'girl gamers' is a stigmatised category that the girls do not want to be associated with. Jansz and Martens (2005) found that LAN gamers were almost exclusively males. According to Euroforum Deutschland (2015), women only account for approximately 15% of all eSports players.

The Norwegian sports model and the position of sports in youth leisure

Organised sport plays a central role in the lives of many Norwegian youths. 93% of all young people aged between 13-18 in Norway have at some point been members of a sports club, and about half of the youth population in this age span is still active in organised sports (Bakken 2019; NIF 2017). To put this into perspective, it implies that in an average school class of 30 pupils in this age range, only two pupils have never participated in organised sports. This makes sport the largest voluntary youth leisure activity in Norway and as big as all organised youth leisure activities (such as music, the arts, politics, etc.) put together (Bakken 2018).

In Norway, organised sport comes under the umbrella of the NIF. At the local grassroots level, youth sport is organised by voluntary sports clubs, of which there are approximately 12,000 across the country. The most popular youth sports are football, handball and skiing (NIF 2017). As there is no strong link between the school system and voluntary sports clubs, participation in sport usually takes place in leisure time. However, as the catchment area of sports clubs is usually the local community, young people often participate in the same sports clubs as their peers from school (Strandbu, Bakken and Sletten 2019).

Many young people drop out of sport in their early teens. The proportion of youth participating in organised sport is almost halved in the age range 14-16 years; a pattern that is more evident for girls than boys (Bakken 2019). Hence, there are slightly more teenage boys than girls taking part in organised youth sport. When it comes to socio-economic differences in sport participation, there have been more inequalities in recent years due to the professionalisation of youth sport, such as increased costs, increased professionalisation and higher demands for parental involvement (Strandbu, Gulløy, Andersen, Seippel and Dalen 2017). However, in Norway the social differences in youth sports are still relatively small compared to many other western countries. This is partly due to egalitarian policies and partly to the unique volunteer-based way of organising youth sports compared to many other countries (Breuer, Hoekman, Nagel and van der Werff 2015).

A distinguishing feature of the Norwegian sports model from that of other countries in the global North is the close relationship between organised sport and the state (Green, Thurston, Vaage and Roberts 2015). In Norway, the largest financial resource for youth and leisure sport is the Ministry of Culture. Additionally, Norwegians regard organised sport participation as an extension of family life (Archetti 2003). This means that parents' voluntary work in the sports clubs in which their children participate is expected (and often necessary for local clubs' survival). Hence, introducing children to sport at an early age is perceived as good parenting (Stefansen, Smette and Strandbu 2018).

Methods

This study is based on a digital qualitative research strategy (Bundon 2016; 2017). Bundon (2016:356) highlights that digital, qualitative research in sport entails all research strategies that '*include the use of digital tools to collect data and the collection of digital data*'. Furthermore, Bundon points out that digital qualitative research methods include explorations of public and private cyberspaces, researcher participation and non-participation in online spaces, as well as analyses of published articles and anonymous online data. According to Bundon's (2016) descriptions, our exploration of the development of eSports in Norway is based on data from public cyberspaces, with non-participation from the researchers in these online spaces and analyses of published material.

Sample

Our data consists of media texts on eSports published in regional and national Norwegian newspapers from 2016 to 2019. As already indicated, the search began in 2016 because this was the first year eSports were introduced in upper secondary school programmes in Norway. The data collection was completed in the first week of July 2019, which is why the material only covers media texts published up until 30th June 2019. We conducted our search in the Norwegian database ATEKST, which is Norway's most comprehensive media archive. ATEKST consists of published content from approximately 100 Norwegian newspapers and journals with an archive of texts dating back to the beginning of the 1980s. ATEKST includes content published in both print media and digital media. We searched the ATEKST database using the keywords related to eSports to find publications in Norwegian newspapers. This resulted in an initial hit of 209 texts, which included some videos and podcasts embedded in some of the newspapers' digital online texts. After removing any duplicates (for instance several regional newspapers reporting on the same national eSports news), texts discussing eSports in other countries and those only mentioning eSports in passing, we were left with a sample of 102 texts for our analysis.

The sample consists of different types of texts. The main body of the texts in our sample are (naturally) news articles and interviews written by journalists. The search in ATEKST also yielded opinion texts published in Norwegian newspapers representing different voices, e.g. of sport leaders, parents, gamers/eSports athletes, scholars and politicians. An overview of our sample, chronologically categorised by publication date, is provided in the Appendix (Table

A1). At the time of the data collection all the online articles (including videos) were available online. The print media texts are only accessible digitally through the ATEKST archives.

Analysis

Although the analysis of the material aims to give an in-depth description of the expansion of eSports in Norway over a four-year period, published texts are always written according to a certain standpoint (Bratberg 2014). The past is neither neutral nor objective and newspaper articles, interviews and opinion texts are always framed by the author (Herd 2016). In this case, the voices in the collected data represent a variety of standpoints, from eager eSports athletes, to sceptical sports fans and concerned parents.

