



**“Cake is not an Attack on Democracy”: Moving beyond
Carceral Pride and Building Queer Coalitions in Post-22/7
Norway**

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'Cake is not an attack on democracy': Moving beyond carceral Pride and building queer coalitions in post-22/7 Norway

[Abstract:]

The pieing of a far-right politician at the 2016 Oslo Pride parade was met with condemnation from the media and within Norway's LGBT movement. The pie-thrower, a member of the European queer-anarchist band Cistem Failure, was charged with committing an 'attack on democracy,' part of the criminal code strengthened after the 22/7 terrorist attacks in 2011, and sentenced to imprisonment followed by deportation. This article reflects critically on the dominant narratives of this event and places them in context with Norway's turn towards right-wing populism, national protectionist discourse on terror, and mainstream Pride's dependence on state support.

Drawing on a combined framework of a critical historical and queer optic (Russell 2019), regenerative analytic (Haritaworn 2015), and Cistem Failure's alter-narratives, I examine the ways in which Norway's increasing 'security governance' promotes a divisive othering and the expulsion of 'undeserving' queers and those who are considered problematic or threatening. I argue that on one level, this presents a serious challenge to democratic principles regarding freedom of speech and expression; on another level, this requires attention to broad intersectional inequalities beyond liberal LGBT activism and its complicity or compliance with state governance. The article argues that marginalised queer protest should be seen as a vital part of efforts to protect the democratic right to public dissent, coalitional justice, and radical care.

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3 [Text]
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5 On 25 June 2016, during the festive Pride parade in downtown Oslo, a member of the
6 continental European queer-anarchist band Cistem Failure threw a pie at Solveig Horne, a
7 government minister and member of the right-wing populist Progress Party (FrP–
8 Fremskrittspartiet).ⁱ Horne, as minister of equality, diversity, and inclusion, was an honorary
9 Parade guest and marched at the front of the parade, alongside movement leaders, prominent
10 activists, and celebrities. According to later court documents that drew on witness statements,
11 after pieing the minister, the ‘pie-thrower’ ran away, laughing, and high-fived a friend in a
12 nearby park. Both the pie-thrower and friend ‘seemed happy’ and ‘evidently pleased with
13 what they had accomplished’ (Borgarting Lagmannsrett 2016).
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28 The police quickly came to the scene and took the pie-thrower into custody. When a court
29 hearing was held a few days later, they (the pie-thrower)ⁱⁱ were charged with ‘attacking the
30 activities of the highest state bodies’ (Section 115 of the penal codeⁱⁱⁱ), a rarely applied
31 paragraph which is often translated as ‘attacking’ or ‘endangering democracy’ (*angrep på*
32 *demokratiet*). In addition to being charged with Section 115, they were also charged with
33 ‘physical assault’ (Section 271 of the penal code^{iv}). A guilty verdict on these charges could
34 carry a prison sentence of up to sixteen years, with ten years for Section 115 alone. On 8 July,
35 Oslo District Court found the pie-thrower guilty and sentenced them to forty-five days
36 imprisonment, to be followed by deportation from Norway. As they had already spent sixteen
37 days in custody, the total number of days in prison was eventually set at twenty-nine. They
38 appealed the sentence, but the verdict was upheld at a hearing held on 4 October that same
39 year. In any case, by then they had already completed the sentence and left the country.
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3 When I first heard of the incident, I was baffled by the main response from LGBT community
4 leaders, politicians, the police, and media: Throwing a cake at a government minister was
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7 ‘very unnecessary,’ a ‘bad choice,’ ‘crazy,’ ‘ugly,’ and an ‘undignified attack on democracy.’
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10 An official narrative that connected the pieing to terrorism and anti-Norway sentiments was
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12 quickly cemented and readily dispersed. For instance, on the same day of the incident, an
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14 attorney for the national police security service (PST) said: ‘An attack against a government
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16 minister in this way is an attack on democracy.’
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21 To be sure, security, terror, and protective measures were already at the forefront of political
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23 and policing concerns due to broader political shifts and events, both nationally and globally.
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25 Just a few weeks before Oslo Pride, a lone man attacked the gay, largely Latinx, Pulse
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27 nightclub in Orlando, Florida, US, killing 49 people and wounding 58 others. Oslo Pride
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29 organisers dedicated the 2016 Pride to the Orlando victims, as a reminder of worldwide hate
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31 and violence against gender and sexual minorities (Bothner et al. 2016). Another effect of the
32
33 Pulse massacre was increased policing and security provisions at Pride events globally. As the
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35 inspector of the Police’s Operational Unit in Oslo said, ‘Our aim is to secure the event and
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37 enable a nice celebration of diversity and equity’ (Rakeng 2016). In a similar vein, the Oslo
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39 Pride committee said that they were ‘taking safety and security back’ by sticking to the
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41 original schedule and framing the Pulse mass shooting as a unifying, rather than fear-
42
43 inducing, event (Arnesen 2016, Rakeng 2016).
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51 While the Pulse massacre was the immediate context of the security and protective focus at
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53 Oslo Pride, the pieing event and the way it was discursively and legally handled must be
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55 considered in relation to the terror attacks in Oslo and Utøya on 22 July 2011. There, the far-
56
57 right extremist Anders Behring Breivik killed 77 people, mostly members of the Labour
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3 Party's youth organisation (AUF) who were attending the annual summer camp. The killings
4 were quickly labelled an attack on the Norwegian nation and even democracy (Esbaty 2021).

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7 Two years later, the FrP, of which the terrorist had been a member for some years prior to
8 2011, joined the government coalition with the Conservative Party (Høyre). As I will go on to
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12 argue, in the ten years since, Norway's political governing and public debate have shifted
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14 significantly towards the right, following international populist and reactionary trends.
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19 Revisions to Section 115 of the Norwegian legal code, made following the 22/7 terror attack,
20 were seen as a legitimate response to terrorism (Lödén 2014, Rafoss 2019). In this article I
21 aim to connect the state's response to the pie-throwing to Norway's political right-wing and
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interrogate the implicit assumptions about which LGBTQI+ identities get to claim belonging
in progressive queer movements and Pride festivals, as influenced by the dominant politics
that structure the movements.

