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**"We can make new history here"**

**Rituals of producing history in Swedish football clubs**

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*Katarzyna Herd*

# "We can make new history here"

RITUALS OF PRODUCING HISTORY  
IN SWEDISH FOOTBALL CLUBS



“WE CAN MAKE NEW HISTORY HERE”



# “We can make new history here”

Rituals of producing history in Swedish football clubs

KATARZYNA HERD



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Lund Studies in Arts and Cultural Sciences is a series of monographs and edited volumes of high scholarly quality in subjects related to the Department of Arts and Cultural Sciences at Lund University. An editorial board decides on issues concerning publication. All texts have been peer reviewed prior to publication.

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*“Did I really do all that?” he said at last.  
“Well,” said Pooh, “in poetry – in a piece of poetry – well,  
you did it, Piglet, because the poetry says you did. And that’s  
how people know”.*

*A.A. Milne, The House at Pooh Corner (1928, 150)*





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This dissertation owes its existence to a cold football evening in November and a discussion about Pichi Alonso.

Lund, 30 September 2018



# 1. Introduction

## The complex meaning of Pichi Alonso

It all started with Pichi Alonso. I was with a colleague, watching a Swedish supercup game between Malmö FF and IFK Göteborg in 2013.<sup>1</sup> It was November, cold and windy. There were only around 3000 supporters watching the match. We were in the standing section and a large part of the Swedbank Stadium (now called just Stadium), where MFF plays, was closed. The game seemed slow. At one point, my colleague pointed out a banner in MFF colours with “Pichi Alonso” written on it in big clear letters. “Do you know who he is?” a question came. “He is an important part of our history”. I had no clue who the mysterious person might be. During the last minutes of the match, I was lectured about Pichi.

Pichi Alonso was a Spanish football player. He was in the FC Barcelona squad in 1986 when they played against IFK Göteborg in the European Cup. The first match took place in Sweden at Nya Ullevi, and attracted 43,000 spectators. IFK Göteborg won 3–0 and was close to reaching the final. The replay happened a month later in Spain and then Pichi Alonso scored a hat-trick and the match went to penalties that IFK Göteborg lost. Pichi Alonso dramatically altered IFK Göteborg’s outlook for future, and sent them home. In my colleague’s words, he became a symbol of a defeat that shattered IFK Göteborg’s dreams for the final match.

The banner with Pichi’s name was a subtle and witty insult displayed at the MFF stadium. This football player was brought back to remind players

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<sup>1</sup> Supercup was played between a club that won the league (MFF in this case) and a club that won the cup (IFK Göteborg) that year.

and supporters from Göteborg that they were not good enough, that they experienced something they would prefer (perhaps) to forget. History can hurt, but one has to be able to make sense of it and understand the context. It is not only MFF's history, but also IFK Göteborg's achievements. Historically speaking IFK Göteborg has been MFF's mortal enemy. Additionally, one has to be able to identify Pichi Alonso. This requires work and some learning. This Spanish player might be quite surprised how many fans he has in Malmö FF.

Complex historical discussions happen all the time. Winners or not, one needs to have history. This little Pichi reference has disappeared from the stadium since (though it comes back from time to time), but the picture



This picture, from 2013, presents a variety of historical references used by Malmö FF supporters. The small banner with Pichi Alonso is on the right. The name of this Spanish player is framed by light blue and white colours (representing the Malmö club). There is an additional text saying *Camp Nou 1986*. One can see other historical references here. To the left, there is a photo of a former chairman Eric Persson. There is a number of won titles and cups. There is a flag stating that MFF leads the table of statistics in the Swedish league. To the right one can find a reference to a former player Jonas Thern (Jonas Påg in the photo). Flags of Skåne in red and yellow contrast with the light blue shade of MFF. Picture taken by Peter Lind.

lives on the internet. This dissertation shows how history is produced and performed, played with, in a non-academic setting, a place where everything can be employed to help one's club, where nothing is sacred, but much is accepted. A place where average citizens can make history and become history on a weekly basis.

References to historical figures, symbols, events, clubs' stories and their myths and legends are produced, performed and reworked constantly. Football rarely ends. When the season is over it is time to evaluate it, preserve some of it and move to expectations for the next year, together with new and old actors that appear in the new or old stadiums. The plethora of interpretations and the ocean of information contribute to its being a creative, innovative and unpredictable environment. For that reason, it seems only just to plunge into the football context and its historical maze. Simultaneously, the focus on producing history proved to be productive in analysing football as a specific field. The aim, the investigation of historical productions, is paired with researching football and unique phenomena that appear there.

A sense of engagement with history is visible on different levels in football. "We can make new history here" said Emil Forsberg, a former player in MFF, referring to his transfer from Malmö to a football club in Germany. This headline from his interview appeared in the local newspaper *Sydsvenskan* in 2015. Emil Forsberg was ready for the next step in his career and reflected on it by employing a reference to possibilities of creating something profound – history. I choose to analyse the production of history through concepts of memory, ritual, myth, magic, materiality, performance and narrative. These terms are employed to varying degrees in ethnology, history and sport studies, which constitute the main overlap of my research fields.

History plays different roles in elite male football and in this thesis. It is the tool, the process, and the end product. Supporters or club officials do not shy from using historical arguments. My analytical toolbox overlaps with their rhetoric. The historical perspective suggests putting current processes in the perspective of change, fluidity and flexibility. "The History", the official monotonous listing of seasons played and trophies won, is not left in peace but is open to interpretations, which makes historical narratives vulnerable to mythologization.

The research presented here puts four Swedish clubs in a context of ongoing historical discussions and exchanges that happen among them. History is constructed in relation to and with the help of other participants. Not only various groups of supporters are included here but also club managements, security and present and former players.

The dissertation presents narratives mainly from four Swedish clubs: Malmö FF (est. 1910), Helsingborgs IF (est. 1907), AIK (est. 1891) and Djurgårdens IF (est. 1891). I shall present them in more detail in the section explaining methods and ethnographic material.

### The aim and main questions

The aim of this dissertation is to describe and analyse how history is produced and performed in elite male football clubs, and the implications this process has for football and for the understanding of history. The process of establishing memories is crucial for constructing a group identity. In this particular case, as a part of global sport activity, football has been influential and it has become, together with other games and disciplines, a major factor in shaping values and attitudes in Western cultures (Hourihan 1997, 14). There is in general a special focus on male activities. It is connected to a construction of masculinity and to authority and power in a historical context (1997, 15). Analysing historical production reveals how an intersection of emotions, collective memory and engaged performance has an impact on individuals and on the clubs. The emphasis is on the process of producing history. In this perspective, football becomes a case study for research in similar environments that attract public attention and emotional responses.

Football, as an example of historical production, encapsulates processes and emotions recurring in certain patterns. Production of history is not focused here on perfectly accurate reconstruction or truth. The goal is set for the future – next match, next season, next transfer window, next victory or failure that might then become history. The process of producing history has elements that could be observed in other contexts, yet football has some unique features. Through the focus on history and different modes of producing it, I was able to analyse football and its special socio-cultural implications.

The aim of the thesis is based on the following core questions:

- What is the role of history in football clubs?
- What historical elements and references appear in contemporary clubs?
- How are different groups of people (officials, supporters, players) involved in producing and performing history?
- What forms do historical narratives take in the football context?

To answer these questions I shall employ the concepts of ritual, narrative, materiality, collective memory, myth, magic and performance. The cyclical character, intensity and speed of events around a football club make it into a captivating field. At the same time, this socially and culturally constructed space is not as sensitive or problematic to conduct research in as other dimensions of social life, for example religious or political groups. The analysis stirred by the questions listed above could provide a deeper understanding of how such collective environments are established, maintained and also contested by historical narration. It problematizes history as a specific socio-cultural construct and the transformations it can undergo.

Football is a widely recognized and popular sport that attracts a lot of attention, emotional and financial, and it triggers a great many cultural activities. Being a football supporter is often a strong part of an individual identity, merged with other features. It connects strongly to personal life stories, relationships, and opinions. An individual narrative cuts across a club's story; one's memories are those of thousands who attended a match.

## Previous studies

I shall discuss some of the existing research that provides a frame for this dissertation. There has been a lot of research into football history, its sociological implications, its various nationalistic faces, into all the trouble-makers to be found at stadiums, and also stadiums as social spaces and the development of sport activities (Testa 2009; Andersson & Radmann 1998; Green 2009; Vertinsky & Bale 2004; Bale & Philo 1998). However, ethnographic studies have often been limited to certain spectator groups or issues such as violence and safety (Armstrong 1998; Richards 2015), female spectators (Pope 2017), or football in the context of urban develop-

ment and politics in varied national backgrounds (Schewell et al. 2016). Three main fields of studies in this dissertation consist of ethnology, sport studies in general, and research in history. I identify these three as the most crucial for setting a scientific background for this investigation.

### Sport studies

Sociologists, anthropologists, sport scientists, criminologists, economists, journalists and even lawyers have produced various books and articles considering different aspects of football. One is spoiled for choice when browsing through publications. The lion's share of research within football was devoted to "problem areas". Earlier decades produced "overemphasis on negative outcomes" (McKay et al. 2000, 6). It would appear that critical studies of masculinities that focused on team sports, including football, found and highlighted various issues that contributed to characterizing them as aggressive, hierarchical, hypercompetitive, oppressive and reproducing a version of hegemonic masculinity. Simultaneously, research on individual sports produced more varied and complex pictures of those physical activities (McKay et al. 2000, 6–8).

In this context, it should come as no surprise that violence in football has become, and still is, a popular topic. There has been a substantial contribution to the study of hooliganism in Scandinavia (Green 2009; Radmann 2013), and different forms of fandom and classifications of supporters (see Giulianotti 1999, 2004; Testa 2009; Armstrong 1998; Kennedy & Kennedy 2012; Radmann 2015; Wilson 2006). Attention has been given to female participants, usually putting forward a critique of masculinity and the male-dominated environment of football (Dixon 2015; Welford 2011; Richards 2015; Dunn 2014; Pope 2017). The gender critique presents an account of historical development in football as well as modern evaluations of problems and issues that are observed there. These publications provided a frame of how football crowds are approached regarding men and masculinities.

In the Swedish academia, the historian Torbjörn Andersson has contributed immensely to researching the past of Swedish football (1998, 2001, 2002, 2011, 2016). The publications are valuable sources of information and



inspiration. It is an account of how the history of football can be written. His studies include a detailed historical focus on the four clubs investigated in this dissertation.

The theme of sport and social space has appeared in various publications, including several edited collections (Bale & Moen 1995; Bale & Philo 1998; Vertinsky & Bale 2004). The importance of physical place has been framed in the context of sociology of sports, as the environment is presented in those volumes as a crucial element for different interpretations of sport, including football. Bale and Moen (1995) conducted an analysis of a stadium that can be sensed, performed and experienced, hinting at this ritual character and the complex experiences that accompany match attendance. This dissertation expands that line of investigation by including individual performers and their engagement through their production of history.

There are a number of studies based on ethnographies and focused on building identities. One such publication is a dissertation by the historian Joakim Glaser (2016). His investigation took place among four football clubs from the former East Germany (DDR). His project was based on interviews with 19 supporters and participant observations (2016, 49; 53–56). It was focused on football identities rooted in national political context of the unification of Germany. Glaser's dissertation was written in the discipline of history, but it has many points connecting it to ethological work. The ethnographic methodologies are acknowledged in the field of sport studies. My contribution to the field of sport studies is to reinterpret football as a magical construction that provides an opportunity to study how history is produced through personal stories. It is a probe into the transformations between an individual and a collective.

## Ethnology of sport

Research on various sports has been plentiful within the discipline of ethnology, yet the field of spectator studies is treated somewhat cautiously. The French ethnologist and anthropologist Christian Bromberger remarked about the issue considering his own fieldwork in football:

a huge crowd of individuals shaped into a temporary unit, the stadium seems like a disturbing phenomenon for the anthropologist, used to scrutinizing small communities or limited social networks. (1995, 300)

Although the study he conducted was some decades ago, and sports feature as a topic in quite a few ethnological investigations, there is a degree of cautiousness, especially considering spectator sports like football. Bromberger commented further that the perceptions of football crowds are affected by an established cultural tradition describing such gatherings as “opium for the people” that “deflects attention away from essential matters, rather than expressing them” and thus “helps blur people’s perception of their place in society and of their everyday problems” (1995, 294). Bromberger’s account was a realisation of ritualistic elements in football and on difficulties in analysing it. I would agree that the existing ethnological studies of football are rather careful in their approach and analysis, and sport studies in general tend to focus on the official side of it, such as the media coverage, rather than on the micro-processes surrounding sports. Further, big events are preferred research topics, which again narrows the picture to specific forms of engagement on a (mostly) national level.