A qualitative content analysis approach was applied as a strategy for analysing the material (Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas 2013). Content analysis uses a descriptive approach in both the coding and interpretation of the data. In analysing, categorising and coding the material, our aim was to describe the characteristics and content of each text by examining who says what, to whom and with what effect (Bloor and Wood 2006). All the texts were read by both authors. Questions and disagreements regarding the categorising and coding of the material were resolved by consulting an independent colleague who also carried out research on eSports. Using this approach, the analysis of the material resulted in three distinct themes that are highlighted in the results section of this article: (1) The inclusion of eSports in Norwegian upper secondary school programmes, (2) the partial inclusion of eSports in voluntary sports clubs and the inclusiveness of eSports, and finally (3) the introduction of Norway's first professional eFIFA league – eSerien. All the texts included in the study were originally published in Norwegian. The descriptions of the texts and the quotations from them have been translated into English by the authors[2].

The aim of the sample and the analysis is not to represent the 'total story' of the expansion of eSports in Norway. Rather, the analysis is based on an interpretative point of entry epistemologically (e.g. Markula and Silk [2011]), i.e. on interpretations substantiated through an argumentation constituted by dialogue between the data, context and previous research in order to construct an understanding of the analysed phenomenon (Bratberg 2014). Hence, the analysis, discussion and conclusions in this article only represent one possible interpretation. However, this by no means represents the 'only' or 'one true' interpretation of the analysed

---

[2] The texts included in Table A1 in the Appendix can be accessed by contacting the authors.

phenomenon. The interpretations and readings of these texts are also shaped by our personal identities and social locations (e.g. Herd [2016]). The authors have no personal background in eSports but can be described as 'casual gamers'.

Results and discussion

The qualitative data collection and analysis were finalised in July 2019, but since then we have re-searched the ATEKST databases to get an updated overview of the expansion of eSports in Norway. Except for 2010 and 2015, the results presented in Table 1 show a trend of increased publications on eSports in Norwegian newspapers from 2010 to 2019.

[Table 1 near here]

Here follows our analysis of the findings arranged chronologically, starting with the inclusion of eSports in Norwegian upper secondary school programmes in 2016-2017, followed by the partial inclusion of eSports in voluntary sports clubs and the inclusiveness of eSports (2017-2019), and finally, the introduction of Norway's first professional eFIFA league – eSerien (2019).

The inclusion of eSports in Norwegian upper secondary school programmes (2016-2017)

The first Norwegian upper secondary school to include eSports in its sport programmes was Garnes, located to the north-east of Bergen, in 2016. The school announced that its eSports curriculum would include two games: Counter-Strike and League of Legends. Norway's first class of eSports students had five hours of gaming on their weekly school schedules – the same number of training hours as students in the football and handball programmes (Gamer 2016). The new eSports students were also subjected to an eSports exam, with grades that appeared on the upper secondary school diploma. In an interview, one of the first teachers to be hired for the subject of eSports at a Norwegian upper secondary school stated that his motivation for accepting the job was to change the social stigma associated with gaming:

> I want to oppose the prejudices towards gaming and eSports. It's important to show people that just because you are a gamer, it doesn't mean that you are asocial, have a bad diet, live your life in isolation and sleep too little. You interact with other people a lot during gaming and you develop meaningful relationships with the people you play with. That's very healthy, especially for teenagers. (eSports teacher quoted in Bygdanytt [2016])

After the introduction of eSports at Garnes upper secondary school in 2016, more schools started to introduce eSports as part of their elite sport programmes. Our material shows that from 2017 to 2019 upper secondary schools all over the country introduced eSports in their sports programmes. Most of the schools focused on a few games, mainly in the game genres MOBA, first-person shooters or real-time strategy games (Hamari and Sjöblom 2017).

Additionally, the material demonstrates how eSports is closely modelled after sports in upper secondary school sports programmes. The learning objectives of the new eSports subject are fashioned after the elite sports courses that are already established. As the eSports teacher states in his interview: '*The learning objectives of other sports programmes at the school deeply influence how we evaluate and grade the eSports students*' (Gamer 2016). This seems to be the case for many of the Norwegian upper secondary schools that have included eSports in their sport programmes and is illustrated by a quote from an interview with the leader of the elite sport programme at Gausdal upper secondary school: '*One of our learning objectives for the eSports subject is that students should learn to act as elite athletes, something that is not compatible with staying up all night drinking Cola*' (Gausdal 2017). The principal of another upper secondary school, Vågsbygd (2018), describes its eSports programme like this:

> eSports is a five-hour weekly subject, just like any other elite sport subject at our school, such as football, handball, chess and golf. We grade the students just like any other school subject. In our learning objectives for eSports, we have three main topics: training planning, general physical conditioning and sport specific skill development.

It is important that students learn what is necessary to perform at an elite level and for this a healthy lifestyle is a must. The texts discussing the inclusion of eSports in upper secondary school sports indicate that they are subjected to a sportification process that is similar to other youth-oriented activities that the IOC has shown an interest in. Surfing, skateboarding and snowboarding have all followed similar development trajectories after the IOC expressed interest in including them in the Olympic Games, with the intention of them becoming more attractive to youth (Thorpe and Wheaton 2011; Thorpe and Dumont 2018; Tjønndal, Hjelseth and Lenneis 2019). This also means that eSports gamers are treated as youth elite athletes in these schools; a parallel the teachers who are responsible for the eSports subjects are keen to draw: '*When I coach my students, I focus on nutrition and establishing good sleeping habits so that the students can perform to the best of their abilities when they compete*' (Vestlandsnytt 2017).

