

Reflections on Norwegian Queer Culture Year 2022

ABSTRACT

This essay explores Queer Culture Year 2022 in Norway – a yearlong celebration of queer history and culture that marked the fiftieth anniversary of the decriminalisation of sex between men in 1972. The article focuses on the effects the year had on the documentation and dissemination of queer history.

Keywords: Queer history, museums, public history

THE YEAR 2022 was designated the Queer Culture Year in Norway (*Skeivt kulturår*), marking fifty years since the decriminalisation of sex between men. There are many perspectives on this event that deserve attention, and this essay does not claim to capture them comprehensively. Rather, from my point of view as a historian working at Skeivt arkiv – the Norwegian Queer Archives – at the University of Bergen Library, I present an introduction to the outcomes of the year in terms of the documentation, research, and dissemination of queer history. Although the decriminalisation in 1972 was the “hook” and point of departure for organising a year of queer culture, this essay also recounts the story of the actual decriminalisation and offers an account of the narratives and mythologisation surrounding this event, both historically and during 2022.

When public interest demands: The struggle against § 213

In the spring of 1972, the Norwegian Parliament repealed section 213 (§ 213) of the Penal Code of 1902, a provision that, under certain conditions, had made sex between men illegal (Halsos 2007). This was the first victory for the Norwegian homophile movement, represented by the Norwegian Association of 1948, which was established as a branch of a Scandinavian organisation in 1950 and became an independent organisation two years later.¹

Section 213 of the Penal Code of 1902 upheld a long tradition in Norway of criminalising sex between men; however, it also continued and codified a reluctance to prosecute such cases. The paragraph included an amendment stating that it should be enforced only “when public interest so demands,” which in practice meant that cases concerning consensual sex between adult men in private were rarely brought to court.² For such cases to be prosecuted, they had to include an aspect of “public outrage,” prostitution, or “seduction of young people” (under the age of twenty-one years). Moreover, Norwegian police and attorneys were not particularly ardent in their efforts to bring such cases to court. According to official statistics, just 119 men were convicted of breaching § 213 between 1905 and 1950. Some of these cases were potentially abusive (e.g., older men having sex with their relatively young employees), and in some cases, the men involved were *also* convicted of abusing boys under the age of sixteen years (§§ 195 and 196 of the Penal Code). The focus on seduction was substantiated by psychiatrists who argued that, since sexuality was fluid throughout the teens, one needed to prevent young people from becoming homosexual due to having sex with older men (Jordåen 2010; Ratcliff 2023).

For the Norwegian Association of 1948, § 213 was still seen as a serious restraint that made its work difficult, and its removal was therefore high on the organisation’s agenda (Kristiansen 2008). In 1953, a government commission proposed amending the paragraph to make sex between consenting same-sex adults over the age of twenty-one years explicitly legal. The same motion, however, drawing on seduction theory, suggested criminalising same-sex relations with persons under

that age and introducing provisions against the promotion of homophile organisations in the press (Halsos 2007, 98–99).

To counter this, the Association of 1948 argued that seduction theory had no scientific basis and that the suggested changes were discriminatory and should not be passed. These and other objections to the proposal resulted in the process being halted; the government finally concluded that maintaining the status quo was the best option. The Association of 1948 viewed this as a partial victory. After all, retaining an effectively dormant paragraph was better than the alternative that had been proposed.

The next stage in the struggle against § 213 began in 1967, when Karen-Christine “Kim” Friele (1935–2021), as the new leader of the organisation, along with her board, decided that it was high time to prioritise this struggle again. Friele argued that the provision, despite its dormancy, was discriminatory and caused a range of problems, including blackmail and police harassment. By following the same blueprint as in the 1950s – activating alternative experts who argued against seduction theory – she and the association this time succeeded in persuading the majority of members of Parliament to decriminalise sex between men unconditionally in 1972 (in contrast to most other countries in Europe, which still had higher ages of consent for homosexuality than for heterosexuality) (Halsos 2007, 100).