To this end, I apply a 'critical and historical queer optic' (Russell 2019), alongside Jin
Haritaworn's regenerative analytic (2015), to analyse the pieing and its aftermath. Drawing on
a more extensive narrative material than that offered by legal and media reporting, I place the
pieing and its carceral aftermath in a broader political context to argue that the case represents
urgent ethical and political dilemmas for struggles for liberation, justice, and marginalised
identities. This article, then, is an attempt to articulate my nagging frustrations with what
happened, both by placing the case within a broader context and by interrogating the
dominant narratives and corresponding silences.

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3 I begin from the supposition that the pie intervention was a legitimate queer protest that sat
4 (un)comfortably within the ethico-legal scope of voicing democratic disagreement and
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6 freedom of speech in contemporary Norway. To support this argument, I approach the case
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8 from two vantage points. Firstly, I focus on the pie-throwing incident and its immediate legal
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10 consequences in court. I examine dominant public accounts that condemned the pieing, called
11
12 for civility, and drew parallels with terror events, expressions of fear, and (select) victimhood.
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14 I then compare these narratives with alternative ones: in particular, Oslo Queer's critical blog
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16 article 'Cake is not an attack on democracy, the FrP is,' and earlier comparable events that
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18 also hosted Minister Horne. I consider the question: What are the implicit assumptions
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20 concerning who belongs at Pride and who does not, specifically in the context of racialisation,
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22 sexuality, citizenship, and identification?
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31 In the second part of the article, I present different perspectives that instantiate a more
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33 expansive queer activism and world-building imaginary, drawing on Cistem Failure's alter-
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35 narratives. This type of activism, I argue, aspires to a genuine politics of accountability and
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37 solidarity beyond the ideology of carceral violence, state protection, and national borders. It
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39 employs tactics of confrontation and seeks to hold powerful actors accountable. Specifically, I
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41 consider seemingly simple acts—such as the accused's refusal to speak in court—as a
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43 political commentary on systemic injustice. Furthermore, I provide a close reading of blogs
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45 and radio programmes that Cistem Failure members produced in relation to the court case.
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47 This perspectival shift, I suggest, allows us to see the pieing not primarily as an anomalous
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49 'attack on democracy,' seen through the carceral frame of a 'war on terror,' or indeed the
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51 moralistic specre of (un)civility and compliance, but as part of a trajectory of radical protest
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53 and queer imaginings beyond borders.
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3 In this, I follow Jasbir Puar's homonationalism analytic, which she describes as 'a facet of
4 modernity and a historical shift marked by the entrance of (some) homosexual bodies as
5 worthy of protection by nation-states, a constitutive and fundamental reorientation of the
6 relationship between the state, capitalism, and sexuality' (Puar 2013: 337). I suggest that a
7 similar process of 'fundamental reorientation' occurred in post-22/7 Norway which affected
8 racialised, sexual, and gender-specific norms of belonging, respectability, and definitions of
9 threat and worthiness of state protection. This especially takes issue with the 'exceptionalism'
10 narrative of Norway as a superior homo-tolerant and gay-rights haven in a global context.
11 Rather, Norway's mode of sexual citizenship is that of 'queer liberalism', whereby 'the
12 inclusion of queers in nationhood is depoliticised and established as a Norwegian value'
13 (Klatran 2021: 3; Jacobsen 2018).
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30 To this end, I argue that the fraught landscape for meaningful dissent and queer protest that
31 emerges through this critique necessitates critical attention to and contextualisation of the
32 intricate ways in which various actors frame systemic critique as a democratic challenge. This
33 includes, for example, the ways that bodies and actions are protected or criminalised. This
34 critique is especially urgent given the current moment of extraordinary uncertainties due to
35 climate and pandemic crises, the rise of reactionary populisms, and the concurrent
36 aggravation of preexisting inequalities.
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51 **Pride politics and its critique in post-22/7 Norway**