If you want to succeed and become a great eSports athlete, you need to practise coordination, reaction, speed of action and the ability to concentrate over long periods of time. Just as in any other elite sport, knowledge about nutrition, rest and recovery is important. (Gausdal 2017)

The above quotes demonstrate how the advocates of eSports frequently draw parallels between elite youth athletes and the gamers who are now characterised as 'virtual athletes' (Jenny et al. 2017). Again, these arguments are similar to those of the voluntary sports clubs who have chosen to include eSports in their organisation, such as Klemetsrud, Tverrlandet and Driv sports clubs (Bodø Nu 2019; Enebakk Avis 2018; Klemetsrud 2019). This leads us to the next section of our findings: the partial inclusion of eSports in Norwegian sports clubs.

The partial inclusion of eSports in voluntary sports clubs and the inclusiveness of eSports (2017-2019)

This part of the analysis deals with two interlinked topics: the partial inclusion of eSports in some Norwegian sports clubs and the potential of eSports to include youth who are marginalised from participating in sports. Even though eSports are not an official part of the NIF, an increasing number of sports clubs have already included eSports in their repertoire, thus demonstrating that although there is substantial resistance towards recognising eSports as 'real' sport (Adresseavisen 2018), there is also acceptance and support. It has proved challenging to find sources that document why sports clubs have begun to include eSports in their activities, and what the motivation for this is. However, we have found that while many of the upper secondary schools that have included eSports in their elite sport programmes have focused on game genres such as MOBAs, first-person shooters and real time strategy games, the sports clubs that are most keen to include eSports are football clubs. Furthermore, these clubs are and first and foremost interested in including one game in their activities: FIFA. Despite this (understandably) narrow interest in eSports, the voices from the sports clubs in our material mainly talk about eSports as something singular and general:

There are great similarities between eSports teams and football teams, it's about team building and collaboration. Including eSports in sports clubs can help structure eSports participation and promote a healthy lifestyle and good attitudes (…) They can't just do whatever they want to because they are eSports athletes, they have to adhere to the clubs rules and behave well, if not – they can't represent our club. (Leader of local sports club quoted in Drammens Tidende 2017)

It's about strategy, you must think – just like football. A lot of the same principles apply. I cannot see that eSports is not 'real' sports. This is sports. The players are athletes. They must be registered members of the sports club and like all other sport, they have to obey the fair play rules and the no-drugs policy. (Football coach quoted in Klemetsrud 2019)

Our material reveals that although these sports clubs talk about eSports in general, they have mainly introduced games that simulate sport, and mainly FIFA, in their activities (Bodø Nu 2019; Drammens Tidende 2018). These quotes from the material also highlight how sports clubs that have included eSports in their activities express an understanding of eSports as a phenomenon with many similarities to sport (Heere 2018; Thiel and John 2018). The coaches and sports club leaders quoted in our material argue that if eSports is organised through local sports clubs, the youth who participate in eSports will have the same benefits as those engaging in ordinary sports: benefits such as learning fair play and zero tolerance of drug use, social skills and democratic participation (Spaaij and Schaillée 2020). They also argue that eSports athletes understand the need to stay physically fit in order to perform well, and that sports clubs can help eSports athletes with their physical training: '*Elite eSports athletes understand the importance of staying in good physical shape. Many of our FIFA players play football in their spare time*' (Bergens Tidende 2019).

The leaders of the sports clubs that have included eSports in their youth activities also argue that eSports can be an important arena for friendship. For example, a member of Drammen football club said: '*We want to provide an activity for youth who are home alone, and not engaged in the football club now. Why shouldn't they come here to the club house instead, meet other people and be part of a FIFA-community?*' (Drammens Tidende 2017). Indeed, the idea that eSports can attract youth who are not interested in sport to become new members, is a main argument put forward by the sports clubs that have already included eSports in their activities:

> We want to reach out to youth who are not already active in sport and create a safe and nurturing local community that is good for all types of children to grow up in. We know that many kids sit at home gaming by themselves. We want to make it possible for them to come here and experience belonging and all the other great aspects that being part of a sports club can offer. (Leader of a local sports club)

The importance of experiencing a sense of belonging, mastery and joy is often mentioned by the voices from the sports clubs in our material. Eklund and Roman (2018) have shown that gaming can be a vital arena for friendship and belonging for youth. Equally, Martončik (2015) highlighted that playing eSports can have positive mental health benefits, for instance by releasing stress and creating digital friendships and virtual places of belonging. Yet, the

relationship between eSports, well-being and mental health is underexplored in Norway, and there is no evidence to suggest that facilitating eSports through sports clubs will contribute to better mental health and a stronger sense of belonging amongst young people.

In some cases, eSports may be more socially inclusive than 'real' sports; something that is exemplified in our material by the story of Mats (NRK 2019a) that many sports clubs refer to when talking about the potential for social inclusion through eSports (Bygdeposten 2019). Mats was a young man who had spent most of his life in a wheelchair. Born with a muscle disorder that drastically reduced his lifespan, he died suddenly from his disease at the age of 25. While Mats was alive, his parents worried about him and what they viewed as a lonely life mostly spent playing computer games alone in his room. However, for Mats it meant a place where he could escape his disability, which he expressed in his blog in a post called 'My escape': '*In there my handicap doesn't matter, my chains are broken and I can be whoever I want to be. In there I feel normal*' (Musingslif 2013).