The decriminalisation in 1972 has since been interpreted as the defining turning point in Norwegian queer history in the public consciousness. This narrative of a dark “before” and a gradually brighter “now” has been promoted by the LGBTQ+ movement, and especially by Kim Friele’s own version of her life and the movement (Friele 1990). “Before, we used to be illegal” has, in retrospect, become a catchphrase repeated by many queer people: the fact that Norway retained a provision of law criminalising homosexuality until 1972 has become a powerful example of severe oppression that has only recently come to an end.

However, this narrative fails to take into account both the special and limited character of § 213 and, more generally, the complexity of queer history, which cannot simply be reduced to a linear narrative of progress.

Documentation and research on queer history in Norway

Exactly when the idea of a queer history year was born is difficult to say; however, the 2017 commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of partial decriminalisation in England and Wales was inspirational to Skeivt arkiv (the Norwegian Queer Archives), which had formally opened two years earlier, in 2015, as a unit within the University of Bergen Library.³ Skeivt arkiv is a centre for the documentation and dissemination of queer history in Norway. The founder of the archive, Tone Hellesund, has been a professor in the Department of Archaeology, History, Cultural Studies and Religion at the University of Bergen since 2014, and one of her main research interests is queer history. The archive and Hellesund have worked closely together to establish queer history as a field of study in Norway (Hellesund 2018).

When Hellesund began her efforts to establish the archive in 2012, she had two primary concerns. On the one hand, queer history had received scarcely any scholarly attention in Norway, with only three or four extant dissertations in the field (produced by scholars from different disciplines, including history, cultural studies, and anthropology). On the other hand, hardly any archives or oral history interviews had been secured for the future. The archive acquired permanent government funding beginning in 2016, making it possible to hire several full-time staff members and to work more intensely on documenting queer history through the collection of personal and organisational archives and life stories, both oral and written.⁴

Public interest in LGBTIQ+ issues in general, and queer history in particular, has until recently not been matched by corresponding interest among traditional or cultural historians; hence, knowledge of this subject has, to a large extent, been based on hearsay or highly personal narratives of prominent activists, such as Kim Friele. Her version of Norwegian lesbian and gay history was formed by her own trajectory as an activist: her “grand narrative” is one of a past in which “we” were criminals and frowned upon by the vast majority, and a present in which nearly full equality has been reached through a series of reforms, beginning with the decriminalisation in 1972.

In stating this, it is by no means my intention to belittle Friele's role as an activist. Rather, the point is to question this depiction as an unchallenged master narrative in the public imagination. Dominant public history narratives of the trajectory of queer history in the Nordic countries often centre on gradual reform, in which civil partnership legislation plays an important role. Vilhjálmsón (2022) has shown how a popular television documentary series in Iceland portrayed the civil partnership law of 1996 as the "homecoming" of an excluded and unruly villain. Through this reform, or so the narrative goes, the Icelandic homosexual "came home" – becoming included in the normalcy of family life. However, Vilhjálmsón points out that many Icelandic lesbian and gay activists were deeply critical of marriage and traditional norms of gender and family, a fact concealed by the television documentary, which focused on the inclusion of queer people in the institution of marriage. Thus, the "good gay" was promoted, while the transgressive figure of the "bad queer" was suppressed.

A similar narrative is certainly central in Norway. The introduction of civil partnerships in the country in 1993, by many accounts – and arguably in the public consciousness – is seen as a crucial point in the gradual inclusion of LGBTIQ+ people in society. Interestingly, Kim Friele was not one of the activists who celebrated this as a crucial reform on the path to a better society. Although she and her partner, Wenche Lowzow (1926–2016), were among the first couples to register as civil partners in 1993, Friele was always ambivalent about it; in fact, she had initially opposed the law altogether, as she resisted the idea of marriage. What she certainly subscribed to, however, was the narrative of gradual inclusion and acceptance and the idea of things being darker then as opposed to brighter now.

This unilinear narrative of progress is, in many ways, very different from how queer history is done by scholars who establish new periodisations that challenge the idea of an evolution from 1950s assimilationist homophile politics to more radical lesbian and gay approaches.