52 Pride festivals are locations of longstanding critiques of activist organising and political
53 prioritising. Queer and trans activists of colour, and those of immigrant and other
54 marginalised backgrounds, are often at the forefront of critiques of dominant Pride politics.
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3 This tacitly or directly configures them as objects of exclusion and threat by mainstream
4 queer communities and the state (Alm 2021; Spade 2015). Daniel Conway, writing about
5 Johannesburg Pride specifically but framing Pride as a global phenomenon, argues for the
6 importance of making intersectional inequalities visible and as a basis for collective action,
7 saying that Pride events ‘reveal, conform and contest broader neoliberal and sanitised
8 presentations of LGBTQ+ rights, identities and diversity politics’ (Conway 2021: 15).
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19 Connecting European Pride festivals to broader social movement politics, collective practices,
20 and queer critiques beyond state-oriented hegemonies, Konstantinos Eleftheriadis argues for
21 the importance of paying attention to local queer mobilisations at a transnational scale, cutting
22 across national and identitarian borders (Eleftheriadis 2018). Writing about Reclaim Pride in
23 the Swedish city of Gothenburg, Cathrin Wasshede discusses radical critiques of mainstream
24 Pride’s wilful forgetting of Pride’s radical roots, and argues that the struggle must be anti-
25 racist, anti-capitalist, and intersectional (Wasshede 2021: 153). Similarly, a comparative study
26 of Pride events in Europe and Mexico demonstrates the multiple strategic priorities involved
27 in contemporary Pride organising. The study’s authors emphasise the desire for a broad
28 inclusion of allies and sympathisers beyond the LGBTQI community, the need to mobilise
29 support beyond the LGBTQI community itself, and note the growing criticism of Pride’s
30 commercialisation, mainstreaming, and ‘de-gaying’ (Peterson, Wahlström, and Wennerhag
31 2018: 212).
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51 Importantly, Pride events and the concept of ‘LGBT rights’ are increasingly appropriated in
52 reactionary populist rhetoric that supports a rigid homonationalist ideology that centres a
53 threat/security dynamic, as well as biological essentialism and racist claims about sex and
54 gender. In writing about the 2016 Pride Järva outside Stockholm, Katharina Kehl foregrounds
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3 how ‘LGBT rights’ and ‘Pride’ can be exploited by right-wing racist movements that position
4 themselves as protectors of LGBT rights, and in this process ‘construct and reproduce certain
5 exclusionary notions of “Swedishness”’ (Kehl 2018: 687). Writing about queer asylum
6 seekers, Deniz Akin discusses the ‘burden of proof’ that the Norwegian Directorate of
7 Immigration imposes on queer asylum seekers to prove their non-straight sexuality in order to
8 receive state protection (Akin 2016).
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19 While the Directorate regards Pride participation as a central factor in determining LGBT
20 orientation, proof of such involvement is also used to confirm a problematic polarisation of
21 queer-migrant vulnerability vis-à-vis an imagined or actual homeland seen as a threat to open
22 queer life (Akin 2016: 13). This script exemplifies the problem of racialised and colonial
23 representations of victimhood and purity, combined with rigid gender-sexual norms, to
24 implicitly frame state narratives and policy in ways that (over)determine citizenship and
25 belonging.
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38 It is therefore important to acknowledge the paradox at play here: while mainstream state-
39 sponsored LGBT organisations could be accused of engaging in racialised exclusionary
40 practices (such as pinkwashing the police), right-wing populist actors also appropriate LGBT
41 rights for exclusionary, nationalist, and racist (especially Islamophobic and anti-asylum)
42 political projects.^v In Norway, right-wing populism has converged with the state and its policy
43 practices; this has enabled an increasingly polarised media climate, especially for racialized,
44 sexual, and gender minorities. A recent research report titled ‘Living Conditions among
45 Queers of Immigrant Background’ found that more than fifty per cent of the respondents
46 reported having been exposed to negative comments or treatment due to race, ethnicity, or
47 religion. The reported racism took place both in mainstream society and in the queer
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3 community, including at Pride events (Eggebø, Stubberud, and Karlstrøm 2018; Mehsen
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5 2019; Haritaworn 2015: 7).
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10 A focus on Norway, then, contributes perspectives towards a body of scholarly literature on
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12 queerness, nation, and belonging that has mostly been located elsewhere. In terms of Nordic
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14 and European locations, the virtue of ‘homo-tolerance’ has been adapted as a national or
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16 regional moral value at the core of a modern, secular, and progressive ‘we’ (Ayoub and
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18 Paternotte 2014; Jacobsen 2018; Petersen 2014). In turn, homophobic attitudes are routinely
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20 marked as originating from religious beliefs (especially Islam) followed by a racialised,
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22 traditional ‘other’ that does not belong to the nationalised community of citizens (see Buijs,
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24 Hekma, and Duyvendak 2011; Puar 2007). It can be argued that inclusions of homosexuality
25
26 and citizenship manifest through nationalism, especially through the narrative lens of
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28 Norwegian egalitarianism and exceptionalism (Gullestad 2002; Petersen 2014: 76).
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35 In 2013, electoral advances saw the far-right populist FrP become for the first time a member
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37 of the Conservative Party-led coalition government, just two years after the 22/7 terror
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39 attack.^{vi} Until the party left the government in 2020 due to disagreements over asylum
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41 policies, the Progress Party oversaw the Ministry of Justice and Public Security and enjoyed
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43 growing mainstream popularity amongst voters for their anti-immigration, racist (especially
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45 anti-Muslim) politics. During the same time period, many western liberal democracies have
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47 witnessed the mainstreaming of positions concerning minority groups that were previously
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49 considered unacceptable right-wing, racist, and hateful. These minority groups, while largely
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51 racialised, have expanded to include gender and sexual minorities who diverge from the
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53 common consensus of good queer citizenship. On several occasions, the neo-Nazi Nordic
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55 Resistance Movement (Nordisk Motstandsbevegelse) has been allowed, in the name of ‘free
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3 speech' and with police protection, to hold demonstrations in Norwegian cities. Among the
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5 slogans shouted by the demonstrators: 'Crush the gay lobby!' (*Knus homolobbyen!*) (Hansen
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7 et al. 2017).
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12 The post-22/7 era in Norway, especially the conservative coalition government period
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14 between 2013 and 2021, has been marked by the normalisation of right-wing, anti-solidarity
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16 populism that was previously linked only to the FrP. The political developmental process has
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18 consciously played on the public's emotions—especially anger, fear, and disgust—and
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20 vilified marginalised groups and identities (see Bangstad 2015, 2020; Esbati 2021; Nilsen
21
22 2013). In the post-9/11 American context, Jasbir Puar has shown how forces of securitisation,
23
24 counterterrorism, solidification of state power, and nationalist surges operate (Puar 2007). As
25
26 I argue below, a comparable process is taking place in contemporary Norway. In the case of
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28 Norway, we might call the process—following Emma Russell (2018)—'carceral
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30 homonationalism' and 'carceral Pride'. In this process, then, liberal LGBT rights activism
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32 operates through Pride movements in collaboration with carceral policing and normative state
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34 violence to oppress and even criminalise queers unwilling or unable to comply with norms.
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45 **Methods of analysis**