When Mats died, and his virtual friends[3] from all over the world (whom his parents had never met) travelled to attend the funeral, his parents discovered that his gaming had given him close friends and a sense of belonging with peers in a way that was difficult for him to attain in the analogue world. In an interview with NRK (2019b), his father explained: '*Our view of friendship was very traditional. His friends, who he only met virtually, we did not really see them as true friends*'. The story of Mats' life has later been described as '*the most important story of our time, helping us to understand the enormous positive value gaming might have for young people*' (VG 2019a). In this part of the results section we have highlighted that football clubs are the sports clubs that have come the furthest in terms of accepting and including eSports among Norwegian sport organisations. Games that simulate sports, specifically FIFA, are also the types of eSports that have come the furthest in terms of professionalisation in Norwegian sports. This is the topic for our third and final part of this section.

The introduction of Norway's first professional FIFA league: eSerien (2019)

The Norwegian Football Federation (NFF) has come the furthest of the national sport federations in terms of including eSports in their organisations. In 2018, Norway's eFootball national team was founded and the first virtual international match in the NFF's history was played (VG 2018c). The NFF claims that Norway is a leading country in eFootball, in that it has participated in both the FIFA eNations Cup and hosted international eFootball conferences

---

[3] By virtual friends we mean friends that you only know through gaming online/digital interaction, but that you have not met in real life.

(NFF 2019b). In the spring of 2019, a year after the establishment of the national eFootball team, a new league was formed: eSerien (Altibox 2019). eSerien is the NFF's national FIFA league and is organised through a collaboration between the NFF, the TV company Discovery and the tournament operator and eSports company Good Game (NFF 2019b). Each participating club has two players, each wearing the official kit of the virtual edition of the club they represent.

The league started with group games, where the best two in each group moved on to the playoffs. The prize pool is 250,000 NOK and victory also gives 200 so-called 'Global Series Points' for the FIFA eWorld Cup qualification. All the Norwegian football clubs from the two top divisions are invited to participate. In the first season, 18 clubs (with a total of 36 professional FIFA players) took part. The NFF believes that this is only the beginning and that more teams and players will participate in the second season in 2020/2021 (VG 2019b).

But how do the sponsors, the NFF and the football clubs taking part in eSerien argue for their involvement? In an interview, a member of the board of directors of a national TV channel predicted a huge development of eSports in Norway and stated that in his view eSports would be bigger than analogue sports in Norway by 2025, calling eSports '*the greatest popular cultural revolution since the Beatles*' (Kampanje 2019). The managerial team of Altibox (the main sponsor of eSerien) argued that their company supported eSerien because eFootball had a great potential to reach consumers who were not interested in traditional football, stating that: '*It's an exciting way to reach a wider football audience*' (Altibox 2019). Another main sponsor of eSerien, SpareBank1 (2019) – a national bank – argued that '*the commitment and passion that emerges within eSports engages a group that has so far not been so visible. Here, SpareBank1 can promote a whole new generation of talents in a new field*'.

The NFF's eSports managers and directors of communication and society argue that NFF also sees eSports as an opportunity to activate new groups. The development of eSports has resulted in more ways of consuming football and it is in the NFF's interest to get involved in them all: '*Football has traditionally been consumed by either playing, being a supporter or through stadium audience. eFootball brings a fourth element: participation through eSports*' (VG 2018d). Furthermore, they point out that there does not have to be a contradiction between playing eFootball and being physically active: '*The best eSports players are interested in football, both in terms of consuming and physical involvement*' (Soundcloud 2018). They further claim that during an NFF FIFA tournament with 64 participants, two out of three participants played (physical) football on average five hours a week (VG 2018d). Hence, the

NFF is convinced that eFootball reinforces the general football interest in Norway (Soundcloud 2018). Finally, eFootball and traditional football have a lot in common and the NFF claims that both versions can contribute to skills development and better public health:

> We see a clear connection between mastering football and mastering eFootball. Within eSports, many of the same mechanisms apply as in traditional sports. The concentration level must be high, and one must therefore eat healthily, get enough sleep and be in good physical shape to perform at a high level. Here, the NFF has knowledge that eSports athletes can benefit from. In this way, the NFF can inspire even more people to adopt healthy lifestyles. (VG 2018d)

Like the NFF, many football clubs are positive to eSports. The elite team Bodø/Glimt is one of them, with a representative of the club stating: '*Gaming is part of the modern society. Hopefully, the link to club sports will increase eSports athlete's physical activity levels*' (Aftenposten 2019). However, some clubs are more uncertain about the development of eSports. For instance, the eSports manager of Ranheim football admits that the club does not quite know what it is doing when entering eSerien: '*We have made a decision without knowing exactly what we're jumping into, but we do see the trends in the rest of Europe where eSports raises interest among youth*' (Sunnmørsposten 2019).