Danish historian Peter Edelberg has argued that some Scandinavian activists of the 1950s were radical both in their approaches to activism

and in their lifestyles (Edelberg 2024, 527). The project *Queer Domesticities* – led by Tone Hellesund at the University of Bergen – also uncovers the complexity of the Norwegian queer past, thereby defying this simple narrative.⁵ Queer history offers a critical historiography that questions the established teleological narratives of gradual change towards inclusion. The establishment of Skeivt arkiv in 2015 was an important prerequisite for enabling such critical historiography. However, the lack of scholarly research and dissemination has continued to leave public discourse open to established narratives.

Not only historians and other scholars but also cultural heritage institutions such as archives, libraries, and museums had, with few exceptions, ignored queer history as part of their research and dissemination work until 2022. A notable exception was the Museum of Cultural History at the University of Oslo, which pioneered the field in Norway by presenting queer history in several temporary exhibitions (Karlgård & Chepstow-Lusty 2013).

To address this general lack of interest, in 2018, Tone Hellesund and Skeivt arkiv hosted a seminar on how to conduct queer history in museums. That same year, the director of the Institute for Local History at the National Library, historian Dag Hundstad, initiated a focus on queer history as part of the institute's work, thereby establishing a collaboration with Skeivt arkiv that culminated in 2022.

The idea of a queer history year

By 2018, Skeivt arkiv had begun developing the idea of a “celebration” of the fiftieth anniversary of decriminalisation. The academic director at the time, Hannah Gillow-Kloster, was in the process of planting the seeds for the idea of a queer history year. In 2019, Stina Högvist of the National Museum of Art independently and briefly presented a similar idea in a talk at the Norwegian National Museum Congress. Following this talk, a meeting with Högvist led to the initiation of a collaboration among Skeivt arkiv, the National Museum, and the National Library. Gillow-Kloster regularly met with Högvist and Hege Høsøien from the National Library to plan activities that the

three institutions aimed to carry out in 2022. In 2020, Heidi Rohde Rafto succeeded Gillow-Kloster as the academic director of Skeivt arkiv and continued this work both before and during 2022. She collaborated with Bjørn-André Widvey, who served as Skeivt arkiv's activity coordinator for the year.

Due to a lack of additional resources, it was quickly decided that the three institutions would continue their alliance by prioritising activities related to queer history and culture within their existing budgets and by motivating other actors to do the same. In discussions between Gillow-Kloster, Högbkvist, and Høsøien, it was also decided to name the year Queer Culture Year 2022 (*Skeivt kulturår 2022*), thereby broadening the scope from "Queer History Year." They understood the role of the three institutions as promoting a year of queer culture and history, hosting events and exhibitions, and providing a logo for the year free for anyone to use if they planned relevant activities. The idea of a national committee to conduct preparations for the year was thus turned down in favour of a more flexible approach, whereby anyone could use the logo and define their own events and projects linked to the year. On the Skeivt arkiv website, the three institutions invited "all institutions, researchers, and individuals to join us in unearthing and showcasing queer history" (Skeivt arkiv 2019).

This decentralised approach proved successful, in the sense that the year quickly became widely known, and many organisations, institutions, and other actors began preparing activities. As a result, it grew into something much bigger than had been planned or expected. The National Library and the National Museum both hired staff to work specifically on the year, while Skeivt arkiv relied mostly on its regular staff.

The primary aim of Skeivt arkiv was to use Queer Culture Year 2022 as a tool to intensify its work on the queer *history* of the Norwegian public in general, but with a special focus on cultural heritage institutions and academia. I return below to how this aim was achieved, but before doing so, I briefly note that many other activities also took place during the year. For example, activist organisations and artists used the year to

highlight queer art and culture, with artists from the organisation Pride Art holding large exhibitions and collaborating with major historical museums during the year (Danbolt 2022).