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47 To analyse the pieing event, I structured my investigation of media narratives into three
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49 interlinked steps.^{vii} For the first step, I conducted keyword and themed searches in Atekst
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51 (Retriever), a Nordic digital media archive. I restricted my search to the time span between 25
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53 June 2016 (the date of the 2016 Oslo Pride Parade) and 31 December 2016, and used the
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55 search words 'Pride', 'Solveig Horne', and 'cake' (*kake*). This resulted in a total of 177 hits.
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57 The greatest number of hits were in the months of June, July, and October, with 55, 98, and
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3 22 hits, respectively. There were no hits after 10 October (the appeal hearing was on 4
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5 October). I then read the stories for content to determine relevance and perspective.
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10 For the second step, I searched Atekst for the period two years earlier, in connection with
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12 Euro Pride in Oslo, between 20 June (the start date of Euro Pride) and 31 December 2014,
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14 using the key words 'Pride' and 'Solveig Horne'. The search generated 107 results, most of
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16 which were in June and July. In addition to the general media coverage, I also retrieved op-
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18 eds and articles written by activists and academics during this period, some of which I discuss
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20 in this article. The third step involved a Sara Ahmed-inspired method of 'following Cistem
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22 Failure around' on alternative media platforms, with the intention of finding the voices and
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24 narratives of Cistem Failure members relating to the pieing, the trial, experiences of
25
26 incarceration, and activism. The identification of blog posts, music lyrics, and radio shows
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28 provided a crucial context for the alter-narratives I discuss in the latter part of this article.
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35 I read these narratives as indicators of broader transnational queer anti-racist and anti-carceral
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37 critiques. They also documented how the seemingly benign throwing of a pie at a minister
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39 was quickly framed as a national terrorist threat that resulted in the perpetrator—an Other—to
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41 be incarcerated and expelled from the nation's territory. Cistem Failure's alter-narratives and
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43 actions, including pie-throwing, could be said to be part of broader movements that challenge
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45 the exclusionary logics of homonationalism and pinkwashing, including refusing consensus,
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47 compliance, and capitalist commercialisation.
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53 **Critically unfolding the pieing's normative narrative**