The ethnologist Fredrik Schoug tackled the issues of intimacy in professional sports (1997) and this theme appears in this dissertation too, albeit in a different context. Gigantic events and horrendous amounts of money help to construct modern sports as massive spectacles (like football or hockey championships, or the Olympic Games) but the idea of intimate connection is still to be found. Schoug explored ideas of loyalty, friendship and solidarity in the hockey and football contexts, where buying/selling players is an everyday issue, yet a sense of belonging needs to be perpetuated (1997, 50–53). His PhD dissertation included the media coverage and identity construction done through the mediation of an event on television or in the press. My approach to including such material was partly guided by Schoug’s work.

The ethnologist Mats Hellspong wrote on a variety of sport themes. Hellspong contributions were important for conducting ethnological research in sports and developing ethnography for such studies. Apart from his doctoral thesis about boxing in Sweden (1982), Hellspong also com-

pared popular movements (folk movements) within sports with free churches and the working-class movement in Sweden (1991). Hellspång's academic publications include an article contrasting public events from 1880 and 1991 which dealt with return of "heroes" – the *Vega* expedition and the victorious Swedish hockey team (1995). He wrote a book about a historical comparison of spectators and sport arenas in Stockholm (2013). The latter study includes team sports like football, hockey, bandy, but also individual sports like tennis, and presents an overview of the developments of spectator engagement in those different disciplines, providing insights into group dynamics and social issues in a historical perspective.

Besides Mats Hellspång, other ethnologists have studied various sports. Anette Rosengren interviewed three women supporting a Stockholm club, Hammarby IF, and attended two matches while doing fieldwork for her article about female football support (2005). Her article scratches the surface of modern fandom, and it highlights paths of investigation that I encountered in my fieldwork. Jesper Fundberg's PhD project on young players and masculinity is an important study that investigated intersections of sport, masculinity, class, ethnicity, and age (2003). Boys playing football are the take-off point for reasoning about bringing up citizens of desired kind. Fundberg's work, although not cited directly, played a crucial part in forming a theoretical background in this dissertation, especially concerning masculinity. It provided useful insights into approaches of studying, presumably, a masculine environment. Sara Berglund did her PhD project on trotting, putting the horse and different professional and personal human relations circulating around the animal in the centre of her study (2006). Berglund's analysis unveils the cultural dimensions of "making" of a winning horse, myths and notions circulating around the sport and horses as their main protagonists. Berglund remarked that, like so many other sports, trotting provides an arena for emotions and interactions (2006, 193). Berglund also analysed in an article the relationships of horses' owners and trainers (2005).

On the international level, several publications were important for writing this dissertation. An EU-funded research project FREE (Football Research in Enlarged Europe) took place between 2012 and 2015.<sup>2</sup> Studies

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.free-project.eu/about-free/Pages/About-FREE.aspx>.

were conducted in several European countries and included themes of history, socio-anthropological and socio-political aspects.<sup>3</sup> The project resulted in several publications, including an edited collection *New Ethnographies of Football in Europe: People, Passions, Politics* (2015). There, perspectives from Poland and Germany are presented in the context of mega-events like the European Football Cup. Christian Bromberger also conducted fieldwork in football. Bromberger noticed strong parallels between football and religious ceremonies, yet it would seem that the eagerness to find similarities overshadowed a possibility to analyse public participation further. Rituals observed there point towards magical analysis of football. That, in turn, stresses the pragmatic character and function, as the rituals do not just illustrate, they are used for production.

The special, captivating character of sports, arenas and fandom has been acknowledged and studied. The take that I propose goes deeper in the search to understand meanings and functions that sport can have in everyday life. Inevitably, studying sports means interactions with different groups of people representing a variety of social backgrounds and occupations, and a range of behaviour during a match. Such groups can be partly constructed through media coverage and popular imagination. Many elements of the game have been already taken for granted. As a result, basic questions about the nature, purpose and effects of participating in football are not asked directly. The interpretations can be based on the “obvious” that is not obvious at all, preventing the investigation from going deeper.

### Ethnology and cultural aspects of memory

Different aspects of remembrance and commemoration as modes of engagement with the past constitute a crucial track for this dissertation. There is an abundance of research concerning such elements but it is tricky to find a place for football to fit in. Important yet trivial, old yet always new, engaging yet strongly criticized, open yet full of restrictions – football is a strange construct when approaching concepts of cultural relevance and preservation.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.free-project.eu/research/Pages/Research.aspx>.

The ethnologists Jonas Frykman and Billy Ehn were the editors of a volume about memorials (2007). Different articles there dealt mostly with official commemorations and statues in different form, and there is an abundance of research on cultural heritage (e.g. Gradén & Aronsson 2013). The memorials that are introduced in this study are more ephemeral and personal. The archaeologist Håkan Karlsson wrote several publications on heritage-like elements in football and discussed how football struggles to be recognized as a cultural space worthy of being described as heritage (2008). One can trace such elements in football, but I would not classify producing history there as an attempt at cultural heritage. That concept is now attached to many phenomena that were not regarded as heritage before, but depend on national histories (Hafstein 2012; Klein 2001; Nisser 2001). My material lacks such categorization. The modern codification of heritage, despite attempts to make it for everyone and include everyone, with the political discussion about heritage being complex, still requires that something stops in time, becomes frozen, unmovable.<sup>4</sup>

Football is, in my view, more of a process than a product. Agreeing on what deserves preservation is not my main concern, if it were even a possible assignment. The field is fixed on going forward. Further, some of the elements in the context – economic issues, physical and symbolic violence, questions about gender – make it into a bundle of social problems. The aim of this dissertation is not to show whether football could be regarded as heritage. Such elements and attempts exist,<sup>5</sup> but how people engage with historical narratives is about the ritual – a performance, rather than preservation.

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4 Johanna Björkholm wrote her PhD thesis about immaterial cultural heritage in the form of music, and provided a thorough discussion on the meaning of the term and on political stances within the European Union (Björkholm 2011, 33–47).

5 Europeana, a digital platform grounded in the European Union, features an online “exhibition” about European sport heritage. Sport, put together with religion, language and art, is framed as essential elements of humanity. Football has its own section as a special European cultural heritage: <https://www.europeana.eu/portal/en/exhibitions/european-sport-heritage/football> (retrieved 03 April 2018). This approach is based on finding additional links to European identity. Still, this does not engage in questions about how the production of history is organized on club level, but chooses glorified elements from the long history of football, often based on international contents like the Champions League.

A study of using and playing with history was conducted by Lotten Gustafsson in her PhD dissertation about medieval market in the island town of Visby, Sweden (2002). Gustafsson interpreted the annual market on the island of Gotland in terms of re-enactment and a liminal space. The researcher noticed that it is a utopia based on historically inspired imagination (Gustafsson 2002, 240–263). Football encompasses liminal elements and it can be interpreted as a heterotopia – a socially constructed space limited in time and used for certain purposes that would often not fit easily as an everyday activity (see Foucault 1962; Herd 2017). Yet, football escapes the definition of re-enactment. Historical references are there to be found amass, as will be demonstrated in upcoming chapters, but the interpretation and function are based on current needs. There is no endeavour to “get it right,” get the facts straight or provide the most accurate view of the past. Football is a field of engaging with history on an emotional basis. It drives on creativity and clashing interpretations.

### Historical studies

Researching the past is an established topic within ethnology and concepts like *cultural history* and *historical context* appear in many publications (e.g. Jönsson & Nilsson 2017). In this dissertation, certain analytical approaches from the discipline of historical studies are used. It opens a discussion about the position and perception of history among individuals and groups. Use of history (*historiebruk* in Swedish) is in itself a field of vast studies in Sweden and in the international context. There is an established tradition of researching the use of history on the macro level, where grand narratives are provided by those with access to power. The historian Klas-Göran Karlsson has written numerous publications about the use of history in the connection with World War II and using history as a weapon (for example Karlsson 1999). Peter Aronsson has written extensively on using history in various contexts (2000; 2004). There has been research about the “use and abuse of history”; for instance Margaret MacMillan (2009) referred to several high-profile instances of misusing history from a political perspective. The use and more often *misuse* of history is to be found in many publications, starting with Nietzsche’s *On the Use and*

*Abuse of History for Life* (1874) and Pieter Geyl's *Use and Abuse of History* (1955). Far too often differently coloured propaganda twisted "facts" to serve its needs.

An important name in the field problematizing history is Hayden White. His publication on the poetry-like qualities of historical accounts highlighted the flexibility of composing history, questioning the claim of objectivity and truthfulness (1973). His analysis of nineteenth-century historians resulted in classifications of different tropes, modes of emplotment, argument and ideological implications that one could observe in work of, among others, Herder, Hegel, Michelet, Ranke and Marx. White was able to show how the present situations and political realities, as well as ideological trends of their time, influenced what kind of history was written, and how the past was evaluated. White's study was a source of inspiration in this dissertation. The criticism he delivered prompted my analysis to look for different purposes of producing history and for the connections between past, present and future.

The understanding of history on individual and communal level, especially in the family context, have been studied. The historians Roy Rosenzweig's and David Thelen's publication *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (1998) is a study of historical consciousness among average Americans. The project was based on phone interviews and provided insights into how people connect personal stories to bigger, national narratives. My dissertation takes history from the abstract level to the everyday use, from academic discussions to daily chats in informal situations.

The folklorist Henry Glassie's study of a small community in Northern Ireland is a take on investigating history on micro-level with actors engaged in their local community and their stories (1982). Glassie stressed the importance of place as a binding point for stories. History is not worth knowing only because it is old. It has to have a meaning that is relevant to the community, and it is, as Glassie phrased it, "a prime mode of cultural construction" (1982, 652). My understanding of history as an active production is in line with the approach presented by Glassie.

## Theoretical frame

The theories present a toolbox that circulate around the idea of creating and performing a historical narrative of memories and materiality. Thus, the main theoretical concepts include ritual, performance, narrative, collective memory, materiality, magic and myth. This collection is not random, but constitutes a set of terms that are closely connected to each other. They are engaged in analysing the production of history as well as football as a context of such productions. A ritual is performed to bring history back, and to make it into fuel for the future. A stage, props and actors are needed, and an action has to take place. One could say that the past is just the past – history, memory, heritage or tradition are different ways we can engage with the past and thus, in a way, produce it. My primary ethnographic material consists of interviews and observations. There appear traces of collective engagement and memories that bound people together. The collective character of memories was the first line of inquiry that was applied to the material. The theoretical frame consists of concepts that are employed in order to answer questions considering the process of producing history, and the features of this process that would be unique for football. These theories allowed me to deal with many forms and manifestations of narratives anchored in the past. Such an investigation of football has not been done before.

## Collective memory

*Collective memory* connects individuals to a group and helps to create communities. People have to share something to feel connected, and history can be squeezed so that it can produce a sense of “commonness”. Maurice Halbwachs (1992), in his classic work on the subject, discussed collective memory in a context of family and religion. He pointed out that “no memory is possible outside frameworks used by people living in society to determine and retrieve their recollections” (1992, 43). The reproduction of memories coincides with the reproduction of beliefs, logic and a nation of rationality and reality specific for a certain society. Thus, “a sense of our identity is perpetuated” (Halbwachs 1992, 47). An individual mirrors the



perpetual circle of events within a social surrounding and treats them as his/her own. Halbwachs noticed the creative element of these processes. This is in line with the field of football. The perpetual and cyclical character of the game produces similar circumstances ready to be included in the string of memories.

Jan and Aleida Assmann further developed Halbwachs' concepts and introduced the terms *cultural memory* and *communicative memory*. A transition happens when memories grow old, when it is not possible to transmit them orally (J. Assmann 1988). Once it is not possible to share the memories between generations, the society, Jan Assmann states, constructs cultural memory that lives in the form of rituals, monuments, ceremonies or written accounts (Velicu 2011). The type of memories passed from one generation to the next are classified as *communicative*. It would have a life span of about 90 years, and then it would be transformed into *cultural memory* as memory after that time requires traditions, rituals and rites to be alive. When individuals pass away and human actors cannot guarantee that past events are honoured, communicative memory turns into cultural memory (J. Assmann 1988; A. Assmann 2011). Jan and Aleida Assmann stress different forms of commemoration as crucial to cultural memory. Such descriptions come close to the folkloristic analysis of rituals.