An important contribution was the announcement by the Minister of Culture and Equality, Abid Raja, in June 2021, that five million NOK of project funding would be made available (Eliassen 2021). The Arts Council of Norway was responsible for distributing the funds, and a great number of applications were submitted. However, only a few of the projects were prioritised (25 of 264), which in turn drew severe criticism from queer activists and artists. For instance, Tonje Moser, an adviser at the Centre for Equality at the University of Agder and a queer activist, was highly critical of the fact that, when an occasion finally arose on which the government was willing to fund queer art and culture explicitly, the amount allocated was completely out of proportion to actual needs (Christensen 2022). Partly in response to this criticism, an extra five million kroner was granted in 2022 by Raja's successor, Anette Trettebergstuen.

Mathias Danbolt, professor of art history at the University of Copenhagen, was also critical of aspects of the year. It was his impression that "the sudden wish to raise the rainbow flag" in many institutions was more about the desire to appear inclusive than about working for structural changes (Danbolt 2022, 206). Focusing on art exhibitions, he pointed to the fact that almost all of them relied on work done by curators who were hired briefly for this purpose (Danbolt 2022, 205). Danbolt further argued that the lack of contributions to a special issue of the journal *Kunst og kultur* reflected the degree of neglect of the field of queer art history by Norwegian art history scholars holding permanent positions (Danbolt 2022, 206).

Queer art and culture unquestionably became highly visible during the year, but so did the long history of neglect of this field within institutions and among scholars and politicians. I have already implied a similar neglect on the part of historians and the cultural heritage sector. But did this change during 2022 and in its aftermath?

Queer history projects in preparation

I have already mentioned that some institutions and actors had initiated queer history projects before 2022. These include the Bergen Maritime Museum, with its project *Queer at Sea* (*Skeive sjøfolk*), which in 2022 received further funding from the Arts Council, as well as the Polar Museum at the Arctic University of Norway in Tromsø, which launched the project *Queering Polar History*. Those projects included both research output and museum exhibitions.

These initiatives, as well as the budding field of queer history, benefited from and drew new impetus from Queer Culture Year 2022. Before the establishment of Skeivt arkiv, queer history in Norway had been the topic of several pioneering master's theses that delineated the field in the 1990s (e.g., Hellesund 1995; Halsos 1999), along with a few PhD dissertations (Hellesund 2002; Kristiansen 2004; Jordåen 2010) and some articles and biographies. With the establishment of Skeivt arkiv and Tone Hellesund's appointment as professor of cultural studies at the University of Bergen, efforts to establish queer history as an academic field slowly began to crystallise. However, apart from an increasing number of master's theses (e.g., Berge 2016; Sandal 2017), there were as yet no significant research projects. The most notable breakthrough occurred when the *Queerdom* project, a research project on "queer domesticities and intimacies in Norway, 1842–1972," led by Hellesund at the Department of Archaeology, History, Cultural Studies and Religion at the University of Bergen, received funding from the Norwegian Research Council in 2021. This five-year project involves one PhD candidate, one postdoctoral researcher, and several researchers participating from Skeivt arkiv, the Maritime Museum of Bergen, the Norwegian Museum of Cultural History, the University of Stavanger, the National Library (in particular the Institute of Local History), Oslo Metropolitan University, the University of Oxford, and the Polar Museum.

Collaboration between the Institute of Local History at the National Library and Skeivt arkiv led to two seminars in Oslo prior to 2022 and a publication in that same year: *Skeiv lokalhistorie: Kulturhistoriske perspektiver på sammekjønnsrelasjoner og kjønnsoverskridelser*, edited by Dag

Hundstad, Tone Hellesund, Runar Jordåen, and Marthe Glad-Munch Møller. This was the first scholarly anthology focusing on queer history in Norway, and it also included contributors from Iceland, Sweden, and Finland.⁶ Although the collaboration had begun earlier, Queer Culture Year 2022 was key to making the book possible due to institutional support and funding.

Official event and apology from the government

On 21 April, the day of the 1972 decriminalisation, Skeivt arkiv, the National Library, and the National Museum hosted their main event of the year at the National Library in Oslo. The National Museum, in particular, invested significant efforts in organising this all-day event by hiring Emma Damskau as the main organiser.