In the light of the new eSerien, it is relevant to ask whether there are similarities between eFootball and elite football. At the top level, such as eSerien, eSports is characterised by an evident professionalisation that reflects that of elite sports. As in 'real' elite sports, the prelude to the matches in eSerien includes betting tips, promo shots, expert analyses and interviews with athletes. The players are scouted, picked, hired and paid. Therefore, those who participate in eSerien are arguably 'the best' FIFA players in Norway, thus making it a prestigious tournament and a recruitment arena for the eFootball national team (NFF 2019a). Players are even treated as top athletes when it comes to the facilities that are provided (paid coaches, exercise facilities, etc.). As in the real world of elite football, there is a transfer window where virtual athletes can be bought and sold from one club to another. There are also some ongoing professionalisation processes regarding the broadcasting of eSerien. Today, eSerien can be watched online at no cost, as well as live on the TV channel Eurosport Norway. The matches are covered by professional commentators and the playoffs are played in real football stadiums with spectators present (VG 2019b).

It is likely that eSerien and eFootball in general will continue to expand in Norway in the coming years. However, with the introduction of eFootball and its inclusion in the NFF, several dilemmas emerge. One is, how will the NFF combine the task of organising football

with eFootball? It is possible that these two practices (football and eFootball) will clash, for instance if children and youth drop out of organised football at a young age to take part in club sport organised eFootball. The challenges that such a scenario will entail for the NFF are still unknown. Another potential issue for the NFF is the institutionalisation and organisation of Norwegian eFootball in general. Although the NFF has the monopoly on organised 'real' football in Norway, it does not have the same monopoly on eFootball. If a major eSports company, such as EA Sports, decides to launch a (Norwegian) FIFA league, it could be more attractive for players than the NFF's eSerien. The NFF also has no national eSports federation to support them in such commercial battles. Thus, the future of the newly established eSerien is far from safe.

Conclusion

In this article we have explored the development of eSports in Norway from 2016 to 2019. Our findings show a tendency for eSports to become increasingly integrated into the Norwegian sporting field. This integration happens in three main ways: with the inclusion of eSports in secondary school elite sport programmes, with an increasing number of voluntary sport clubs establishing eSports training and teams for youth, and through the initiation of a professional, national eFIFA league – eSerien.

Our findings indicate that it is the genre of eSports games that simulate sport that has reached the strongest integration in voluntary sports clubs so far. While our material shows that the majority of sports clubs that have begun to include eSports in their activities for youth are football clubs interested in FIFA (eFootball), we know less about the integration of other genres of eSports games in Norwegian sport organisations. Some sport clubs still offer other genres of games, such as MOBAs or first-person shooters. Interestingly, the elite sports programmes in the secondary schools that are now offering eSports are not dominated by sport simulator games. Several of the schools offer eFootball/FIFA, but it is mainly MOBAs and first-person shooters that have the most players/students. This could indicate that while sport simulator games in general, and FIFA in particular, have developed more in terms of an organisational and practical integration into Norwegian sport organisations, these games may not be the most popular eSports games amongst Norwegian youth. As Mirabito and Kucek (2019) have noted, sport simulator games are the least popular game genre in the global world of eSports. Therefore, it is possible that this is the case in Norway as well. It could be that the reason why eFootball/FIFA is the most institutionalised and professionalised in Norwegian sport is that FIFA players are interested in football and are therefore interested in being included in the NFF.

eSports players in game genres that have no association to sport, such as MOBAs, might not be interested in being included in a sport organisation. These games have their own organisations, world championships and tournaments, and perhaps these eSports players see no benefit in becoming integrated into sports.

In the texts we have analysed, the representatives from the sports clubs argue that their reasons for including eSports are threefold. Firstly, eSports have the potential to attract new groups of youths who are not interested in sport. Their reasoning is that because eSports include many game genres that do not revolve around sports, including such games in their repertoire will enable them to recruit youth who were unlikely to join a sports club before the inclusion of eSports. Secondly, some texts in the material show that including eSports in sport clubs could contribute to social belonging and other mental health benefits for youth. Some of the sports leaders explain this by saying that instead of young people playing alone in their rooms, by joining eSports teams in their local sport clubs they will be able to train together in physical meeting places. Thirdly, our material illustrates that eSports could enable the sports clubs to include youth with physical disabilities in their activities. In our material, the story of Mats is the best example of the potential of eSports for social inclusion.

Finally, we find that upper secondary schools were the first to include eSports as sport through the introduction of eSports courses in their elite sport programmes. Our material also indicates that there is a difference between eSports in upper secondary schools and in sports clubs in terms of their choice of game genres. While FIFA dominates the sports clubs, MOBA games, real time strategy games and first-person shooters are the most common in the schools' eSports programmes. Hence, it may seem that at this point, in 2020, upper secondary schools have come further than the sports clubs in terms of integrating eSports as sport, and that sports clubs (football clubs) have introduced FIFA mainly to recruit new football fans.

Limitations and implications for research

As is commonplace with studies conducted using digital qualitative research strategies, there are sampling issues in our study. Although we have used the ATEKST database to retrieve texts published in Norwegian newspapers and journals, this database does not incorporate all the relevant digital places in which the development of eSports in Norway could be discussed. For instance, digital forums for gamers are not included in the database. Several gamer and eSports athlete voices are included in our material, but these have been selected and framed by journalists in our specific sample of newspapers and journals. If we were to conduct a digital ethnography (netnography) amongst eSports athletes and gamers either in game or through their

own digital meeting spaces, we would probably gain a different perspective on the development of eSports in Norway. In other words, we do not claim that our interpretation and our material represent the 'truth' about the expansions of eSports in Norway. Our interpretation is one possible interpretation of many, based on a specific sample of texts.