In a publication entitled *Social Memory* (1992), the anthropologist James Fentress and historian Chris Wickham analyse memory in social context. They point out that the grand written histories are always chosen and need special care to be established. No narrative is automatically important to any group. The selection strengthens some memories and weakens others. Social memory is a term encompassing an established version of collective memories. These concepts of collective, social, communicative and finally cultural memory (as introduced by Jan Assmann) are used in this dissertation to trace the individual and collective approaches to the past and to analyse the creative engagement with the past.

The importance of memory in the context of historical research was explored by the American historian Carl L. Becker (1931). He presented a definition of history as “memory of things said and done” and argued that this definition allows any average person to engage with history. Every person is a carrier of history. This means that history is taken at its lowest

point, so to speak, and stresses the importance of individuals in shaping the more official *history* by focusing on their personal narratives. This perspective is employed in this dissertation as it presents ethnographies of individuals participating in historical production.

### Ritual and magic

The preservation of the memories, as Jan and Aleida Assmann (1988; 2011) suggest, need to acquire formal structure. There is a ritualistic quality to historical engagement. The Assmanns evoke a need for rites and rituals to transform communicative memory into cultural memory. Rituals do not need to be connected to religion or magic, and studies of *secular rituals* have been conducted (Klein 1995; Moore & Myerhoff 1977). Yet, I consider football as a socially constructed context with many magical qualities that involve rituals and rites (Herd 2017).

In the definition of ritual, one finds performative elements and emotions as well. Gestures, screams, routines are meant to evoke emotional responses. A match situation is a spectacle that involves performers and audiences. It is a form of *cultural performance* (Bell 1996 (1992), 26–27; Macaloon 1984, 380). The emphasis on producing history is a result of the performative character of the engagement. Raising scarves, singing, hopping, shouting at the referee, throwing snuff packages on the pitch, and burning flares are established instances of presenting emotions. The display of feelings is framed and embodied in symbols and references. They communicate history encapsulated in those symbols (Ahmed 2004, 59).

Christian Bromberger analysed football, especially matches, “as world-view and as ritual” (1995). His article listed elements that suggest such an interpretation, such as “a break with everyday routine”, “a specific spatio-temporal framework”, a programmed schedule of recurring ceremonies that consist of words, gestures and objects (1995, 306). Bromberger noticed the role of audience, contesting established hierarchies and with a specific “moral obligation to participate” (1995, 306). In his analysis, Bromberger described parallels between rituals in football and those in religion, though he commented that there is a lack of “the belief in the active presence of supernatural creatures or forces, which constitute the backbone of religious

rituals” (1995, 309). What Bromberger described, I would argue, was in fact an act of magic performed by magicians (as magic shares many features with religion – see Mauss 1972) without using that analytical term.

Marcel Mauss presented a theory of magic that put it between technology and religion – one believes in one’s abilities, one needs the onlookers to believe that it works, but there is no or little worship and all is used to achieved a set goal (1972). Mauss explained magic in terms of collective phenomena. Its rituals serve technical objectives rather than symbolize worship of a sacred character. Magic, in this regard, does not contain a notion of the sacred, but rather serves as means to a desired end. Magic may involve the use of gods, demons, and religious icons within its practice; however, there is usually a pragmatic, technical objective. Mauss pointed out this objective as being a key similarity between magic and science. The analytical concept of magic includes rituals in various forms.

Magic was thoroughly discussed not only by Mauss but also, among others, by Emile Durkheim. He too saw an important distinction between magic and religion and the way myths function in the magical discourse. He wrote: “Magic, too, is made up of beliefs and rites. Like religion, it has its myths and its dogmas; only they are more elementary, undoubtedly because, seeking technical and utilitarian ends, it does not waste its time in pure speculation” (1996 (1915) 191). Magic needs rites and rituals to be performed to “happen”.

## Performance

*Performance* is strongly connected to rituals. The performative side of magic has its shape in the form of a ritual. Rituals have been described as habitual actions that do not necessarily involve belief, or even that they are separated from belief and represent only action, but rituals shape their meaning through acts and engagements (Bell 1996 (1992)). Rituals consist of certain elements: repetition, acting, special behaviour or stylization, order, evocative presentational style, staging, collective dimension (Klein 1995, 15–20; Moore & Myerhoff 1977, 7–8). All these features are embodied in match situations that produce history.

The anthropologist Roy P. Rappaport defined ritual as “a form or struc-

ture, defining it as the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not encoded by the performers” (1996 (1979), 428). This definition stresses the structure of a ritual that reveals itself in a performative act, and the structure is a vital part of possible interpretations of the meaning and function of a ritual. If ritual is, as the cultural anthropologist Stanley J. Tambiah remarked, “a culturally constructed system of symbolic communication” (1996 (1981), 497), its performative character of sequences and patterns plays a vital part in the construction of sense and meaning in an actual performance of a ritual (1996 (1981), 501).

A concept of performance is used in studies of narratives as a story gains contextual meaning and function while being performed in a specific spatio-temporal setting (Norrick 2007, 128). The “immediate context of use” or “actual narrative event” are crucial elements of any recorded story (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1975, 106–107). Materiality makes history possible.

## Materiality

A *reading* of a social situation is performed through materiality. Interaction with materiality often indicates historical connections that are translated into emotional attachment. Shreds of history become materialized in various forms at stadiums. They also gain agency. It is not only humans that “act” as scarves, banners, stadiums and even seats acquire agency and become protagonists, or *actants*,<sup>6</sup> in historical narratives (Herman 2005, 1; Hébert 2011, 73). *Materiality* is approached in the processual, performative connection to narrativity and history-production. The objects, while being used, contain instructions for how they can be used, thus triggering action towards them (Smith 1978, 46). The “socially organized responses” constitute materiality and elaborate on the use of objects as well (Smith 1978, 46).

The folklorist Henry Glassie’s approach to studying an Irish village was through the integration of material culture and oral literature, which he defined as “folklore and folklife” (1982, xiii). The study of people and

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<sup>6</sup> The term “actant” is often associated with Bruno Latour’s Actor-Network theory (ANT) but has its origins in structuralist narratology.

their stories oscillated around genre, transmission and tradition, but Glassie included the landscape, buildings and artefacts as important elements of any tale. His detailed, touching study approached history through people and objects. Glassie offered a critical view of official history:

Some professional historians feel the land, its fields, houses, and buried broken crockery, cannot serve truly as documents. Artifacts, even spoken texts, are suspect. Only the written word is meaningful and useful, and the historian's story retains its dreary elitist bias, since few of the past's people wrote and most of them were tied to an upper-class minority. [...] Yet beyond, around us, spreads the fast and democratic handmade history book of the landscape. (Glassie 1982, 603)

History is to be found in objects and through the human usage of objects. Glassie's folkloristic analysis engaged on the micro-level, dealing with people in the environment familiar to them, and with a set of stories circulating in everyday life. The focus of this dissertation is similar, as the fieldwork material is based on histories produced by fans, players and club officials in various forms and functions, resulting in flexibility and manifold expressions.

## Narrative

The stories that were collected through fieldwork are different *narratives* that include personal life stories and the clubs' life circles. I use *narrative* as an analytical term that addresses different ways of composing stories and their different functions. Narratives are a form of *everyday psychology* (Herman 2009, 20) that helps people to come to terms with certain events, make sense of their world and their position in it (Herman 2009, 2). Historical narratives circulating around clubs help, for example, to establish their positions, and to create an understanding of what is going on. My informants told stories that interpreted their love for football, the clubs, their journey through history with the help of materiality present. My take on a narrative focuses on the process that include materiality, a

story and a function – a reason for their construction. A narrative is composed of such elements (Ryan 2007, 24).

Narratives engage with concepts of textuality and intertextuality that lead the analysis towards the complexity of social situations. The *reading* of the social context, based on familiarity and previous knowledge, points out entangled webs of meanings that build the social structure (Stewart 1979). That structure is *readable* because of textual/intertextual elements in narratives. Textuality means that events or materiality could be treated as texts, thus understandable through interpretation based on *intertextual elements*. Intertextuality, coined by Julia Kristeva, refers to textuality (readability) of texts, social contexts and events. It points out that any work contains references to other sources that build up possible and more complex meanings (Worton & Still 1990, 1-44).

Sport is a field of study that adds to the discussion redefining popular culture as modern folklore (see Storey 2003). Some of older folk traditions connected to physical activities evolved into modern sports like football (Eichberg 1998, 151-153). The definition of folklore presented by Dan Ben Amos as “artistic communication in small groups” (1971, 3-15) suggest a broad spectrum of activities that could be regarded as folklore and analysed through their intertextual qualities, for example on social media (see Blank 2013).

Narratives are not only about text and linguistic utterances. They consist of “material signs, the discourse, which convey a certain meaning (or content), the story, and fulfill a certain social function” (Ryan 2007, 24). Whirlpools of materiality, oral communication, songs, chants and performances happen during matches and live in stories about football. The term “story” appears in this dissertation alongside “narrative”. The distinction between them is not easily definable. David Herman analyses stories through narrative elements (2009). Referring to the work of Roland Barthes, Herman remarks that “... narrative is not (or rather, not only) something in the text. To the contrary, stories are cognitive as well as textual in nature, structures of mind as well as constellations of verbal, cinematic, pictorial, or other signs produced and interpreted within particular communicative settings” (Herman 2009, 8).

Narrative elements make a story into a story, or a myth into a myth. The use of the term “story” in this dissertation does not aim at distinguishing

it from other narrative forms (Glassie 1982, 37-39). Narrative, the main analytical term here, can be seen as encompassing story (what) and discourse (how). This distinction is formed in structuralist theory, presented for example by Seymour Chatman (1978). “Discourse” here is understood as “particular communicative settings”, in other words “context”, and that term shall be used in this dissertation.

## Myth

The presence of a ritual is connected to the presence of myths, which can be described as specific narratives and the part of “conceptual aspects of religion” (Catherine Bell 1996 (1992), 22) – should we accept that rituals are actions based on beliefs (myths). The folklorist William Bascom defines myths as “prose narratives which, in the society in which they are told, are considered to be truthful accounts of what happened in the remote past. [...] Myths are the embodiment of dogma, they are usually sacred, and they are often associated with theology and ritual” (Bascom 1984, 9). Myths then are means of communication developed in a specific context of a ritual that is “a pattern of behaviour which has been sanctioned by usage” (Honko 1984, 51).

Myth as an analytical term is a form of narration; as Roland Barthes expressed it, “myth is a type of speech chosen by history” (Barthes 1972, 110). Myths are a particular way to understand the world, and may work as a means of orientation in the world (D’Aquili & Laughlin Jr. 1996 (1979), 140). That applies also to the assessment of the past and orientation in it. *Myth* is then another analytical tool, a specific narrative that helps to investigate how history is produced.

As this dissertation concerns how history is produced and performed, the methodology has been chosen to obtain relevant material. The selection of participants, the scope of the study and various methods are presented in the following section, together with some critical thoughts about the material obtained.

## Methods and material

Football is a vast and diverse field and there are possibilities to explore various methods. Fieldwork depends on trust, access and familiarity. The choices of subjects and informants were not only mine. These were negotiated and mediated. The Swedish football scene is generous and open, but access is not always easy to obtain. Several layers of protection separate different supporter groups, players, and club officials from curious researchers. Although sometimes it required patience, usually a plea for help was not refused and all the clubs included in this study assisted me with finding informants, getting access to footballers and matches, albeit to a different degree.

It is essential to mention that the material gathered was influenced by my own presupposition of what would be found in the field, as well as by the chosen terminology and the perspectives selected before starting the research. Fieldwork is not independent of the theoretical frame, as the emerging material was filtered through certain concepts, thus allowing structures and patterns to become visible. Paraphrasing the folklorist Lauri Honko, one can say that the measuring device chosen to assess a phenomenon also creates that said phenomenon (1973, 12).