The previous day, Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre held a reception for queer organisations and several of the institutions involved in Queer Culture Year 2022, at which he apologised on behalf of the Norwegian government and Norwegian society (*“det norske fellelskapet”*) for the criminalisation and discrimination of queer people (Støre 2022). He acknowledged the efforts of activists, who had contributed to making Norwegian society “warmer, richer, and more diverse.” This initiative originated with the government and was not initially on the agenda of the three institutions planning the year.

The event at the National Library was called Criminal Love: The Struggle against Section 213 and consisted of lectures and discussions on queer history and contemporary issues, along with musical contributions.

Another important “official” event during the year was the reception Legally Queer, at which the Norwegian Government and the City of Oslo hosted a celebration at Oslo City Hall.

What had started as a discussion between Skeivt arkiv and two other institutions to highlight queer artefacts in their collections had, by the time of Støre’s reception and the Oslo City Hall reception, also become an official commemoration – the Norwegian state celebrating the present and apologising for its past.

Queer history in 2022: Lectures, exhibitions, sources, and research

Despite its official and celebratory aspects, which were largely unanticipated by the organisers, the year also retained its focus on the documentation and dissemination of queer history. Some events relied on the aforementioned projects begun before and independently of Queer Culture Year 2022, while others came into being as a result of it.

In 2022, the National Library hosted several lectures and seminars, including one on queer magazines, zines, and journals and another on different sources of queer history. The institution also recorded a series of podcasts on Norwegian queer history. To carry out this work, the institution relied on external resources (including researchers and Skeivt arkiv), but its own staff also contributed significantly. As noted above, the Institute of Local History at the National Library had already begun to focus on queer history in 2018. However, with the preparations for 2022, the institution as a whole started to examine their collections, looking for queer traces and preparing exhibitions and publications. Lectures and seminars were also held at various locations, particularly in museums – many of which sought, first and foremost, public outreach to engage the local or regional public.

The goal of one event was to reach an international audience: the international conference *Why (Queer) History Matters: The Politics of History*. Organised in August 2022 by Professor Tone Hellesund and Queerdom, together with SKOK, LawTransform/Queer Lawfare, GRIP, and Skeivt arkiv, the conference was the academic highlight of the year at the University of Bergen. It consisted of invited speakers addressing how and why knowledge of queer history matters, providing examples of historical neglect and erasure of queer history and its global effects and repercussions (Hellesund 2022).

While public lectures, seminars, and conferences made queer history visible throughout the year, museum exhibitions also contributed to this effort. The National Library invested time and resources to display numerous sources from their collections in the exhibition *Pride and Prejudice (Stolthet og fordom)*, curated by Bjørn Hatterud. The University Museum of Bergen also organised the exhibition *Queer Years of Cul-*

ture, which displayed materials from Skeivt arkiv and the museum's own collections. In addition, the University of Bergen Library, in cooperation with Skeivt arkiv, presented the exhibition *Decriminalizing History*, curated by David Carillo Rangel. The exhibitions *Queer at Sea* (Bergen Maritime Museum) and *Queering Polar History* (Polar Museum, University of Tromsø) opened during 2022. These were based on scholarly research by curators in the two institutions and thus contributed significantly to the field of queer history (as well as to the Queerdom project).

I would also like to highlight that Skeivt arkiv received numerous requests from museums around the country that were interested in creating exhibitions or projects documenting queer history. For example, Lågdalsmuseet in Kongsberg, one of the traditional regional museums in Norway, produced an exhibition on the homophile community organiser, activist, and drag artist Willy Mikkelsen (1928–1984) from Kongsberg (Heinrich 2022). This exhibition presented new information on Mikkelsen and his life, while also introducing him to a local community that had previously known almost nothing about him. The curator, Anette Opheim, and a colleague sought advice from Skeivt arkiv during the process.