Hamari and Sjöblom (2017) point out that research on eSports is both rare and fragmented. To our knowledge, while empirical research on eSports is growing, most of this body of research has so far focused on sport management perspectives (e.g. Hutchins [2008]), issues of gender equality (e.g. Taylor, Jenson and Castell [2009]), doping amongst eSports athletes (e.g. Holden, Rodenberg and Kaburakis 2017), the sociality of gaming regarding the (re)production of social capital (social integration and making friends) (e.g. Eklund and Roman [2018]) and motivation amongst eSports athletes (Bjørner 2014) and spectators (Hamari and Sjöblom 2017). As far as we are aware, there is only limited research on the development and expansion of eSports in different parts of the world. This study is therefore a modest contribution to the eSports literature on the development and expansion of eSports in Norway.

The findings in this study suggest that eSports have developed differently as part of elite sport programmes in upper secondary schools and as part of leisure activities for youth in sports clubs. The most notable difference here is the genre of eSports games that the upper secondary school sport programmes focus on (mainly MOBAs, first-person shooters and real time strategy games) and the genre of games that sports clubs emphasise (games that simulate sport). Future studies on the development of eSports in other countries should be mindful of the different development trajectories in school sports and organised sports clubs (the NIF). Building on this finding, research on the expansion of eSports in other areas can identify similarities and differences between the development of eSports in Norway and in other countries where these new virtual sports are now on the rise.

References

Archetti, E. P. 2003. "Den norske «idrettsmodellen»: et kritisk blikk på sivilt samfunn i Norge" ["The Norwegian 'sports model': a critical look at civil society in Norway"]. *Norsk antropologisk tidsskrift* 14 (1): 8-15. https://www.idunn.no/nat/2003/01/den_norske_idrettsmodellen_et_kritisk_blikk_pa_sivilt_samfunn_i_norge.

Arneberg, E. J., and Hegna, K. 2018. "Virtuelle grenseutfordringer. Symbolske grenser i spill i The League of Legends" ["Virtual boundary challenges. Symbolic boundaries at play in the League of Legends"]. *Norwegian Journal of Sociology* 2 (3): 259-274. https://www.idunn.no/norsk_sosiologisk_tidsskrift/2018/03/virtuelle_grenseutfordringer.

Bakken, A. 2018. "*Ungdata 2018. Nasjonale resultater*" ["*The Norwegian youth survey*

2018. National results"]. Oslo: The Norwegian Institute for Research on Adolescence, Welfare and Aging. http://www.hioa.no/Om-OsloMet/Senter-for-velferds-og-arbeidslivsforskning/NOVA/Publikasjonar/Rapporter/2018/Ungdata-2018.-Nasjonale-resultater.

Bakken, A. 2019. "*Idrettens posisjon i ungdomstida. Hvem deltar og hvem slutter i ungdomsidretten?*" ["*The position of organised sports in adolescence. Who participates and who drop out of youth sports?*"] Oslo: The Norwegian Institute for Research on Adolescence, Welfare and Aging. https://fagarkivet-hioa.archive.knowledgearc.net/bitstream/handle/20.500.12199/1298/NOVA-Rapport-2-2019-Idrettens-posisjon-i-ungdomstida-25-februar-2019.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

BBC 2017. "Esports: International Olympic Committee considering esports for future games". Retrieved from https://www.bbc.com/sport/olympics/41790148.

Billings, A., and Hou, J. 2019. "The origins of esport: half a century history of 'overnight' success". In: R. Rogers (Ed.), "*Understanding esports – an introduction to a global phenomenon*". Maryland: Lexington Books.

Bjørner, T. 2014. "'You've been in the house too long, she said, and I naturally fled'. An analysis of habitus among Danish e-sport players". *Scandinavian Sports Studies Forum* 5: 149-166. https://sportstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/149-166_vol_5_2014_bjorner.pdf.

Bloor, M., and Wood, F. 2006. "*Keywords in qualitative methods: a vocabulary of research concepts*". London: SAGE Publications.

Bowman, N. D., and Cranmer, G. A. 2019. "Can video games be a sport?" In: R. Rogers (Ed.), "*Understanding esports – an introduction to a global phenomenon*". Maryland: Lexington Books.

Bratberg, Ø. 2014. "*Tekstanalyse for samfunnsvitere*" ["*Textual analysis in the social sciences*"]. Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademisk.

Breuer, C., Hoekman, R., Nagel, S., and van der Werff, H. (Eds.) 2015. "*Sport clubs in Europe. A cross-national comparative perspective*". New York: Springer.

Bundon, A. 2016. "The web and digital qualitative methods: researching online and researching the online in sport and exercise studies". In: B. Smith and A. C. Sparkes (Eds.), "*Routledge handbook of qualitative research in sport and exercise*". London: Routledge.

Bundon, A. 2017. "*Digital qualitative research in sport and physical activity*". London: Routledge.