### The fieldwork arrangement and club selection

For this investigation, narratives from four Swedish teams were selected.<sup>7</sup> The choice was influenced by their geographical locations, and the social space that they occupy. The elite clubs in Sweden have a plethora of narratives. Big clubs provide centres of gravity that organize spaces around them. That means that smaller, less successful or younger clubs find themselves as satellites with varying possibilities to influence the fields of force around the big institutions. It is impossible to omit some of the story-telling that is produced outside the four main clubs I worked with, but one

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<sup>7</sup> Although HIF was relegated during the time of the study, it remains one of the most popular and influential clubs on the Swedish scene. Further, many clubs are vulnerable to relegation, and both Stockholm teams spent one season in the lower league during the first decade of the 2000s.



is able to obtain more (and perhaps more diversified) material when concentrating on them while listening to others. The interactions are rich and emotional, and the exchanges result in mutual building of images. I am aware, though, that any club could provide its historical point of view.

Those four clubs were all in the highest league when the research began. Their supporters produce plenty of material every year; the matches between them are popular, with high attendance and interest from the media. Hence, this research could focus on producing history on a certain level, as these clubs were, in a way, equal to each other. Selecting a number of clubs from different divisions in the same region/location could, I presume, reveal more about local power structures and hierarchies. AIK, DIF, MFF and HIF have shared dozens of seasons playing against each other, as well as players and coaches switching clubs. There is a well-established rapport in exchanges between them. The focus of this dissertation was on historical production, and only male football was taken into consideration. The reason for this is a specific kind of narrative-building that occurs among male clubs. Women's football does not share historical accounts in the same way, nor does it engage much in such exchanges with male clubs.

Once contacts were established, a snowball effect provided many informants, one person recommending another. Although not without problems, hindrances and rejections, conducting fieldwork in football was a daring experience. There was a flood of sources, themes, protagonists and matches to consider. Methodologically it is a form of bricolage, taking up all the possible sources and engaging with varied material while searching for modes of producing history (Ehn & Löfgren 2001, 147).

There are some international points of reference introduced throughout this dissertation. European-scale comparison was not intended but Swedish football is framed within European developments, and global influences were visible as soon as the game arrived in Sweden (Andersson & Hognestad 2017).

MFF, AIK, DIF and HIF  
– participants in the historical discussion

In the initial stages, I considered including several different clubs. I had worked before with Malmö FF while writing my master's thesis, and it seemed natural to continue with this club. As I approached Helsingborgs IF, another club from Skåne, an idea of including teams from another region or city appeared. Clubs in Stockholm play a strong part in Swedish football and they are productive in providing material based on references to their long and rich past. Hence, the dissertation includes Malmö FF, Helsingborgs IF, Djurgårdens IF and AIK.

AIK, the abbreviation for Allmänna Idrottsklubben, was founded in 1891 on 15 February in Stockholm. Its founder was Isidor Behrens. The current stadium is Friends Arena where the club moved in 2012 from Råsunda Stadium, which was demolished in 2013. Supporters still describe the annihilated Råsunda as “an open sore”. The club claims to be the biggest in Scandinavia in terms of attendance and fans. It has several supporter organizations, including the Black Army, Ultras Nord, Sol Invictus, AIK Tifo, Smokinglirarna, hooligan firm Firman Boys, ASK, and several others.

DIF, Djurgårdens IF, or simply Djurgår'n, is named after an island in Stockholm which used to be a royal hunting park. This provides a background for an impression that the club regards itself as a bit better, because of the royal connection, and thus attracts better-off, snobby spectators. DIF was founded in 1891, on 12 March, and because it is a month younger, AIK calls it a “kid brother”. DIF used to be placed at the Stockholm Olympic Stadium until 2013, when it was moved to Tele2 Arena, which it has to share with another Stockholm club, Hammarby IF.

Malmö FF, or MFF, is a club from Malmö, southern Sweden, established in 1910. Its mortal rival used to be IFK Malmö, a club that attracted upper, educated classes, while MFF was considered a working-class club (according to my informants). It has been the most successful Swedish club and it reached the final of the European Cup in 1979 in Munich, where they were beaten by Nottingham Forest. MFF has a strong ultras supporters' group called Supras Malmö. In 2017 they won Allsvenskan for the 20th time.

HIF, or Helsingborgs IF, was established in 1907. It uses the nickname “Skånes stolthet” (the pride of Skåne). It was previously referred to as “Mjölkkossan” (the milk cow) because it attracted many spectators in other cities, making it very profitable for their opponents. In 1968 HIF was relegated from Allsvenskan and played in lower leagues for 24 years, which is referred to as *ökenvandring* (wandering in the desert, as when the Israelites spent 40 years trying to reach the Promised Land). HIF’s stadium, Olympia, has been recently renovated, but in 2016 the club went down from Allsvenskan again (after 24 years).

### Attending matches – observations

I observed 26 matches between 2014 and 2018.<sup>8</sup> I was able to conduct observations from various places at stadiums: the pitch, the standing section, the sitting section in the middle, the family space, the media centre, and the stands for away fans. The football crowd is arranged at the stadium according to different factors such as ticket prices, proximity to the club, age, and the expected behaviour, which comes with specific prejudices or expectations. Bronislaw Malinowski, in his classic study of Coral Gardens, advocated for an ethnographer to *feel the field*:

The ethnographer has to see and to hear; he has personally to witness the rites, ceremonies and activities, and he has to collect opinions on them (1935, 4).

The British criminologist Geoff Pearson mentioned the importance of participant observations while conducting ethnographic research within a context like football (Pearson 2016, ix). Observations offer a unique possibility to supplement and expand on interviews. Seeing the world that informants describe allows one to experience, some of the emotional connections they refer to in interviews. Further, focusing on spaces and material culture helps to frame informants’ socio-cultural context (O’Toole & Were 2008).

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<sup>8</sup> A detailed list of the matches attended, with dates, is included in the appendix 1.

When on the pitch, I was usually granted a special permit as a photographer. I became included in the experience – I was an incorporated element with privileged point of entrance. A couple of times I was on the pitch shadowing, but ended up sitting on the narrow strip between the grass and the stands. I was observed too. I was filmed by fans and clipped into a movie that documented one match. It provided a sudden realization that when “out there” it is easy to become a usable element.<sup>9</sup>

Observations from the media section came with special seats that are right in the middle of the stadium, which allows journalists to have a good view of a match. There sit club officials, sometimes injured footballers and scouts searching for talented players. One also gets coffee and sandwiches. This particular set of seats is one of the most secluded and professionalized.

On several occasions I had company. These were friends or colleagues who fancied seeing a match. Watching football with somebody changes it into an ongoing commentary that includes unrelated trivia about other teams, deceased players, cities, and personal feelings. An observation could become more like an unstructured interview. The conversation notes acquired in such a way are classified as football chat (discussed below).

I have travelled with HIF fans to an away match in Malmö. I asked the supporters’ organization how it could be arranged, but since I would be just another fan there were no direct issues about it. I became a member of the organization and purchased the bus ticket from their website. Although most of the supporters on the bus clearly knew each other well, there were some lone individuals like myself. This trip was an attempt to see another part of supporters’ life, travelling to see their team, arranging transportation etc. I was allowed to participate, but stayed on the margins.

When doing fieldwork in Stockholm I spent a day with DIF officials and players at their training grounds. The intended activity was an interview with a player, but a supporter liaison officer generously agreed to show me around. While waiting for an interview I wandered around the place, watched people come and go, performing their mundane routines. This was an unexpected but rewarding experience. Again, it was a different part of backdoor activities that happen around football.

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<sup>9</sup> My own position will be discussed later in this chapter.

Participant observations played an important role in this investigation. My participation was at times limited, guarded, or restricted, and not only by various gatekeepers, but by my own unfamiliarity with certain aspects of the field. The immersion was never complete, but guided by the levels of possible participation that could change spontaneously (Löfgren 2018, 50–58). A simple act of opening a notebook and writing something down while standing with supporters would shift my position (see Emerson, Fretz & Shaw 2001).

### Interviews in various forms

I have encountered 43 people during individual interviews and two focus groups. The voices presented in this thesis belong to the supporters Jonathan, Markus, Marta, Arvid, Martin, Theo, Felic, Erik, Alex, Tom, Robin, Adam, Bengt, Leif, Olle, Hubert, Maria, Anton, Arne, Otto, Kristian and Oskar; the players Peter, Gustav, Kristoffer, Sixten and Jacob; former players Sune, Jesper, and Åke; the referee Wilmar; individuals working for clubs Linus, Jan, Filip, Carl, David, Alma and Joel; the tattoo artists Henrik and Håkan; security and police Kaspar, Benjamin and Albin. To protect the identities of my informants their names were changed and their age is not revealed unless necessary for highlighting generational differences in the understanding of football.

The interview is not only a common method in qualitative studies, but is also “heavily relied on for studies of myth and ritual” that are framed within life histories (Davies 2008, 107). The interviews were semi-structured (questions were prepared, the conversations usually developed beyond them) as were two focus groups (with three and four people) and one double interview. Three were phone interviews; one was a Facebook Messenger interview; two officials were interviewed during shadowing. Questions oscillated around clubs, Swedish football, personal experiences and memories, evaluations of other clubs and their histories.

I view an interview situation as a process of creating understanding between participants, rather than obtaining information from an interviewee (Davies 2008, 108). The narratives that occurred during my interviews were influenced by the context, topics, surroundings and social

markers of both the interviewee and the interviewer. Christian Bromberger, when referring to his material obtained while studying French clubs, commented that there was a “new kind of relationship – an interactive one” between the researcher and interviewees (1995, 300). He meant that the field he entered was eager for interaction with him, just as in my case.

One of the challenges was that more often than not people held several positions simultaneously. Those working for clubs are often strong supporters; players can turn to be supporters or work for their club in another form, while supporters play football in their spare time, coach or do voluntary work for clubs. Sometimes the change of position was clearly shifted during an interview, as in “speaking as a supporter...”. In this project the classification of interviewed persons follows the first category that they were approached through – a supporter, a club official, a player (see Sherman Heyl 2001, 369-383).

One interview with a player was sort of “monitored” by a club official who found it interesting to listen to. As the interview took months to arrange, I felt I had no power to say no. I can only speculate as to how the presence of another familiar person influenced the footballer. I had two focus groups with organized supporter organizations. Participating individuals were directed to me.

Interviewed supporters represented a broad spectrum of age, gender, education, and class, and even style of support and attendance patterns. Some individuals have not seen live matches often, yet still they proclaimed their admiration and devotion to clubs. They also differed with their take on history and evaluations of displays during matches.

The Facebook messenger interview was spontaneous. I asked one person in a private message for permission to use a photo published online, explaining what I was doing and why I needed it. He not only agreed but also suggested that he could answer some questions and was happy to help. The interaction happened online with me posting questions and him answering. This exchange provided a background to the picture as well as an additional mini-interview.

The club officials were contacted directly and agreed to talk, while some referred me to their more knowledgeable colleagues. Most of the players were selected for me by my contact persons; only two were my first choic-

es. Fans were pointed out to me by officials, or by my own acquaintances or friends, but some contacted me directly, as in “you should talk to me, I know a lot”. Interviewees had highly varied occupations and life stories. From university staff, PhDs, entrepreneurs, young professionals, security workers, to manual workers, tattoo artists and retired teachers. I did not have to strive for variety or look for specific groups as football attracts all strata of society. Some of the interviewees represented organized supporter groups. These were Supras Malmö (MFF), Kärnan and HIF-Vännerna (HIF), Järnkaminerna (DIF), Allmänna Supporterklubben – ASK and Black Army (AIK).

Out of 43 informants only three were women. I encountered many women in other fieldwork situations, i.e. not in formal interviews. Such meetings often resulted in short conversations used in this thesis as football chat. Women nowadays make up roughly 25–30% of football-attending supporters. A quantitative study from 2006 from Sweden gives a figure of 28% for women present in the standing section (Horsner & Söderberg 2006). Other European studies present similar percentages of female presence (e.g. Pfister, Lenneis & Mintert, 2013).<sup>10</sup> I have talked to many women, yet a male-oriented picture of football prevails. Men hold positions that are more prominent while women are often backstage. These factors require further investigations as they deal with power, access and social recognition. Yet, they do not fit the scope of this study, as my female informants expressed the same understanding of football history and same emotional engagement as men. I am nevertheless able to discuss the perceived *male* and *female* patterns of behaviour and the impact of such evaluations as part of a critical view of football is the expected old-fashioned working-class masculinity that comes with a badge of trouble that has been established during previous decades of crowd unrest.<sup>11</sup>

The majority of interviews were in Swedish, but there were some in

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<sup>10</sup> The practice of attending matches does not directly translate to being a supporter. The statistics that were available to me dealt with match attendance. I encountered several people that stretched the understanding of football fandom from attending the matches to watching them at home, or just stating an interest.