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55 The dominant narrative in the mainstream news placed emphasis on the pie-thrower's
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57 foreignness and consistently misgendered them. The court proceedings received little
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3 coverage in the press. The pie-throwing itself, including its possible context and the
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5 motivation behind it, was barely if ever explored. As soon as the sentence was announced, the
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7 event's newsworthiness seemingly disappeared. I found minimal evidence of any sustained
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9 journalistic attempt to carry out more detailed investigative research. Nor was there discussion
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11 of why Horne had been targeted, or even reference to the FrP's well-documented political
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13 positions on matters concerning minorities and marginalised communities in Norway.
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19 The one mainstream news article I found that did explore a political connection was published
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21 by the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK). In a long article, published two days
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23 after the pieing, several key actors were interviewed, including the state attorney, the accused
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25 pie-thrower's lawyer, and Minister Horne. Under the sub-heading 'Cake is not a democratic
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27 tool,' Ingvild Endestad, then leader of the national LGBT organisation FRI, was quoted as
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29 saying: 'We have access to democratic tools. Pie-throwing is not among them ... There are
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31 many issues where the government is not doing enough or on which we disagree. In those
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33 cases, we use democratic means in our dialogue with them' (Jørstad & Zondag, 2016).
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40 It was troubling that a single cake-throwing incident was unambiguously denounced as
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42 undemocratic, and even compared with terrorism in its alleged 'attack on democracy'. An
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44 important discursive strategy in this respect is the categorical othering of the pie-thrower,
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46 especially in terms of nationality, gender, and '(in)civility'. The discursive connection that
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48 was established between pieing, crime, and an attack on democracy by key actors foreclosed
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50 possibilities for more critical discussion of the event itself and its political significance vis-à-
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52 vis Pride, LGBT organisations, and the government.
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3 The NRK article focused on the fear narrative. Minister Horne was quoted as saying: ‘I feel
4 very well taken care of by the police, and I am confident that they will deal with the case
5 accordingly.’ The article also referred to social media posts that Horne had shared from the
6 Pride parade. Among her posts: ‘It is important to show consideration for one another, and
7 stand up to discrimination.’ She also added the hashtag #happypride2016 to a Parade selfie.
8 This depoliticised reporting functioned on the one hand to separate the minister from the
9 FrP’s much-critiqued political legacy, and on the other hand to portray her(self) as an
10 innocent victim. By extension, Horne was able to represent a range of common Norwegian
11 values in her ministerial role, ‘values’ considered in opposition to the actions of a foreign,
12 uncivil attacker.
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28 A blog article by the independent radical group Oslo Queer, ‘Cake is not an attack on
29 democracy, the Progress Party is,’ was the only media narrative I found that refused to de-link
30 Horne from the FrP:
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38 We thought it was absurd that Horne walks in the parade in the first place, when she
39 belongs to a party which has actively worked against LGBTQIA rights. We are glad
40 that someone came up with a humorous reaction to her presence in the parade ... We
41 are proud to see that there are still people who do not stay silent, but act and says it
42 like Charlie Chaplin: No to this hypocrisy. People who remember our history and
43 recognize those who actively work against our struggle. Solidarity with the cake-
44 thrower! (Oslo Queer 2016)
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56 Inspired by Oslo Queer’s critique and applying Emma Russell’s ‘critical and historical queer
57 optic’ in the following, I read the pieing at Pride in the context of broader activist tactics and
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3 relevant historical events. Considered to have its origin in early twentieth-century slapstick
4 comedy and films, such as those made by Charlie Chaplin, the act of pieing (or egging) has
5 been typically seen to support common people's causes against the powerful and wealthy
6 (Vincent 2020). Today, the act of pieing is commonly described as a humorous political
7 statement, the merging of comedy with political intent to protest, humiliate, and even subvert
8 authority figures (Cohen 2018; Frank 2011). During the 2019 European Parliament elections
9 in the UK, a similar act of 'milkshaking,' to protest the far-right candidates Nigel Farage and
10 Tommy Robinson, gained popularity (Jacobson 2019). Indeed, pie-throwing represents a
11 persistent political strategy of protest that confronts and shames public figures, but its
12 principal aim is not to cause fear; the fear is a side effect (Abrahamian 2019).
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28 Oslo Queer's critique of the FrP's problematic legacy is also a poignant reminder of similar
29 events and critiques from the recent past. Two years prior, in 2014, Minister Horne
30 participated in and spoke at the Feminist Nordic Forum in Malmö, Sweden, and at the 2014
31 Euro Pride in Oslo. At the Nordic Forum, Minister Horne represented Norway and gave a
32 speech at the closing session which led to many people leaving in protest at the FrP's
33 documented history of supporting and voicing racist, homo-, and transphobic views
34 (Martinson 2017: 187). At the 2014 Euro Pride, Minister Horne was invited to ceremonially
35 open the festival, which led to substantial criticism directed at the FrP, the national LGBT
36 organisation LLH (later, FRI), and the Pride committee. Scholars Stine Svendsen and Mathias
37 Danbolt argued in the national *Dagbladet* newspaper:
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54 The LGBT movement has political capital in the Norwegian society. This capital has
55 been built through several decades of political mobilising against the Progress Party
56 and their proponents. When the [LGBT] movement now uses this political capital to
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3 contribute to the governing abilities of the Progress Party on a political area that it has
4 long opposed, it helps the Progress Party to legitimise its agenda to weaken social
5 movements fighting for diversity and inclusion in the Norwegian society. (Svendsen &
6 Danbolt 2014, *author's translation*)
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14 Others went further in their criticism. The Swedish LGBT organisation RFSL accused the
15 organisers of not only granting a platform to a racist political party but doing so without
16 organising any opposition or critique of the FrP; the RFSL representative subsequently
17 boycotted the opening ceremony. Another pointed intervention, also by scholars and scholar
18 activists, traced the background for the original invitation to Minister Horne to an organising
19 committee member who was also a member of the coalition government's Conservative Party
20 (Høyre) and had used Høyre's letterhead for the invitation letter. In the letter, the committee
21 member explicitly discussed the need to change the perception that the government was in
22 any way 'anti-gay' (*homofiendtlig*). The authors concluded that 'the intention was not to show
23 support for the LGBT movement; Horne was in fact invited to pinkwash the FrP and the
24 government' (Roen et al. 2014, *author's translation*; see also Mon and Konstad 2014).
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42 At the trial of the accused pie thrower, Horne gave testimony to the court by video link.
43 Delivering a forty-minute statement, she spoke of her feelings of fear immediately after the
44 pie attack: 'I thought about what could have happened if it wasn't a cake, but a weapon or
45 something like that ... This can look like just an innocent cake, but it could have been
46 something else ... I also thought about security, how someone could come so close, so
47 quickly' (Berglund 2016). A police officer made a statement to the court on the meaning of
48 the queer anarchist flag that the pie-thrower had draped around their shoulders—described in
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3 the Oslo District Court trial documents simply as ‘a piece of cloth ... in pink/black paint’
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5 (Oslo Tingrett 2016).
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10 The official court account was very much like the mainstream news coverage. In short, it
11 foregrounded the fear and security framework and the absence of civility and appropriate
12 manners in throwing cake at a minister, thereby establishing a very narrow arena for
13 acceptable protest in a democracy. In addition, the continued emphasis on the foreign
14 nationality of the pie-thrower further amplified the rhetorical othering of them, which in turn
15 served to delegitimise *any* critique of the Pride parade and those connected to it—including
16 Horne, the FrP, and, by extension, the government. The absence of a sustained discussion of
17 the politics of queer anarchism that the flag indicated further bolstered this dominant single-
18 story narrative, the unified call for civility, and the exclusionary imaginary of a progressive
19 LGBT movement (Borgarting 2016; Oslo Tingrett 2016).
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35 Staying with the trial but turning now to Cistem Failure, how can we read differently the
36 defendant’s refusal to give a statement or defend themselves in court? Theories on queer
37 refusal attend to representations and longer histories of queer activism where ‘bad feelings’
38 and regenerating exclusions are central (Love 2013). It is, in short, a refusal of the usual
39 connections and of conforming to normative expectations. In this light, consider Cistem
40 Failure’s own court account on its blog:
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51 The best bit was when the cop from the *politiets sikkerhetstjeneste* presented as
52 evidence the pink and black flag of which Em was in possession at the time of their
53 arrest. She also printed out what appeared to be the Wikipedia article on anarchist
54 symbolism. The cop seemed immensely proud of and delighted with herself that she
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3 had managed to decipher the meaning of such an esoteric symbol. She read aloud from
4 a piece of paper which said (in English) something like ‘queer anarchism is a
5
6 revolutionary practice that seeks to overthrow the state and the gender binary’. The
7
8 translator then attempted to translate this into Norwegian but got stuck on the phrase
9
10 ‘gender binary’. The judge, the cop, the prosecuting attorney, and the translator all
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13 kind of looked up at each other curiously, but they just shrugged — none of them
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15
16 could shed any light on the meaning of this bizarre utterance. (Cistem Failure 2016a)
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21 This account broadens the perspective on the legal process that followed the pie-throwing, but
22
23 instead of bolstering the normative narrative which emphasises crime, uncivility, and a
24
25 necessary carceral solution, Cistem Failure’s alter-narrative centres radical queer refusal as
26
27 more than simply refusing to speak. The detail of the queer-anarchist flag insists on the pie-
28
29 throwing’s politics of protesting authority and convention. Furthermore, with its somewhat
30
31 irreverent tone, the account reflects on the unwillingness or inability of the police and the
32
33 court to comprehend and take seriously the political significance, and possible explanatory
34
35 power, of the flag that Em carried with them.
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42 Placed alongside the constant misgendering in media and legal documents, Cistem Failure’s
43
44 alter-narratives aptly demonstrate the operationalisation of the dominant cisnormative
45
46 vocabulary and exclusionary social order of the contemporary nation state (hartline 2020).
47
48 Read through a more expansive queer-historical optic, the pie-throwing and its manifold
49
50 aftermath open the possibility for other, more complex, narrative framings of the pie-
51
52 throwing. Moreover, these openings take seriously acts of refusal (to speak in court), rejection
53
54 (of the Pride consensus), and regeneration (to create other ways to organise and live
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3 collectively) as core components of imagining radical political critique and movement
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5 building. In the next section, I examine these generative possibilities in more detail.
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12 **Imagining transformative solidarity and queer-movement building**