The Mikkelsen project is an example of how an institution with access to limited resources can contribute to the documentation and dissemination of queer history. Some of the projects and exhibitions during 2022 received funding from the Arts Council and other public sources. However, several were accomplished without such funding by dedicated museum employees, who worked on the projects as part of their regular duties. Some had backgrounds in gender or queer studies, some self-identified as queer, and others did not. My overall impression of the creators was one of genuine enthusiasm and a willingness to contribute to the exploration and display of queer history.

In addition to lectures, conferences, and exhibitions, I lastly highlight the dissemination of source materials that emerged from Queer Culture Year 2022. For example, the National Library digitised the diaries of Petronelle Nielsen, who, in her journal, wrote about same-sex affection in the 1820s (National Library of Norway n.d.), as well as letters written

by Professor Ebbe Hertzberg from the period 1892–1912, in which he employed new concepts from continental sexology, such as “homosexuality” and “contrary sexual feeling” (an annotated transcription of the letters was also published; see Jordåen 2022).

The National Archives also contributed by making a selection of digitised sources available on its national platform for digital archive materials, Digitalarkivet. This required considerable time and resources, but input and advice were also provided by Skeivt arkiv.⁷

To sum up, Queer Culture Year 2022 resulted in a range of projects that made queer history visible. These included a number of lectures and seminars aimed at both the general public and academic audiences; many exhibitions that both conveyed insights from the field of queer history to the public and contributed new empirical research; and the digitisation and publication of important sources.

In addition to the projects briefly mentioned here, a host of others also took place. Moreover, media coverage was substantial. A major part of this coverage took the form of a documentary series on Norwegian queer history screened on the commercial television channel TV Norge. A closer examination of how queer history was portrayed in this series or in the overall media coverage falls outside the scope of this essay (for a list of activities, see Widvey 2023). An interesting question for a future research project would be whether the media coverage was informed primarily by the progressive, inclusionary narrative outlined above, which arguably dominates the public consciousness, or by insight from the fields of queer studies and queer history.

What were the outcomes of all this?

As mentioned above, Mathias Danbolt observed a lack of knowledge, skilled personnel, and resources concerning queer themes in art museums and in the discipline of art history, as well as a tendency to use 2022 as an occasion to appear inclusive rather than to work for structural change. This critique also applies, at least partially, to cultural heritage institutions (e.g., libraries, museums, and archives) and the disciplines of history and cultural history. The few historians and other academics

who possessed qualifications in the aforementioned areas were highly sought after, not only by these institutions but also by the media.

Cultural heritage institutions also relied on hired curators and temporary staff to compensate for the lack of knowledge among their permanent staff, in line with what Danbolt observed in the art field. At the same time, it was evident that permanent staff in different institutions highly prioritised the year, as demonstrated by their enthusiasm, knowledge, long working hours, and the resources invested. This resulted in fruitful collaborations: museum staff who possessed valuable knowledge about their field (e.g., maritime history) or region were paired with queer archivists and scholars, yielding outcomes in the form of the documentation of stories that would otherwise have been lost, as well as the dissemination of queer history to thousands of museum visitors.

The flip side is that institutions may come to believe the mission is accomplished: having ticked the queer history box, they might now return to their heteronormative *modus operandi*. As Íris Ellenberger points out in her critical assessment of the narratives and practices of the National Museum of Iceland in this issue, the creation of *A Rainbow Thread* – an alternative guided tour through the permanent exhibition of the museum – is a positive step; however, it does not entail a structural reworking of cis-heteronormative museum practices (Ellenberger 2025). The hope that this intervention will lead to more systemic and substantial changes has yet to be fulfilled.

The same seems to be the case in Norway. According to Ellenberger, this may be due in part to the financial situation of museums and cultural heritage institutions. Although curators of museums may want to create new and more inclusive permanent exhibitions, they rarely have the resources to do so. This is certainly also true for Norwegian museums. In an article on *Queering Polar History*, Silje Gaupseth and Marit Anne Hauan, curators at the Polar Museum, reflect on how the exhibition aimed to skew or queer the straight lines of the permanent and traditionally heroic portrayal of Norwegian polar history in the museum's permanent exhibition (Gaupseth & Hauan 2022). This was a powerful intervention, initiated not by a wish to appear inclusive but

by queer curatorial practice. As I have shown, several such interventions were realised in 2022 in Norway, demonstrating that queering museums was indeed a possibility. However, the question remains whether these interventions will contribute to lasting structural changes.