<sup>11</sup> The image of a football crowd is influenced by the media coverage of unrest in English football during the 1980s. I shall return to the issue later in the thesis.

English and Finnish. Interviews lasted from around 25 minutes to over an hour. The shorter meetings were with players and officials, as both groups appeared pressed for time, and sometimes I was “squeezed” between their routine activities. Although one can argue that such a short meeting could not provide much in-depth material, it was the entire arrangement that was of interest. Interviews were also good situational observations. The material obtained through interviews needs to be contextualized as well, since meaning “happens” in a specific situation, time and space (Malinowski 1935, 37–52).

Transcriptions were made directly to English even though the interviews were mostly conducted in Swedish. The decision was dictated by pragmatism as the material was to be used in English, and translating while transcribing enabled me to have the interviews ready for analysis. When transcribing the material, all ethnographers are faced with certain interpretative choices that influence what appears on a page and how (Bucholtz 2000, 1440–1441). In my case, an extra layer was present in the form of direct translation into English, thus changing the sound and feel of interviews as I tried to frame specific spatio-temporal remarks in a foreign language. The multi-layered linguistic character of the material prompted a discussion of how the material should be archived.<sup>12</sup> I decided against standardization of the transcript and I kept small informal elements, such as indicating laughter, hesitation, uneasiness, as much as possible. That, in my view, keeps the interview alive and shows how information is based not only on verbal utterances but also on the context and the emotions attached (Bucholtz 2000, 1456).

### Spontaneous interviews – football chat

I introduce “chat” as a method. It turned out to be useful for getting small glimpses of people’s relationship with football. It can be described as a short, informal, spontaneous interview. It was not developed intentionally. Often, when I mentioned what my research project was about, people

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<sup>12</sup> The material will be deposited, once properly arranged, in the Folklife Archives at Lund University.



presented opinions, stories, clubs they loved and hated. As more and more information was scribbled down in such situations, I decided to include “football chat” as a resource and paid more attention to such situations.

People were usually willing to engage in the conversation, and the informal context made it into a relaxed setting. It was about the links, networks they operated in, and such chats highlighted narratives they used. Chat happened both outside and inside the football context. For instance, every shadowing of supporter liaison officers<sup>13</sup> (SLOs) resulted in a “chat” with other people present. Often I did not know the name or exact position of my sudden informant. As one person remarked in such a football chat, “I’m not into football but you just can’t avoid it” (2015). Even a meeting during lunch could provoke a football discussion with opinions, facts and emotions flying around the table. Not all such instances were recorded and often they were connected to other forms of fieldwork. This method reflects the *experience* of the field, and its multi-dimensional character. As the sociologist Alex Tjora remarked, one is never fully able to control one’s positioning and status when in the fieldwork situation, which results in a somewhat fluent role that needs to adapt constantly (2017, 61–62). Football chat signalled a path that could be followed, providing the first brick in building on sources. It was an alternative way to generate stories.

The apparent hybridity of methods that happened during fieldwork made it a bit difficult to classify the material. Thus, I chose to extract those bits of informal conversations with random yet eager informants. This was, in the end, another form of interview, which resulted in specific material (Ehn & Löfgren 1996, 131). The context of a match situation, for example, resulted in tailoring the shared knowledge to the points my informants found the most relevant/interesting. It was also a spontaneous reaction to encounter a researcher, a female PhD candidate with a specific project. If, as Ehn and Löfgren have stated, the goal of an interview should be a surprise, then this form of interrogation was certainly full of surprises (1996, 134).

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<sup>13</sup> SLOs are responsible for communication between clubs and their supporters, often trying to bridge differences, settle conflicts and negotiate on various occasions. They work with fans and are in constant dialogue between the club, supporters and security forces. In European football leagues, it is usual for a club to have one or more SLOs employed.

## Shadowing

I shadowed SLOs from all four clubs during matches, three times in Stockholm, once in Malmö and once in Helsingborg. By shadowing I refer to a method described by Barbara Czarniawska in her book *Shadowing, and Other Techniques for Doing Fieldwork in Modern Societies* (2007). While describing an account (in the principal's office) of using the method, Czarniawska mentioned activities that "constitute shadowing: recording in writing what was said and done, attending formal and informal meetings and conferences interviewing him and other people who were encountered during the shadowing, and accessing various notes and documents" (2007, 30). I consider my following of SLOs instances of shadowing. It was "fieldwork on the move" (Czarniawska 2007). The mobility and unique access to an every-day reality of matches opened my eyes to many issues concerning connections between fans, officials, players and security that otherwise would be difficult to observe. Shadowings lasted from three to six hours.

During shadowing we went around, checked on away fans, chatted with medical personnel and police, fetched something from the office, looked for troublesome supporters etc. A match day is a routine activity. SLOs communicate constantly with fans, security, officials and the police. It should be acknowledged that shadowing turned out to be a hybrid construction including football chat and observations, liked described by Czarniawska. Several times upon learning about my agenda, people would volunteer their contact information to be interviewed later or provided information on the spot.

This possibility to follow individuals affiliated with clubs was by far the most exciting and in my opinion the most relevant in terms of the material provided. The mix of walking, chatting, observing and following seemed natural. The informality of the situation and the routinized activity helped to facilitate an alternative form of sharing stories. Certainly, there were challenges, including negotiating access on the spot, being observed, and psychological discomfort connected to being simultaneously hidden and in-the-open as a researcher (Czarniawska 2007, 56-57).

## Internet ethnography

It is easy to follow clubs and supporter organizations online. They are eager to show their involvement, share photos of tifos<sup>14</sup> or football trips. Facebook pages or Twitter accounts are common. Some of the comments and photos from social media are included in this thesis. It is a short-cut fieldwork, as the others present material for you, albeit from a specific angle. It is another way for supporters and clubs to have a voice and show their versions of history. These short internet reports present an interpretation, different from newspaper reports, as they are not shy of pumping emotions and clearly stating their sentiments and agendas. The grand narrative acquires personal characteristics instantly and digital interaction is a form of social interaction (see Blank 2013).

Because of ethical considerations, I avoid direct quoting and rely mostly, though not exclusively, on paraphrasing the content of chat forums or Facebook comments. These internet pages are not restricted, and their participants were not aware of my presence in the role of researcher. As their statements are placed in a particular research context and then analysed, they should be granted a degree of anonymity (Davies 2008, 167–168). I have chosen not to keep their forum nicknames when quoting, and present only the date and page name where the data was taken from. Internet ethnographies pose specific problems, such as considering the discrepancies between online and offline identities. The part of my research that took place online was contextualized and complementary to other sources.

## The visual material and popular literature

Throughout the dissertation I present considerable amounts of visual material. These are more than just illustrations. Football relies heavily on what can be shown quickly and swiftly. In hectic, rushed situations an act of

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<sup>14</sup> Tifo is a shortening of the word tifosi which means fans or supporters in Italian. It also stands (for example when used in Swedish) for an organized display (by fans) of big painted canvas, banners, flags, flares and smoke bombs, to name the most popular forms. Such displays usually take place before or during a match and celebrate a club, its players and supporters. Tifos attract media attention and are often shared on social media.

taking a photo might even substitute for writing down field notes – especially when photographing banners. Taking a photo does not disturb the flow of the reality as a black notebook with a pen can do.<sup>15</sup> After the game, fans would upload pictures on various social media and look at those taken by others, not least in newspapers. In this act, spectators become actors.

Photography as a method comes with a reflection on its objectivity (Davies 2008, 131–138). The photos that are treated as ethnographic sources in this thesis come with a contextual description. They are treated as texts. Their textuality provides a version of historical narratives present in the clubs. The visual material includes several YouTube videos, presented as screen shots of freeze frames. Most of the pictures were taken by me, but several were produced by supporters or professional photographers. Permission to use their work was duly obtained.

The material includes printed publications of different kinds. These consist of jubilee albums, books written by journalists, and semi-fictional texts based on clubs' history mixed with personal experiences. These sources are forms of ethnographic material. Among others, Johan Höglund's account of his involvement in AIK's hooligan firm provides a captivating read of his relationship with the group and the club. A book by Erik Bengtson about a club called Degerfors IF is a novel written by a fan, and presents a specific historical perspective. Newspapers like *Aftonbladet*, *Sydsvenskan* and *Helsingborgs Dagblad* have digitized archives and produce text concerning football on a daily basis. Such material can be labelled as *secondary sources*. I view it as an extension of historical production, the next step in spreading, using, and producing a historical account connected to football.

## Analytical approach

The data collected was analysed in different ways. I searched for themes and patterns in the transcribed interviews, and some of the themes that

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<sup>15</sup> Several colleagues prefer to write on their phones rather than use pen and pencil. We are in a digitized society and we are used to that act, whereas writing down a comment can trigger a reaction. A couple of times at a stadium I was asked if I was a journalist specifically because of my act of writing. Pen and pencil create a distance that a phone would not. Fans take pictures, check results, or just answer messages constantly during matches.

kept reappearing drew the attention. A number of such phrases were clearly connected to the subjects of history and memory. Quotations and bits of observations included utterances on the importance on history, memory, tradition, or emotions.

The process of analysis could be described in terms presented by the sociologist Axel Tjora as “gradual-deductive inductive method” (2017, 18–19). His model includes both going from raw data towards theory (inductive) and beginning in a theoretical take and then approaching material (deductive). Consequently, Tjora showed that ethnographic methods include approaches that are connected throughout the research (2017, 18). It can be a linear process, but it is rarely so. Disciplines like ethnology are driven by ethnographic methods, which means considerable flexibility and creativity in acquiring material that is motivated by ongoing theoretical research. I went to the field with a specific theme (e.g. players, stadiums, ultras activities) that was framed within ethnologic and historical fields. The collected data was probed, first through the transcription process, thematized and codified, which led to new theoretical approaches that helped to open up the material (see for example Rennstam & Wästerfors 2015).

A reflection on truthfulness and performative elements in my informants’ stories and anecdotes triggered a search for theories that would help to analyse the material. I feared that maybe my sources presented flawed versions of history, and the moment of doubt helped to reorganize my approach, provoking me to develop a discussion on inclusion, exclusion and interaction with the field. The histories that I collected were relevant in the present time.

Further, I encountered many situations that left me puzzled. I had to ask myself why this or that did not make sense to me, and why it made sense to the football crowd. While giving presentations, discussing papers and even teaching, I was forced to try to explain to onlookers this strange world of emotional engagement that sometimes seemed out of proportion; actions and behaviour erratic and suspicious if not questionable. My own emotions and growing engagement did not let me agree with explanations that appeared too simple or too easy. There was complexity and intricate patterns behind the common evaluations of football crowds. Stories from the field were taken out of their context and there they became strange and

surprising, like exotic insects in a laboratory. This contrast helped to shake up the analysis.

### Ethical Considerations

Several ethical aspects were already touched upon while discussing different methods. Following the ethnographic procedures, I always informed people about my project, position and topics I wanted to discuss. The interviewees' names were changed. If an information was obtained informally, with people not exactly informed about my agenda, it was classified as "football chat" and not ascribed to any particular person. The material was created mostly in form of scribbled notes and recorded interviews (on my mobile phone). The files and rewritten notes were then saved as digital files.

As Swedish is not my mother tongue, I faced difficulties in trying to grasp all the messages hidden in a language. Things escaped me. I was not always familiar with gentle hints, digressions, body language, slang etc. My linguistic abilities were challenged when a crowd screamed and shouted. It is never possible to take everything in and to account for every little reference and message. Still, I felt the pressure of trying to understand and stay truthful to my sources. Additionally, there was a degree of exaggeration in some of the stories. My informants evoked feelings and spoke with passion that sometimes coloured their narratives. Their stories included memories, emotions and memories of emotions. One should reflect on the complex exchange structure that happened between my informants and me. From the vast possibilities of the connections to the past they selected a fraction that served some purpose at the moment we met and had an interview.

More importantly, I became an element in the production of football history. I composed a narrative that has been influenced by my choices and preferences, by my interaction with the field. One informant during an interview remarked that my dissertation would be useful for them once finished (interview with Otto April 15 2016). I was not aware that he would find my work useful, but he considered the approach as helpful in presenting another version of supporter story. My account shall be discussed below.