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14 Jin Haritaworn's queer-regeneration analytic is useful to help unpack the broader landscape of
15
16 violence, stigma, and exclusion that radical-queer protest, beyond respectable liberalism and
17
18 normative Norwegian consensus culture, entails (Haritaworn 2015). This involves a centring
19
20 of the perspectives and work of excluded and nonconforming queers, and contains 'banal
21
22 encounters, co-habitations, hauntings, mobilisations and reverberations that occur when
23
24 formerly degenerate bodies, times and places come to life' (Haritaworn 2015: 3; Chavez
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26 2015: 50).
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33 The banal, humorous, and lone-standing protest action of throwing a pie at a government
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35 minister, the band's name (Cistem Failure), their self-description as a 'travelling Anarchist
36
37 feminist queer band' on their website, and the sharp critique of mainstream structural violence
38
39 in their songs, offer a sense—when viewed in a historical and political context—of a
40
41 regenerative potential, a framework, for systemic critique. Sure, Cistem Failure's alter-
42
43 narratives may well be dismissed as banal encounters and momentary mobilisations—short-
44
45 lived and largely ignored by hegemonic powers which view them as at best inconvenient
46
47 disruptions and at worst an attack on democracy.
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54 Reading through Russell's queer-historical optic and Haritaworn's regenerative analytic,
55
56 however, offers a tentative framework that reaches for broader mobilisations. I suggest that
57
58 they sketch a radical political subjectivity that centres other ways to live and come together
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3 beyond the homotolerant, exclusionary, and violently racist nation-state logic in the name of
4 progress, protection, inclusion, and civility.
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10 The post-22/7 anti-terror rhetoric in Norway, building on the geopolitics of the 9/11 trope,
11 has served to mainstream previously right-wing populist ideology that further marginalises a
12 legitimate and very necessary political critique of consensus-based, depoliticised inclusion
13 discourse. Pinkwashing the FrP by inviting Minister Horne to the Pride parade and the
14 policing and securitisation of Pride, by its very carceral and liberal logic, blocked any
15 meaningful possibility for articulating *other* demands for critical solidarity. In effect, this
16 foreclosure of radical-queer protest represents ‘the very foreclosure of politics’ itself as it
17 disallows any meaningful challenge to current structures of domination (Lamusse 2016: 67).
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30 As shown by Emma Russell, carceral Pride’s complicity with state violence is a precondition
31 for queer liberalism and progressive movements today (Russell 2018, 2019). Challenging
32 carceral institutions as part of ‘securitised’ Pride spaces requires fundamental support from
33 and solidarity with the broader LGBTQ+ community (Russell 2018). In the context of a ‘No
34 Pride in Prisons’ protest at Auckland Pride in New Zealand in 2015, Ti Lamusse has argued
35 that such a foreclosure of politics ‘denies the existence of a wrong, which to be overcome
36 requires the creation of a different world . . . [and this] attempt to impose that world is
37 necessarily disrespectful’ (Lamusse 2016: 67).
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51 Importantly, anti-carceral and Black Lives Matter protests demonstrate the necessity for a
52 historical perspective in identifying past logics, and a queer politics of refusal at the centre for
53 world-making theorising, when suggesting ways to ‘reject and refuse’ (Chavez 2015: 50). The
54 carceral politics of white supremacy and racism is at the core of such violent dynamics; this
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3 reality, however, is often overlooked by both state policing and mainstream queer activism,
4
5 including aspects of queer anarchism.
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10 Turning back to this article's empirical case study, the likelihood of a disproportionate police
11 response and a hyper-politicised legal process had the perpetrator been Black or Muslim and
12 read as male is considerable, in my view. This, in turn, is linked to the implicit racist
13 assumptions of whiteness harboured in the nationalist discourse of belonging and citizenship,
14 and where criminalization and incarceration figure centrally.^{viii}
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26 ***'[A] "nice" prison is still a prison'***
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28 During the trial, Em's reflections on their prison experience and views on social justice
29 politics were posted on Cistem Failure's public blog. Here, I include excerpts from the first
30 entry:
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38 Many people said that if you're gonna go to prison then Norway is one of the best
39 places. I can see why people think this. I keep reminding myself and them that a 'nice'
40 prison is still a prison, still a cage. They agree – it's important to not let reformist
41 attitudes substitute real liberation and destruction of hierarchies but I can totally see
42 that to a lot of people here, this place is a much better deal than somewhere else, in
43 Germany, Russia, Belarus, England . . .
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53 Someone said to me on my first day here that it is good to come to a woman's prison if
54 you're a feminist. That interested me, firstly because I haven't yet found a reason or
55 the ability to come out as non-binary trans to anyone. I think I'm too shy and I haven't
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3 found anyone I trust to understand and feel safe telling them. It's not important that
4
5 people know that I'm not a woman. I know it and that is enough. But it means I don't
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7 necessarily relate to people in that way. However, we all seem to share a unanimous
8
9 mistrust, hatred or lack of interest in the plight of cis men, and that seems to be a very
10
11 uniting thing.
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17 There is a lot of gossip and some rivalry but more intensely is the support and deeper,
18
19 more serious understanding that these people have of each other (or just from what
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21 I've seen and been part of so far) through standing together against the wrath of the
22
23 men in their lives who for more people than not, seem to be the reason for their
24
25 imprisonment . . .
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30 I'm already finding that sometimes it's necessary to take a step back from having a
31
32 harsh critique ready at every moment, when you just need to laugh at the
33
34 ridiculousness of the situation. I know I'm not here for long, but I think without the
35
36 silliness and laughter that these women offer, I would have a much harder time. I
37
38 would really like to get to know some people, I hope I do. (Cistem Failure 2016b)
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44 These reflections speak to the tense dynamic of carceral violence versus the right to protest, of
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46 experiences with gendered solidarity among inmates, dealing with and surviving prison
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48 confinement, and the collective experiences of violence at the hands of heteropatriarchy
49
50 transnationally. Norway's relative position of positive exceptionalism in a social-democratic
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52 welfare context is noted at the beginning of their narrative: Being in prison in Norway is
53
54 considered a much better experience than in other countries.
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3 Interestingly, Em's noting of the importance of humor—'the silliness and laughter that these
4 women offer'—resonates with pieing as a long-standing protest tactic, as earlier discussed.
5
6 This is telling of the broader state-sponsored carceral dynamic that effectively shapes and
7
8 limits the transformative potential of contemporary activism. Taken together, these accounts
9
10 insist on disruptive intervention but do so with a grounded reflection on the protest's larger
11
12 context and significance for justice and liberatory politics.
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19 They demonstrate the problematic stance of a carceral Pride logic that utilises solidarity
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21 slogans and rainbow symbolism to appear 'all-inclusive' but, in reality, actively partakes in
22
23 a violent exclusionary politics of othering. Cistem Failure's practical yet imaginative protest
24
25 and alter-narratives combine to foreground solidarity across national borders and
26
27 identifications, as well as defining a framework for a profound recognition of shared
28
29 humanity amongst those incarcerated, however divergent their backgrounds. By extension, as
30
31 Em's analysis teaches us, taking a step back to reflect and uniting across divergences are
32
33 indeed central conditions for surviving confinement.
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42 *radiOrakel and 'attack on democracy'*