In fact, in the aftermath of 2022, an unimpressive number of *new* queer history projects have been initiated by museums, scholars, and other actors, with a project on the history of the Norwegian queer movement being the most notable exception.⁸ Moreover, there have been no major structural changes within academia: there is still no chair in queer history, nor are there university courses dedicated specifically to queer history (although it is included in certain other courses in gender history). However, Norway is witnessing a continuing trend of students choosing queer history as their subject, and two queer history research projects are now being conducted at the University of Bergen (The History of the Queer Movement and Queerdom). This represents a positive change from the previous situation, in which hardly any such projects existed.

The future of queer history

What about the master narrative of gradual inclusion? Was this challenged in 2022? Was a more nuanced story of § 213 and queer history in general successfully conveyed? On the whole, I suspect that it was not. The idea that before 1972 “we were illegal” prevailed, and it may even have been reinforced. The apology from the government was received as an atonement by many in the lesbian and gay community, particularly those who still remember the 1950s and 1960s. However, the other side of the coin may be that the narrative of pre-1972 queer history as being mostly about punishment and repression – and that this history since then must be understood as a gradual path forward through civil partnership and marriage – was strengthened. Perhaps it is difficult to communicate more complex narratives when the framing is the commemoration of decriminalisation. Thus, the question remains whether a queer history year should be centred around other types of events instead.

That said, I think that 2022 *also* made projects contributing to a more complex queer historiography possible. The anthology *Skeiv lokalhistorie* and the Queerdom project study concrete local queer practices before 1972, and rather than revealing a massive machinery of oppression, they point to a more nuanced situation of possibilities and limitations (Hundstad et al. 2022). Local communities engaged with queer people and practices in different ways – some were more hostile, some friendlier. The work of queer history is to study the multiple ways people negotiated, resisted, subverted, and accommodated them according to their resources and the specific situations in which they lived. Instead of celebrating the present and turning away from the past, queer history is about recognising more complex queer pasts, presents, and futures.

Thus, the activities in 2022 contributed significantly to creating a space for doing queer (public) history. The collaborations between local historians, museums, archives, activists, and researchers in different fields need to be extended to challenge cis- and heteronormative ideas about history and to achieve a better structure for queer history. Although helped by Queer Culture Year 2022, queer history as a field still relies on activism from students, archivists, curators, and scholars who understand the necessity of engaging critically with a queer past and of challenging normative narratives.

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NOTES

1. For the early years of the Norwegian homophile movement, see Kristiansen 2008 and Edelberg 2024. The term “homophile” was the preferred designation used by the movement both in Norway and in other countries where such organisations were formed in the early post-Second World War era.

2. For the history of § 213, see Halsos 2007 (in English). Other works drawn on here include Halsos 1999, Jordâen 2003 and 2010, and Kristiansen 2008.
3. The preparations for establishing the archive began in 2012 (Hellesund 2018).
4. For details about this institution, see Hellesund 2018.
5. Rather than presenting a narrative of gradual progress, the Queerdom project focuses on the “changing dynamics of societal norms and expectations, change and stability, processes of exclusion as well as of inclusion, through the period 1842–1972” (Queerdom n.d.). See also Hundstad, Hellesund and Jordâen 2022.
6. A previous milestone, the anthology *Norsk homoforskning* (2001), edited by Marianne C. Brantsæter, Turid Eikvam, Reidar Kjær, and Knut Olav Åmås, provided a general introduction to lesbian and gay studies in Norway and also contained some articles on history and cultural history.
7. These sources are now available via the “Find sources” function (<https://www.digitalarkivet.no/en/search/sources>) on the Digital Archives, by searching for “Homosexuality and queer culture” in the “Tags” field.
8. <https://www.uib.no/ahkr/170321/den-skeive-bevegelsens-historie>