## A short narrative on limitations and personal involvement

The issue that I would like to raise deals with emotionality and my involvement. Many researchers struggled with positioning and the usual questions about being an insider or outsider, the degree to which they felt included or excluded. Pia Karlsson Minganti's dissertation on religiously engaged young Muslim women living in Sweden displays parallels to my project (2007). Karlsson Minganti entered an environment that was foreign for her. She had a clear position as a researcher, and had little possibilities to be regarded as an insider. Just like Karlsson Minganti, I had an "outsider" marker when entering the research field – a female, non-Swedish academic and not a supporter.

There is, however, a strong difference in formalities and group acceptance. Officially accepting a religious standpoint presupposes a rather complex process that is connected to social evaluation. Becoming a supporter might be meaningful for an individual, but it does not invite any specific requirements. One can put on a scarf, or just declare one's sympathies. One is also free to stop active support should a life situation demand so. As one of my informants commented, football is not "a mafia" and one can decide how much one wants to invest (interview with Jonatan 21 March 2013).

As earlier mentioned, Karlsson Minganti encountered a field that seemed closed, as she aimed to research young Muslim women. Her position as a researcher and an ethnic Swede, in contrast to her informants, was openly discussed and commented on by the participants (2007, 43). Karlsson Minganti recalled being questioned about becoming a Muslim herself, to which she replied, in her own words, that she would not, but one never knows (2007, 41). Karlsson Minganti had to position herself and she chose to accept an emotional connection that was made available to her in the field. My own fieldwork was coloured by emotional engagement. Frequent questions were "who do you support?" or "are you a supporter?" A category as "a researcher" seemed secondary to the accepted obviousness of having a link to a club. Stating an affiliation to a group would make me recognizable, readable for my informants.

I have stated "we" several times when referring to my fieldwork experiences. But who are "we"? The experience from this research has certainly

affected the way I write and the general tone I employ, as I am unmistakably positive towards the environment (Ehn & Klein 1994, 10). I would not identify myself with one particular club in this thesis, but rather with the whole field. There are, in a sense, many different “we”. There is, however, a distinction between a fieldworker and a writer, and an act of actively collecting and writing ethnography helps to create the difference, but does not prevent emotional involvement (Ehn & Klein 1994, 26). This distinction does not assure objectivity, but provides a methodological advantage. The discussion of the issue was taken up by Clifford Geertz:

The trick is not to get yourself into some inner correspondence of spirit with your informants. Preferring, like the rest of us, to call their souls their own, they are not going to be altogether keen about such an effort anyhow. The trick is to figure out what the devil they think they are up to. (Geertz 1983, 58)

A researcher might be from the start driving a specific goal or become affected while doing fieldwork. For instance, Lars-Eric Jönsson’s choice of a study object for his PhD thesis was not triggered by any immediate connections, but he reported in his methodology the effects it had (see Jönsson 1998). I started as an almost complete outsider, not having once attended a football match.<sup>16</sup> As my knowledge of the field expanded, so did my appreciation for it. I have slowly become emotionally involved.

On several occasions I encountered a direct warning about a risk of “going native”, as it would compromise my research. I would like to flip the question and ask if anybody can actually stay neutral in any field that involves emotionally invested groups. As ethnologists, especially researching phenomena within popular culture, broadly understood, we cannot completely snap out of it. I suggest that “risk” is not an appropriate term. Rather, one could talk about different stages (or steps) of immersion in the fieldwork (Löfgren 2018, 50). I have experienced both sides of the football narrative – from being helplessly lost in this context, to enthusiastically participating in matches, and then connecting emotionally to one of the

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<sup>16</sup> I started researching football in 2012/2013, when I did an internship with Malmö FF.



clubs. The experience of fieldwork presupposes various degrees of immersion too.

The term “immersion” is used widely in video game research, but it is also used by sociologists and anthropologists. Beverley Skeggs (2002, 7) accounts for immersion in her fieldwork among working-class women and the experience of both proximity and distance. Qin, Rau and Salvendy write about immersion in video games: “To be immersed is to be involved in the context, not only physically but also mentally and emotionally” (2009, 112). Within the traditional understanding of ethnography, after fieldwork one leaves to write down the knowledge obtained (see Ehn & Klein 1994). This is tied to Sara Ahmed’s understanding of a researcher as “professional stranger”, with emphasis on “translating” the strangers/informants into ethnography, hence to the academic knowledge (2000, 58–59). Ahmed calls to acknowledge the debt to informants, not least masked in referring to them as “co-writers”, which simultaneously deprives them of agency and marks them as strangers to the author (Ahmed 2000, 63–64). Ahmed discusses “strategically framed friendship” (2000, 65) and friendship as a strategy for knowledge (2000, 66). In her own words, “Within the ethnographic discourses of cultural translation, knowing strangers is the transforming of those who are recognised as strangers into knowledge” (2000, 73).

Yet, this understanding presupposes that one enters a field as “unfamiliar” and then leaves it “unharmed”. It also gives a picture of a controlled researcher, not engaging in emotional exchange with the field. If one knows, understands and participates, should one not be described as a “familiar” rather than a stranger? The folklorist Jakob Löfgren, in his study of fandom, has suggested the concept of “professional familiar”, where he is both a researcher and a fan (2018, 50). The concept is further developed with immersion and degrees of immersion. One is never completely out, and one can have different depths of being in, especially when dealing with fields that encourage emotional reactions.

Closeness to the subject of study does not necessarily finish with a completed study. One affects and one is affected. Post-fieldwork reflections do not erase the immersion. Emotions can be acknowledged as a part of cognitive process and become a part of our practice while doing fieldwork.

The anthropologist Monique Sheer discusses how emotions are forms of cognition:

Access to emotion-as-practice – the bodily act of experience and expression – in historical sources or ethnographic work is achieved through and in connection with other doings and sayings on which emotion-as-practice is dependent and intertwined, such as speaking, gesturing, remembering, manipulating objects, and perceiving sounds, smells, and spaces (Sheer 2012, 209).

I have not anticipated it, but I have become a part of a narrative, and thus a part of their journey, and it affected me. I found the field welcoming and captivating. There I encountered humour, openness and willingness to share. I have become affected. One can say that emotions are not about two layers, inner and outer, or two opposite poles, but rather the degree of engagement (Geertz 1983, 57). The distinction appears later, but in the act of experiencing there are emotions, letting us learn from it by doing it.

As I learned my field, it learned me. Unaware of my noticed presence, I was filmed and clipped into a report from a match during shadowing in 2015. My body occupies about 15 seconds in a YouTube clip that shows the highlights from a derby match from Stockholm. I can only speculate as to why I appeared there. But I interviewed a person involved in a group making those video clips. When I mentioned it, he laughed: “Well where is your objectivity now? You are in our clip!” (interview with Kristian 28 April 2016). This comment made me laugh, but it also made me alert. I felt that my position as a researcher made a good buffer zone for me, and that my declared sympathy for the field was in a way “under control”. The field acted and reacted, and I did too.

Many of the cited researchers state that the groups they interacted with were caring, loving, good people that one wanted to get closer to. I have experienced that as well. I have also experienced derogatory comments, questioning of my abilities, harsh treatment from the security staff. Football is based on oppositions, and thus if you are with one team, you are an enemy for others. Parts of the field were off limits for me as a female. This does not only refer to the players’ changing room, but some fan organiza-

tions ban women from joining. This did not hinder emotional engagement. It saved me from a kind of naïve working enthusiasm that is not uncommon. This research has not been friction-free and both my position and gender, as well as my understanding of my position and gender, created tension and caused reactions.

## The structure of the thesis

The aim of the following chapters is to analyse how history is produced in various forms during matches and in activities that happen outside of stadiums, but are still connected to football. Different observations have been chosen to introduce chapters, and they all happened in match situations.

The second chapter, called *Historical recycling*, focuses on the importance of history and how clubs present official accounts of their past. Clubs and their fans often use vocabulary hinting at origin and genealogy, and the investigation engages with the issues of time flow and a time frame, as well as stability and fluidity performed within clubs.

The third chapter, *Cultural capital of one hundred years*, explores the connection to history through individual participants. One such aspect, rather strong in the Swedish context, is the working-class/middle-class narrative. This chapter engages in the question of history versus money, as the historical capital of being old provides counterweight to useful capital or international success.

The following chapter, entitled “...our history is engraved in concrete”, focuses on the historical exploration of geographical regions, stadiums and grass in the narratives about the clubs. The first part consists of a discussion of historic-geographical elements. The following section deals with stadiums and grass as material manifestations that are tangible but can undergo (or facilitate) a transformation through various rituals.

The fifth chapter, *Our history – our identity*, investigates group identity produced through history, and also producing history. Examples cited here are a club identity (AIK) and the organizational identity of the ultras, a group that constructed its image with the help of historical narratives available in the football context. These productions have a historical effect

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as they are recorded, distributed, commented on and reproduced, having an impact in the form of a digital footprint as well.

Next chapter, “*We want to see you sacrifice blood sweat and tears*”, analyses individuals that are used to produce history. Investigated examples of players include a hero, a villain, and protagonists oscillating between those categories. One can list several examples of players who could swing from heroes to villains and back. The positioning of hero-villain is not stable and it has an impact on how history in football is produced and what kind of performances can take place.

The dissertation ends with *The final score*, a chapter presenting the main conclusions.

## 2. Historical recycling

This chapter begins by exploring the “birth point” and genealogical aspiration presented by clubs. Collective memory is a key concept in this investigation. The time flow is specific in football and I analyse what constructions of time are visible in historical productions. Clubs often have museums where they present trophies and medals, but history flows in many different activities circulating around stadiums. Fans can view the past by touring stadiums. In March 2013 I took part in a guided tour of the Swedbank Stadium (now called just Stadium), used by Malmö FF. We began in the media room, we visited the changing room for away teams, even put the shirts on and were photographed wearing them on the pitch. The tour finished on the top floor, which contained a small museum. Paraphernalia from different decades were displayed in glass cabinets. A former player who showed us around pointed out a strange blue vase, a souvenir from a match against Wisla Krakow in 1979, which, in his words, was the ugliest thing ever (observations 2013).

During fieldwork, I encountered many trophies, medals, or diplomas covering walls inside clubs. When being shown around AIK’s new quarters close to Friends Arena, my contact person walked me passed a big, dark wooden cabinet. He said that this is where some of the trophies and medals and “the like” were kept (observations 2015).

The change and time flow manifested itself through different material objects that represented the past in the present. On another occasion, also at Swedbank Stadium, a world map with various colourful pins was pointed out to me. A club official explained that these were the places MFF visited during various world tours over the years. That team, he said, travelled a lot, pointing out further that the MFF team has been like that ever since: “this team have it in their blood” (observations 2013). The journeys in the past mattered for the present squad.

The focus in this chapter is on how the general view of history and its value is present and promoted in Swedish clubs, and how their narratives are tailored according to the time frame and the current need for heroes, great deeds, stability, nostalgia, etc. History in sport has its logic and pace; its chronology is specific and it can be seen as relatively autonomous from the everyday world (Bourdieu 1978, 821). The ongoing cyclical character perpetuates the process, and it stresses the feeling of *history in the making*. What sorts of narratives are built around clubs? Is it only glory that shines through? How is continuity produced?

## Football genealogy

History is carefully arranged and displayed around football clubs. Dates of establishment, preferably going back to late nineteenth century, adorn many football crests. Everton from England claims 1878, Liverpool 1892. The German club FC St Pauli has the year 1910; Olympiakos from Greece 1925, Swedish AIK has 1891. Being old, and being able to state that, is a desirable quality. It seems fashionable to have history. Clubs and their supporters are at pains to show and perform their narratives. The desire for these kinds of references is not a constant norm, but the current football development presents a plethora of historical symbols.

The dates inserted in crests, embroidered on scarves and shirts, point towards the genealogy of clubs, the mysterious beginning of things when they were created. While interviewing AIK supporters on different occasions, I was presented with the same story: “AIK was established in 1891 by Isidor Behrens at Biblioteksgatan 8. Its birthday is on 15 February” (interview with Martin 25 January 2015). This club has a birthday, a celebrated day of creation that marks the beginning of a certain universe.<sup>17</sup> A narrative explains the beginning of the world in terms of the Stockholm football scene. It has authority, and it is a part of dogma. This could classify it as a myth (Bascom 1984, 9).