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44 During Em's detention and trial, the Oslo-based feminist radio station radiOrakel hosted two
45
46 special episodes with Cistem Failure's other main band member 'R', with the apt title 'Attack
47
48 on Democracy.' Part of the motivation seems to have been to show solidarity with Em while
49
50 they were in prison by broadcasting discussions and music they knew Em would appreciate.
51
52 In the interest of following Cistem Failure's alter-narratives, I approached the shows' contents
53
54 and the broader events they cited as critical reflections on the the pieing's carceral outcome.
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3 In the first episode, R hosted a discussion on protests at several Prides in 2016. At Toronto
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5 Pride, activists from Black Lives Matter, Black Queer Youth, and other groups held a sit-in.
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7 Among the chants were: ‘There is no pride in policing’; ‘We are saying, we are united!’; and
8
9 ‘We do not feel safe with increased police on the streets. We do not want the police at Pride!’
10
11 They were protesting the participation of uniformed police in the Parade and the pinkwashing
12
13 of the police force’s homophobic and racist past. In an audio clip from the sit-in, a speaker
14
15 says they refuse to accept the police force’s ‘hollow apology’ for its historical violence, and
16
17 calls for Black queer and trans solidarity with sex workers being traumatised by police
18
19 brutality today. They also criticised the ongoing police pinkwashing that places queer and
20
21 trans people in opposition to racialised communities (radiOrakel 2016).
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28 The discussion draws on and connects with critical scholarship on carceral Pride
29
30 transnationally. In his analysis of mainstream media discourses surrounding the Toronto
31
32 Pride’s disruptive event in 2018, Andrew Tompkins argues that the widespread popular
33
34 condemnation of Black Lives Matter Toronto (BLMTO) centred on three themes: ‘a demand
35
36 for police inclusion within future Pride parades, rhetoric of criminal conduct, and an
37
38 accentuation of positive LGBT/state relations’ (Tompkins 2020: 1217). Andy Holmes, writing
39
40 on the inclusion of uniformed police in Vancouver’s Pride parade in 2017, found that people
41
42 who opposed the police presence at Pride parades tended to negatively connect contemporary
43
44 police participation to past police violence and historical marginalisation, as well as to
45
46 pinkwashing politics (Holmes 2020). Holmes concludes that contrary to those who favour
47
48 police inclusion by citing historical progress and all-round improvements and recent support,
49
50 ‘those who are unsupportive of police in Pride parades reject the idea that general positive
51
52 change has happened if there continues to be members of the LGBTQ community on the
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3 intersectional axes of race and class, who continue to experience hostile relationships with
4
5 politics' (Holmes 2020: 25).
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10 Later in the radiOrakel show, the host interviews two queer activists in Dublin, Ireland, about
11
12 how they were violently arrested as they organised an alternative Pride in a street parallel to
13
14 the mainstream event. They were arrested by the police, the activists explained, after they
15
16 unfurled banners from a public building that read: 'Homophobia kills,' and 'Queer liberation,
17
18 not rainbow capitalism.' Said Xav, one of the activists who was beaten and detained by the
19
20 police, 'It's so important to *do* something to shake up conventional habits, to challenge the
21
22 system in any way we can and to take risks, but most of all to take care of each other and not
23
24 forget about anyone' (radiOrakel, 2016; author's emphasis; and see Stern, 2012).
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30 Ultimately, these narratives and conversations about Pride protests and their consequences
31
32 demonstrate how conventional habitual practices and thinking are being shaken up today by
33
34 activists who are not afraid to take risks and challenge the system. Pride events on several
35
36 continents have sparked intense political debates about police inclusion, governance,
37
38 securitisation, and criminalisation.
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47 **Conclusion**