Burroughs, B., and Rama, P. 2015. "The esports trojan horse: twitch and streaming futures". *Journal of Virtual Worlds Research* 8 (2): 1-5. Doi: 10.4101/jvwr.v8i2.7176.

Children and the Media Survey 2018. "*Barn og dataspill*" ["*Children and computer games*"]. Oslo: The Norwegian Media Authority. https://www.medietilsynet.no/globalassets/publikasjoner/barn-og-medier-undersokelser/dataspill-tallgrunnlag-februar-2018.pdf.

Eklund, L., and Roman, S. 2018. "Digital gaming and young people's friendships: a mixed methods study of time use and gaming in school". *Young* 27 (1): 32-47. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1177/1103308818754990.

Elasri-Ejjaberi, A., Rodriquez-Rodriguez, S., and Aparicio-Chueca, P. 2020. "Effect of esport sponsorship on brands: an empirical study applied to youth". *Journal of Physical Education and Sport* 20 (2): 852-861. Doi: https://doi.org/10.7752/jpes.2020.02122.

Euroforum Deutschland 2015. "*Marketing channel esports – how to get the attention of*

young adults?" Düsseldorf.

Finch, D. J., Abeza, G., O'Reilly, N., and Mikkelson, A. 2020. "Esport sponsorship: practitioners' perspectives on emerging trends". *Journal of Brand Strategy* 9 (1): 59-74.

Gray, W. D. 2017. "Game-XP: action games as experimental paradigms for cognitive science". *Topics in Cognitive Science* 9 (2): 289-307. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1111/tops.12260.

Gray, P. B., Vuong, J., Zava, D., and McHale, T. 2018. "Testing men's hormone responses to playing League of Legends: no changes in testosterone, cortisol, DHEA or androstenedione but decreases in aldosterone". *Computers in Human Behavior*, 83, 230-234. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2018.02.004.

Green, K., Thurston, M., Vaage, O., and Roberts, K. 2015. "'[We're on the right track, baby], we were born this way'! Exploring sports participation in Norway". *Sport, Education and Society* 20 (3): 285-303. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2013.769947.

Hallmann, K., and Giel, T. 2018. "esports – competitive sports or recreational activity?" *Sport Management Review* 21 (1): 14-20. Doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2017.07.011.

Hamari, J., and Sjöblom, M. 2017. "What is esports and why do people watch it?" *Internet Research* 27 (2): 211-232. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1108/IntR-04-2016-0085.

Hebbel-Seeger, A. 2012. "The relationship between real sports and digital adaption in e-sport gaming". *International Journal of Sports Marketing & Sponsorship* 13 (2): 132-143. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSMS-13-02-2012-B005.

Heere, B. 2018. "Embracing the sportification of society: defining e-sports through a polymorphic view on sport". *Sports Management Review* 21 (1): 21-24. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2017.07.002.

Herd, K. 2016. "Writing, stitching, inking. Different modes of creating historical narratives". *Idrott, Historia & Samhalle* 1: 29-47.

Holden, J. T., Rodenberg, R. M., and Kaburakis, A. 2017. "Esports corruption: gambling, doping, and global governance". *Maryland Journal of International Law* 32 (1): 236-273. https://digitalcommons.law.umaryland.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1663&context=mjil.

Huang, J., Yan, E., Cheung, G., Nagappan, N., and Zimmermann, T. 2017. "Master maker: understanding gaming skill through practice and habit from gameplay behaviour". *Topics in Cognitive Science* 9 (2), 437-466. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1111/tops.12251.

Hutchins, B. 2008. "Signs of meta-change in second modernity: the growth of e-sport and the world cyber Games". *New Media & Society*, 10 (6): 851-69. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444808096248.

IOC 2018. "Olympic movement, esports and gaming communities meet at the esports forum". Retrieved from https://www.olympic.org/news/olympic-movement-esports-and-gaming-communities-meet-at-the-esports-forum.

Jansz, J., and Martens, L. 2005. "Gaming at a LAN event: the social context of playing video games". *New Media and Society* 7 (3): 333-355. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444805052280.

Jenny, S. E., Manning, R. D., Keiper, M. C., and Olrich T. W. 2017. "Virtual(ly) athletes: where esports fit within the definition of "sport"". *Quest* 69 (1): 1-18. Doi : https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2016.1144517.

Jonasson, K., and Thiborg, J. 2010. "Electronic sport and its impact on future sport". *Sport in Society* 13 (2): 287-299. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/17430430903522996.

Keiper, M. C., Manning, R. D., Jenny, S., Olrich, T., and Croft, C. 2017. "No reason to LoL

at LoL: the addition of esports to intercollegiate athletic departments." *Journal for the Study of Sports and Athletes in Education* 11 (2): 143-160. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/19357397.2017.1316001.

Llorens, M. R. 2017. "eSport Gaming: the rise of a new sports practice". *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy* 11 (4): 464-476. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2017.1318947.

Markula, P., and Silk, M. 2011. "*Qualitative research for physical culture*". Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Martončik, M. 2015. "e-sports: playing just for fun or playing to satisfy life goals?" *Computers in Human Behavior*, 48: 208-211. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.01.056.

Mirabito, T., and Kucek, J. 2019. "Sports video games (SVGs) in the esports landscape". In: R. Rogers (Ed.), "*Understanding esports – an introduction to a global phenomenon*". Maryland: Lexington Books.