My interviewees often explained their connection to the club by starting

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<sup>17</sup> In 2018 there appeared more stickers and more clothing items with MFF's date of establishment. That was not as visible during previous seasons.

with the date of establishment. They displayed a sense of pride. Isidor Behrens, one of the AIK's founding fathers, still features proudly in AIK's marketing strategies. For instance, in 2016 there was a campaign to build a new and special monument on his grave (field notes 2016). Yet, for all the obsession with its creator there is very little information about him. A book commemorating AIK's 100 years of history mentioned Behrens and gave a couple of trivia about him, but there was little about his life story. His brother was the first secretary of the club, yet the supporters mention only Isidor (Dahlberg et al. 1991, 12; 17). Behrens' position in the narrative is that of a maker – a demiurge that helped to build the club, but the image is vague and incomplete, thus perfect for using it in a founding myth (Barthes 1972, 127). A myth is simplified and boiled down to some of its most important features, yet it is blurry because of the multitude of versions that it is supposed to represent. It could be described as “overused past”. Behrens had not had meaning in this story before or after the event of AIK coming to life. His work and importance are joined with the club's birthday and this is how his mythical time is established – in this one event creating a specific symbolism connected to a sport institution.

As the historian Jan Samuelsson noticed, in a time of fast changes one looks for some form of connection, an anchor in the past which is displayed in the food industry, for example on beer labels (Samuelsson 2014, 151). There are marketable qualities in history and old age (2014, 153). This phenomenon is visible in football. Supporters and clubs understand that there is a value in history that a broader social context can recognize and relate to. There are many groups involved (different fans factions, management, players, media, and security). They tend to view themselves as co-creators. One history can take the form of several narratives.

The value of history could be described in Bourdieu's term “cultural capital”. The term refers to varied non-monetary resources that can help an individual or a group to gain a favourable position or power. Beverley Skeggs remarked that for Bourdieu “cultural capital” meant high culture, and other elements of capital include social and symbolic capital as well, providing a more complex picture (2004, 17). I use “cultural capital” as an umbrella definition for different elements in social life that can acquire higher value and thus provide a positive output.

In Sweden, cultural capital based on old age allows clubs to contest each other and even mock rivals. In one interview an AIK supporter remarked that Djurgårdens IF were a “kid brother” because the club was established one month later than AIK. In his opinion another Stockholm club, Hammarby IF, was a “spoiled baby” since “they were established in 1915, come on they are nothing! (laughs loud)” (interview with Martin, 25 January 2015). Not only Stockholm clubs use the date of origin in evaluating their opponents. A Helsingborgs IF representative remarked:

We are the best team in the region. The team has a strong history, it is not one of the big cities but its history is like one of the biggest. We were formed in 1907, three years earlier than MFF. Many teams see us as one of the biggest opponents. (interview with Filip, November 2014)

Those three years mattered. Being older means more traditions, more history, but also prestige. Helsingborg cared for football three years longer than Malmö. One could argue that in the absence of titles and trophies that are more evident on MFF’s historical list, HIF refers to something MFF cannot argue about, namely their age. Not surprisingly, there exists a counter-narrative to the boasting of being older, and MFF can claim more triumphs. Whenever an opportunity to exchange opinions arrives, supporters argue about which history counts the most, the story of success or the story of a longer continuous existence. Being called a “little brother” sounds like a serious insult for many fans.<sup>18</sup>

Consumption of history and increased interest in cultural heritage are modern phenomena fuelled by new media and technologies (de Groot 2009, 2; Hafstein 2012). The “obsession” with history and preservation of the past has been noticed. De Groot commented on the so-called “non-academic or non-professional history – what has been defined as ‘public’ history” (de Groot 2009, 4), a dynamic and complex phenomenon that sustains engagement on an individual level. History is recyclable and

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<sup>18</sup> For example, see a discussion on a blog called [hifi907.se](http://hifi907.se), which tends to bring up the fact that Helsingborg as a city has a longer and richer history than Malmö, and so does its football club. <http://www.hifi907.se/2008/09/27/tre-dagar-till-matchen/>.





A T-shirt on display at Supporterhuset in Malmö, a place for fans of the clubs that also sells MFF-related merchandise. The T-shirt pays homage to the group of men that established the club on 24 February 1910. The picture existed in different reproduced forms on the stadium and was displayed as a banner during matches. Apparently it became a theme for shirts in 2018. This is freshly produced memorabilia that searches the past for the meaning of the present. A black-and-white photo of the “founding fathers”, accompanied by the date, lends itself to the feeling of nostalgia that has not been as present with MFF before. Picture taken in Malmö 28 April 2018.

renewable – a perfect source of energy to build, sustain and maintain identities, both personal and collective. Family photos and different kinds of memorabilia have filled our houses, and the digital footprint of our past is seen on different internet platforms (Lowenthal 2015, 26).

The seemingly fast pace of changing reality, globalization and rapid destruction of the familiar makes nostalgic encounters popular. For example, clubs remind their supporters about former players, about their birthdays or different anniversaries. Endless printed publications go back to the past to revive the best matches, strikers, and seasons. The past is reprinted with golden lining and the harsh and difficult times become heroic struggles rather than failures. Nostalgia seems “today’s favoured mode of looking back” (Lowenthal 2015, 31). The past becomes a different, imagined space to be visited. It offers an escape from the pains of the present and fear of the future. Over there, decisions were made and actions taken (recorded and transmitted too), becoming reassuringly solid and thus attractive (Lowenthal 2015, 52).

Malmö FF puts a strong emphasis on the number of league titles won. In Swedish football, there is a tradition of placing a golden star above a club’s crest for every ten titles won. Malmö FF gained yet another league title in 2014 and counted that it was their 20th. Then they promptly added the second star next to the first one, which was challenged by other clubs.<sup>19</sup> The complaint was about the way MFF counted the wins. Between 1982 and 1990 the highest Swedish division consisted of a regular season and followed by playoffs. MFF won the season five times, but was not that successful in the playoffs.<sup>20</sup> After the dispute, Malmö club was ordered to remove the additional star, because they did not fulfil the requirements for it, although MFF contested the decision.<sup>21</sup> They had to wait until 2017 to be finally able to have two stars, and promptly claimed to be the first Swed-

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19 <https://www.aftonbladet.se/sportbladet/fotboll/sverige/allsvenskan/malmo/ff/art-18251711.ab>

20 <https://www.fotbollskanalen.se/allsvenskan/malmo-ff/malmo-ff-tvingas-ta-bort-st-jarna-pa-brostatet/>

21 <https://www.fotbollskanalen.se/allsvenskan/malmo-ff/malmo-ff-tvingas-ta-bort-st-jarna-pa-brostatet/>

ish club to win 20 times.<sup>22</sup> The dispute was about counting success. The present win was not just enough anymore, MFF was getting used to basking in glory. Too good of a past might undermine the efforts of the present, as phrased by David Lowenthal: “Obsession with roots and relics, heirlooms and mementoes, pre-empt concern for the present” (2015, 132–133). The additional star tied the greatness of the past to the recent titles.

The cosmogony of a club would seem a plain story to tell as usually it presents a fact, a date, as in the case of AIK it is 15 February 1891. Nevertheless, the search of the origin myth is prone to many interpretations. Establishing the genealogy of things is never a straightforward process of finding out facts in the past. As Foucault remarked commenting on Nietzsche’s text *On the Use and Abuse of History for Life*:

Genealogy does not pretend to go back in time to restore an unbroken continuity that operates beyond the dispersion of forgotten things; its duty is not to demonstrate that the past actively exists in the present that it continues secretly to animate the present, having imposed a predetermined form on all its vicissitudes. [...] it is to discover that truth or being does not lie at the root of what we know and what we are, but the exteriority of accidents. (Foucault, 1977, 81)

Foucault’s essay was a commentary on Nietzsche’s criticism of employing historical narrations for various purposes. Nietzsche pointed to *monumental history*, which serves as empowerment, provides justifications for contemporary actions and aims at creating “greatness” (1874, 10). Genealogy, according to Nietzsche, was one of the daughters of monumental history. It did not strive to find the ultimate origin. Instead, the fabrication of continuity served a purpose of providing the descent and time lines. Genealogy, as Nietzsche argued, did not purify the picture of the past; on the contrary, it seems very eclectic and messy.

Foucault wrote that “genealogy is history in the form of a converted carnival” (1977, 94). The selected narrative of the origin is constructed

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22 <http://www.svenskelitfotboll.se/sm-guld-till-malmo-ff-firar-med-en-andra-stjarna/> (retrieved 4 February 2018)

through genealogy and the shaky time lines are supposed to connect the past with the present in an organic, unbroken fashion. MFF tried to consolidate one narrative in 2014, but there was a substantial opposition that questioned their version of history as regards the number of wins.

There is value in searching for history; it is a form of capital that helps to promote the product while emphasizing its longevity and established social value. This mixture of historically grounded nostalgia in football has been applied to the Marxist interpretation of football as industry (Kennedy & Kennedy 2012). The instability of the football commodity is also a result of different forms of cultural capital applied to it, historical narratives being one of them.

Football clubs found themselves rich in such elusive and flexible genealogical narratives. Clubs rejuvenate themselves, and quite literally so, with the young blood of new players, management and supporters. Fans are able to make curious statements, saying that “the team is there forever” but then stating that you can change everything, meaning the management or players, and you will still have the club, because it is “larger than life” (interview with Felix 6 February 2015; interview with Martin 25 January 2015). My two interviewees Felix and Martin supported different teams, HIF and AIK respectively, but their statements were similar. The protagonists seem replaceable, and they need to be replaced every now and then, but the club will continue regardless. In a sense, all the protagonists are changeable elements. They are participants in a story, having different roles to play (Herman 2005, 1). The rituals surrounding football help to ground the sketchy and fluid present in the selected past lines. The roles are rewritten too, so it is *production* rather than *reproduction*.

Having deep historical roots seems to help along the way. It can even serve as a peculiar justification for why a club needs to exist, why it needs to play in the highest league, why it deserves financial backing. This logic has been employed by different clubs. It secured HIF’s future when the city agreed to help the club out of bankruptcy. The club fell into deep financial trouble after 2000. As the historian Torbjörn Andersson retold the story, HIF was granted loans and financial backing from the city of Helsingborg. Multimillion investments in a club with overpaid players was not a unanimously popular decision. There was a notion that letting the club go broke

would cost even more. HIF succeeded in presenting itself as a part of the city's cultural heritage together with other cultural institutions like the theatre, the opera, or the symphony orchestra, which also need public financial backing (Andersson 2011, 74–75; 80). The club and its stadium, Olympia, meant too much for the local politicians to let it go. Since the club had been there for so long, it deserved rescuing with taxpayers' money. HIF regarded itself as a strong commercial brand for the city, which would mean that having a club, no matter how badly off financially, would still be better than not having one at all (Andersson 2011, 78–80).

## Assembling the past

The mystic beginning firmly placed in ancient history plays a key role in grand narratives that are carefully produced and performed. Clubs eagerly publish yearbooks, celebrating all forms of anniversaries. Inner spaces at stadiums are decorated with trophies, pictures of victories, heroes who fought for their teams. The historian Peter Aronsson's definition of using history stresses that it is a process in which bits of culturally framed history are used according to present needs, which is regulated by the perception of the past, present and future. This establishment of meaningful connections between the three time categories, according to Aronsson, is reproduced in the process of using history (2004, 17). I would argue that the use of the past in this context results in a performance that produces a certain version of history.

Cups, medals, various artefacts that differ in shape and size are usually gathered together to strengthen the idea of power and success. MFF showed off its trophies on the top floor of the stadium and in a media centre, and organized "historical trips" (field notes 2013). AIK's new office space close to Friends Arena in Solna could accommodate only a part of their rich history, stuffed in a dark, wooden cabinet (field notes 2015). The big clubs can choose among different shapes and sizes of trophies for all sorts of wins and commemorations.

The highest Swedish league, Allsvenskan, used to have a web page devoted to the history of Swedish football.<sup>23</sup> Memorable figures and mo-

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<sup>23</sup> [www.allsvenskamuseet.se](http://www.allsvenskamuseet.se).



The home grounds of Malmö FF. One wall holds a long shelf with different trophies. The other walls are decorated with selected photos of the past. Some of the players, coaches, matches are there with small texts next to them. The photo was taken at the Swedbank Stadium (now called just Stadium) in April 2015.

ments were collected in a bricolage manner. The text on the web page stated that this was a loving tribute to the rich history of football in Sweden. At the same time, it displayed a fragmented picture, not a comprehensive narrative from the beginning to the end. There were some dates, facts, players included in flows dedicated to different teams. This online museum was taken off the internet in 2018. In the email communication with Allsvenskan I learned that the site was not popular among internet users and that there were technical problems which contributed to the decision to take the site down (internet communication 19 April 2018). That digital museum was a collection of images loosely stitched together to form a flow of collective memories. Unfortunately, I did not save any information from the page. It was not archived. It was not cared for enough to perpetuate and sustain its existence, hence it disappeared. Although constructed according to the common logic of a museum, it did not produce emotional collections as one would expect to happen.