48
49 Queer, feminist, and trans scholarship concerned with a historically situated capitalist critique
50
51 has examined how activist and community organising involves struggles for rights and
52
53 equality within nation-state borders, and the uneven distribution of these struggles' effects for
54
55 differently positioned LGBTQ+ peoples. Many have pointed to the dismantling of policies of
56
57 social welfare and economic regulation under neoliberalism (Hanhardt 2013), and how real
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3 progressive social justice and economic equity across the domains of race, gender, and
4
5 sexuality must begin with a unified solidarity (Duggan 2003).
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10 These observations are also relevant to the Nordic region, as a similar process has taken place
11
12 here (Martinsson, Griffin, and Nygren 2017; Stoltz, Mulinari and Keskinen 2020). This
13
14 includes a heightened emphasis on nationalist securitisation policies as part of the post-9/11
15
16 ‘war on terror’ discourse, thereby reinforcing ‘emotional regime[s] of banal nationalism’
17
18 (Mulinari 2017: 155). My ambition in this article has been to show some of the ways in which
19
20 this has manifested in post-22/7 Norway, using neoliberal LGBT movements and carceral
21
22 Pride politics as specific examples.
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28 The mobilisations I have discussed here, as seen through the queer and historical optic of
29
30 Cistem Failure’s Pride intervention, demonstrate that the pieing of a minister can be read not
31
32 principally or merely as a politically insignificant criminal aberration, but as a deeply
33
34 meaningful and radical political intervention that demands a movement and a world
35
36 otherwise. These mobilisations speak against mainstream Pride organising and state-
37
38 supported LGBT equality work, which have largely made themselves dependent on police
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40 protection and governmental support.
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46 Importantly, carceral Pride politics rely on the deployment of a deserving figure and cause,
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48 coupled with a polarised opposite—namely, the uncivil, angry queer who refuses to play
49
50 along. In Norway’s post-22/7 political and social landscape, one side of this split dynamic has
51
52 moved to embrace an increasingly narrow, racialised, and nationalist trope of Norwegianness
53
54 and homotolerance. In many ways, this trope has served to cement and naturalise affective
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3 attachments to the national community, which Christine Jacobsen has termed an ‘exclusionary
4
5 community of value’ (Jacobsen 2018: 330).
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10 Thus, support for visibility and the perceived acceptance and tolerance that accompany it are
11 tacitly or explicitly conditional on the deployment of a restrictive definition of acceptable
12 identity positions and forms of protest that do not confront the status quo; they rely on violent
13
14 exclusions and unacknowledged intersectional inequalities (Dixon 2014, Ferguson 2019,
15
16 Spade 2015). In turn, structural power and violence are normalised in mainstream LGBT and
17
18 Pride spaces. It is this localised problematic that Cistem Failure’s pie-throwing exposes.
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26 By critiquing dominant narratives and excavating Cistem Failure’s alter-narratives and
27
28 ‘following them around,’ I have shown some ways that queer coalitional justice is made
29
30 unintelligible within the carceral logic of contemporary Norway. An anti-racist, intersectional
31
32 politics of solidarity and collaborative justice is always already excluded from the mainstay of
33
34 Pride politics. In its stead, the one-dimensional discourse of liberal progress within a
35
36 protective national territory fixes the ministerial pie-throwing as an uncivil aberration with a
37
38 compulsory carceral consequence.
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44 Rejecting the logic of liberal identity politics organised around compromise, consensus, and
45
46 inclusion, Cistem Failure’s alter-narratives explore and indicate other logics. These logics
47
48 meaningfully and ethically centre a regenerative queer politics of coalition for seeking
49
50 structural transformation and building radically caring communities that *leave no one behind*.
51
52 They insist on disrupting the white supremacist carceral state from the margins. Cistem
53
54 Failure’s interventions—beginning with the seemingly banal act of throwing cake at a
55
56 government minister—present a concrete example of this other logic, however short-lived and
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3 compromised. Pieing, then, becomes a gesture towards the making of a different world
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5 entirely.
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26 [fargeblind-under-pride-skriver-nora-mehsen/](https://www.morgenbladet.no/ideer/kommentar/2019/06/22/jeg-har-ikke-rad-til-a-vaere-fargeblind-under-pride-skriver-nora-mehsen/)
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43 Macmillan, pp. 147–75.
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7 ⁱ The precursor to the contemporary Pride festival in Oslo dates to 1974, when the first public
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9 ‘27 June commemoration day’ was held at University Square (Universitetsplassen),
10
11 downtown Oslo, with an estimated 250 attendees. Homosexuality was decriminalised in
12
13 Norway in 1972 (Johansen 2019).

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16 ⁱⁱ To clarify, I use they/them as gender-neutral singular pronouns as ‘Em’, the pie-thrower,
17
18 identifies as nonbinary in other published sources.

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21 ⁱⁱⁱ *Attack on the activities of the highest state bodies*: ‘A penalty of imprisonment for a term
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23 not exceeding 10 years shall be applied to any person who by force, threats or other illegal
24
25 means puts the King, the Regent, the Government, the Parliament, the Supreme Court or the
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27 Court of Impeachment, or a member of these institutions, at risk of being hindered or affected
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29 in their activities.’ <https://lovdata.no/NLE/lov/2005-05-20-28/section115> (last accessed 18
30
31 March 2021). Section 115 has only been used eight times since it was enacted in 2005,
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33 according to an overview in *Aftenposten* on 6 September 2020
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35 ([https://www.aftenposten.no/norge/i/zGWy95/bertheussen-er-tiltalt-etter-samme-paragraf-](https://www.aftenposten.no/norge/i/zGWy95/bertheussen-er-tiltalt-etter-samme-paragraf-som-kakekastere-og-kjente)
36
37 [som-kakekastere-og-kjente](https://www.aftenposten.no/norge/i/zGWy95/bertheussen-er-tiltalt-etter-samme-paragraf-som-kakekastere-og-kjente)). Notably, in 2005 a student was charged in accordance with
38
39 Section 115 after pieing then-Minister of Finance Kristin Halvorsen (SV). He ended up
40
41 receiving a ‘påtaleunntatelse med prøvetid’ (waiver of prosecution with probation), the
42
43 mildest form of sentencing one can receive in the Norwegian court system
44
45 ([https://www.aftenposten.no/norge/i/AL1KM/tiltalt-for-aa-ha-kastet-kake-paa-](https://www.aftenposten.no/norge/i/AL1KM/tiltalt-for-aa-ha-kastet-kake-paa-finansministeren)
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47 [finansministeren](https://www.aftenposten.no/norge/i/AL1KM/tiltalt-for-aa-ha-kastet-kake-paa-finansministeren)).

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53 ^{iv} *Physical assault*: ‘A penalty of a fine or imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year
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55 shall be applied to any person who commits an act of violence against another person or
56
57 otherwise physically assaults him/her.’ [https://lovdata.no/NLE/lov/2005-05-20-](https://lovdata.no/NLE/lov/2005-05-20-28/section271)
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59 [28/section271](https://lovdata.no/NLE/lov/2005-05-20-28/section271) (last accessed 18 March 2020)
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4 v Pinkwashing is a critical term that refers to using LGBT rights as a ‘public relations tool’ by
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6 nation states or state actors that have ‘questionable human rights records and exclusionary
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8 policies’ (Russell 2018: 342).
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10
11 vi Note that the 2021 parliamentary elections saw the defeat of the coalition government led by
12
13 Høyre. The new coalition government is led by the Labour Party (Ap–Arbeiderpartiet). It
14
15 remains to be seen whether the political environment described and analysed in this article
16
17 will change significantly in the next four-year period.
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21 vii As the main object of analysis is not Cistem Failure’s individual subjects as such but rather
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23 their actions and narratives, I am only sharing information that I deem necessary for the
24
25 analysis to make sense.
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29 viii I am very grateful to one of the reviewers for their suggestions regarding this point.
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