Morgan, L. 2019. "Liam Morgan: esports is coming to the Olympics after all as Paris 2024 reveal ideas to improve fan engagement". Retrieved from https://www.insidethegames.biz/articles/1075990/liam-morgan-esports-is-coming-to-the-olympics-after-all-as-paris-2024-reveal-ideas-to-improve-fan-engagement.

Musingslif 2013. "My escape". Retrieved from https://musingslif.blogspot.com/2013/07/my-escape.html.

NIF 2017. "*Årsrapport 2017*" ["*Annual report 2017*"]. https://www.idrettsforbundet.no/contentassets/4393d243d44c40d790193e7ff977765c/27_18_nif-arsrapport-2017_lr.pdf.

Parry, J. 2019. "E-sports are not sports". *Sports, Ethics and Philosophy* 13 (1): 3-18. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2018.1489419.

Ratan, R. A., Taylor, N., Hogan, J., Kennedy, T., and Williams, D. 2015. "Stand by your man: an examination of gender disparity in League of Legends". *Games and Culture* 10 (5): 438-462. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412014567228.

Reitman, J. G., Anderson-Coto, M. J., Wu, M., Lee, J. S., and Steinkuehler, C. 2020. "Esports research: a literature review". *Games and Culture* 15 (1): 32-50. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412019840892.

Ruvalcaba, O., Shulze, J., Kim, A., Berzenski, S. R., and Otten, M. P. 2018. "Women's experiences in esports: gendered differences in peer and spectator feedback during competitive video game play". *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 42 (4): 295-311. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1177/0193723518773287.

Seo, Y., and Jung, S. U. 2016. "Beyond solitary play in computer games: the social practices of esports". *Journal of Consumer Culture* 16 (3): 635-655. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1177/1469540514553711.

Spaaij, R., and Schaillée, H. 2020. "Inside the black box: a micro-sociological analysis of sport for development". *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 00 (0): 1-9. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690220902671.

Stefansen, K., Smette, I., and Strandbu, Å. 2018. "Understanding the increase in parents' involvement in organized youth sports". *Sport, Education and Society* 23 (2): 162-172. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2016.1150834.

Strandbu, Å., Gulløy, E., Andersen, P. L., Seippel, Ø., and Dalen, H. B. 2017. "Ungdom, idrett og klasse: fortid, samtid og framtid" ["Youth, sports and social class: past, present and future trends"]. *Norwegian Journal of Sociology* 2 (1): 132-151. https://www.idunn.no/norsk_sosiologisk_tidsskrift/2017/02/ungdom_idrett_og_klasse_fortid_samtid_og_framtid.

Strandbu, Å., Bakken, A., and Sletten, M. A. 2019. "Exploring the minority-majority gap in sport participation: different patterns for boys and girls?" *Sport in Society* 22 (4): 606-624. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2017.1389056.

Taylor, N., Jenson, J., and Castell, S. 2009. "Cheerleaders/booth babes/halo hoes: pro-gaming, gender and jobs for the boys". *Digital Creativity* 20 (4): 239-252. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/14626260903290323.

Taylor, T. L., and Witkowski, E. 2010. "This is how we play it: what a mega-LAN can teach us about games". Retrieved from https://dl.acm.org/ft_gateway.cfm?id¼1822374.

Thiel, A., and John, J. M. 2018. "Is esport a 'real' sport? Reflections on the spread of virtual competitions". *European Journal for Sport and Society* 15 (4): 311-315. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/16138171.2018.1559019.

Thorpe, H., and Wheaton, B. 2011. "'Generation x games', action sports and the olympic movement: understanding the cultural politics of incorporation". *Sociology* 45 (5): 830-847. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038511413427.

Thorpe, H., and Dumont, G. 2018. "The professionalization of action sports: mapping trends and future directions". *Sport in Society* 22 (10): 1639-1654. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2018.1440715.

Tjønndal, A., Hjelseth, A., and Lenneis, V. 2019. "Fra presentasjon til prestasjon? Sportifisering av skateboard i Norge" ["From self-expression to competition? The sportification of Norwegian skateboarding"]. *Scandinavian Sports Studies Forum* 10: 89-116. https://sportstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/089-116_vol_10_2019_tjonndaletal.pdf.

Vaismoradi M., Turunen, H., and Bondas, T. 2013. "Content analysis and thematic analysis: implications for conducting a qualitative descriptive study". *Nursing & Health Sciences* 15 (3): 398-405. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1111/nhs.12048.

Ward, M. R., and Harmon, A. D. 2019. "Esport superstars". *Journal of Sports Economics* 20 (8): 987-1013. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1177/1527002519859417.

Witkowski, E. 2010. "Probing the sportiness of esports." In: J. Christophers and T. Scholz (Eds.), "*eSports Yearbook 2009*". Norderstedt: Books on Demand.

Witkowski, E. 2012. "On the digital playing field: how we "do sport" with networked computer games". *Games and Culture* 7 (5): 349-374. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412012454222.

Zolides, A. 2015. "Lipstick bullets: labour and gender in professional gamer self-branding". *Persona Studies* 1 (2): 42-53. https://ojs.deakin.edu.au/index.php/ps/article/viewFile/467/504.