Perhaps the history displayed there was a bit too official, concentrating on clubs as institutionalized sporting entities, rather than places constructed with/for the fans.

Next to the HIF stadium in Helsingborg there is a sport museum, and a large part of the display concentrates on football, players, coaches and chairmen that influenced the club. Glass cabinets are full of photos, old shoes and balls. There is even a wooden statue of the former HIF player and coach, Henrik Larsson (field notes 2015). The display organized in Helsingborg leads its way through HIF's history to its finest moment in the shape of a great player with an impressive international career who attained his full glory while playing in Helsingborgs IF. "Museums are intellectually interesting because they are cramped presentations of pressure-cooked history, made by the winners and viewed by the losers" (Brabazon 2006, 43). Henrik Larsson became a part of history while still occupying the present. The arrangement around the statue needed to include everything



A showcase display and a wooden Henrik Larsson. There are many shelves in in the sport museum in Helsingborg that are filled with football memorabilia. There are numerous wooden carvings of former goalkeepers and one chairman – Ingvar Wenched, who was important for the club. Pictures from the sport museum of Helsingborg taken in November 2015.

at once – his success with HIF, his rich international career, and performance in the national team. Larsson's football shirts hang next to photos and newspaper clips. He occupied his own small universe in the museum. This display commemorated not a person as such, but the core elements of success, glory and victory. Larsson's statue and other memorabilia enacted those categories. He started working as a coach, and his playing career could be catalogued and frozen in time.

The persistence in displaying and reaffirming one's grand past highlights the flexibility of evaluations when it comes to success in football. AIK called itself the biggest club in Scandinavia; MFF called itself the most successful club in Sweden (spring 2015). Success does not taste the same every time, and it does not have the same impact either. "Strong" history, as indicated by my informants, can illuminate a club's position, but it can also harshly contrast present misery.

It is a mix of what Jan Assmann calls "communicative" and "cultural" memory (1988). Communicative memory can be transmitted from generation to generation while cultural memory needs other media to reach new listeners. In the Allsvenskan museum, just as in material displays in Helsingborg, recent events were placed next to those from the early 1900s. Last year's victory and a goalkeeper from the 1920s made up the club's image. Both memories connect in a blank and mythical point of making this history meaningful, as the meaning is transformed into a form (Barthes 1972, 131). This creates a confusion of images, crucial in magic that allows participants to mould the past, present and future (see Mauss 1972).

All four clubs included in this research have published jubilee books celebrating a hundred years of their existence. Big and heavy slabs of history are adorned with many pictures and filled with narratives of love and sacrifice, glory and a bright future to come. As the folklorist Henry Glasie stated, "History is not the past; it is an artful assembly of materials from the past, designed for usefulness in the future" (1995, 395). It resembles fortune telling. The collected elements, thrown together in an enthusiastic assemblage, foretell hope, victories and glories. Examples of such production of history are to be found in publications like *100 years with Swedish Football* (Alsiö & Persson 2011). A mix of club profiles, statistics, and interviews with football heroes is presented as thorough research into the



history of Allsvenskan. Yet several kilos of this printed text consists of a bricolage of “hard data” and emotions. Columns of numbers are juxtaposed with nostalgic pictures of fans and arenas. It is a version of a past that tries to take all of it in, in a somewhat desperate ambition to preserve all points of view. Important events represent emotional connections, and yet stay objective and factual. Many football publications end up being massive in size and weight. This is because the story never stops, and it has many components. Anything “comprehensive” struggles to cover numerical facts, media interpretations, fans, management, players, coaches, national governing bodies, personal memories, rumours and conflicting evaluations. Hidden behind the forest of statistics is the collective memory of feelings, as a hundred years of tears of joy or grievous disappointment were duly photographed and preserved.

The clubs publish collections about titles won. One such example is DIF's book called *Golden Year*, which came out in 2002. It is a story of one season when Djurgården, after a carefully counted 13,153 days, became not only Swedish champion but also won the Swedish cup the same year. The book includes reports from every match, pictures and profiles of players and supporters. It has museum-like qualities, as it presents arranged display of matches that led to a spectacular victory. Football relies on the passion of a crowd, but museums can be said to present institutionalized memories which are washed clean from emotions (Brabazon 2006, 36–39). A book like DIF's *Golden Year* emphasizes the strong emotional reactions not only of a crowd but also of footballers, as photos of suffering or overtly happy faces are shown. It is the players that produce history in this book. It is through the images of their fight that one witnesses pain, hardship and joy. The matches played were framed with pictures capturing emotions through bodily movements, ritualistic performance of feelings that can be read from the pictures. History is not produced by presenting scores and statistics. These need to be acted upon and be performed.

The publications about football deal with various material objects connected to memory and nostalgia. One such example is *Football Memorabilia: Evocative Artefacts of the Beautiful Game* (1999). This big and heavy album presents images of medals, caps, shirts, trophies, programmes, posters, prints, photographs, books, sculptures, ceramics, and “general collectibles”. Mem-

ories and emotions are encapsulated in different artefacts. The book includes auction prices that these artefacts had commanded when they were sold. Such auctions take place in Sweden too. Online auction houses offered arm-bands worn by the AIK captain during the last season they played at Råsunda,<sup>24</sup> football shirts, old photographs and even a part of a hanger from a dressing room (nethnography 2017–2018).

Personal attachment expressed by material objects is commodified. Various memorabilia are markers of individual expression of emotions, but they are transformed once they enter an auction house and receive a price tag. They begin and end as gifts, but in between, when being assessed and arranged by an auction house and put on sale, they become a capitalist commodity. From emotional, “evocative” as the book says, memorabilia, they change to a profit-oriented material thing (Tsing 2013). The value is negotiated, as Baudrillard put it, “economic value (money) is converted into sign exchange value (prestige, etc.)” and football memorabilia present a value of collective memory and emotions that can be for sale (Baudrillard 1981, 112).

Clubs show off the best bits of their history, but even tragedies can be used to enhance one’s identity. Such a story is to be found in Helsingborg. The club, after successful decades, plummeted from Allsvenskan in 1968. It took them twenty four years and eleven days to get back to the highest league in 1993.<sup>25</sup> This long process is referred to in HIF history as “the wondering through the desert”. Like the punished biblical Jewish tribes, HIF was trapped in the limbo of less prestigious football. For almost a quarter of a century, HIF’s story was not connected to success, but to a struggle. This became a powerful narrative. Instead of trying to get rid of this unhappy story, HIF supporters and the club embrace it. Interviewed HIF fans referred to it and pointed out that even in the lower divisions there were many spectators, that the average attendance numbers in Helsingborg were unusually high (focus group with HIF-Vännerna 17 Febru-

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24 The text in Swedish describing the item stated that it was a captain’s band worn in 2012 which was the last season played by AIK at Råsunda, and it was worn during a match against Örebro SK on 12 August 2012. It was sold for 850 Swedish crowns. (<https://www.barnebys.se/slutpriser/objekt/7700648/kaptensbindel/>)

25 During this project, HIF was relegated from Allsvenskan in 2016.

ary 2015; focus group with Kärnan 16 February 2015). The story highlights devotion, as fans did not abandon their struggling club but stuck with it through thick and thin.

The narrative lifts up a traumatic time and patient waiting which was rewarded by the final victory and a place in Allsvenskan. A former HIF footballer who played during the 1993 season could recall the moment when the team met supporters at the train station.

Interviewer: I think it had to be very emotional when HIF came back to Allsvenskan after such a long time.

Åke: Yes, that was absolutely amazing. A lot has been written... so we were ready for Allsvenskan and travelled to Knutpunkten... and there were five or six thousand there. And that was... we were not prepared for it really, not the players either... we watched and it was just... aaaa! And we were presented one by one... it's something you can never forget. It was nice. Great. That's the way you live, an instant where you'll find... you'll find it even at the lower level... in football... it's the moment you think, shit, we were there, it's ours, it's ours forever. It's hard to forget. (interview with Åke, 3 November 2015)

The historical event of winning promotion back to Allsvenskan is mixed in Åke's story with the memory of emotional response to the situation. It was the experience of it that made it unforgettable. Åke pointed out *pockets of time* that mark one's life. These pockets, according to the historian Niels Kayser Nielsen, are created around special places, like stadiums, that "sustain history" and sustain "objective memory" (1995, 30). The reception of a successful team was ritualistic. A cheering crowd welcomed the heroes.<sup>26</sup> Their achievements, based on sporting qualities, were important

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<sup>26</sup> Mats Hellspong (1995) wrote an article comparing two different instances of heroes coming home, one being the Vega expedition in 1880 and the other the homecoming of the national ice hockey team in 1991.

because of the possibility for individual emotional responses. The fact that a group of people won a certain amount of matches does not guarantee that it should become meaningful. The past has to become history. The exchange between Åke and me about the situation from 1993 was, in the words of David Herman, *communicatively situated* (2009, 17). The context of the story contributed to the shaping of the story.

Åke's interview displays elements that are usually presented when defining a narrative, as it "consists of material signs, the discourse, which convey a certain meaning (or content), the story, and fulfil a certain social function. This characterization outlines three potential domains for a definition: discourse, story, and use" (Ryan 2007, 24). The story of the welcoming party at Knutpunkten was presented as the triumphant arrival after years of struggle. Its magnitude reflected the hardships and difficulties of the 24 years outside of Allsvenskan, tied to personal stories of loyalty and hope. That discourse was used to provide an image of Helsingborgs IF's supporters and the club – loyal and patient, resilient and passionate. The history was then produced through a lens of an emotional image Åke presented. He evoked a time perspective that appeared frozen and static. A monument in collective memory, as he said, "it's the moment you think shit we were there, it's ours, it's ours forever. It's hard to forget" (interview with Åke 3 November 2015). That freeze frame of memory needs to be performed to gain relevance. Henry Glassie commented that history could be defined as a "use of the past to discuss the present" (1982, 229).

## Seasonal rites of football

Time is not only a background element in producing history. It has a profound influence how it is shaped (Bridgeman 2007, 52–53). Football season runs through a pattern of yearly seasons, in Sweden starting in spring and ending in autumn. Football context can be interpreted through agrarian qualities. It runs along a set time line that always comes round. One successful season does not mean success in the following year.

The spring of the 2015 was rather bumpy for MFF. Considering their previous year, good matches in the Champions League and all the money

earned, supporters wondered on internet forums how such resources could be wasted just like that, and instead of sailing through the Swedish league MFF found themselves struggling with, in their own opinion, mediocre opponents.<sup>27</sup> Before the matches began, on paper, MFF seemed to be the richest and most balanced club, with good new players hungry for more success. One of the supporters said in February:

Now they are better than before. Absolutely. You are quite negative when you are a MFF supporter. That's just the way it is. Never happy, never satisfied. But on paper we have a better team than last year. (interview with Erik 10 February 2015)

The changing evaluation that depends on applied time frames was noticed by the classical philologist Jonas Grethlein. He developed the term *future past*, which was coined by Reinhart Koselleck, then translated it into English and put it in the singular (Grethlein 2014). By doing this, Grethlein claimed, the term became flexible, richer and ambiguous. By *future past* he meant that the future described in different, old written accounts is the past from the present perspective. A vision of that future became the past that we know. The understanding of the prediction of the future is important for understanding the past. Grethlein pointed out that the way in which a historian or historical agent sets the time frame (telos) has a strong impact on the narrative and can change how the past, present and future are evaluated. In the interview, Erik set the telos in the 2014 season, which was successful for MFF, and with that frame in mind, he evaluated the new squad's possibilities. Unfortunately, the past glory did not translate directly to 2015 and frustration was visible in the comments after MFF was placed fourth in the table before the summer break in June (from *svenskafans.se* 2015). The club from Malmö did not win that year; they finished in fifth position.<sup>28</sup>

Different kinds of time in football can be distinguished. One of them is cosmogonic time. The geographer Yi-Fu Tuan gives Australian aboriginal

<sup>27</sup> The conversation was followed on a forum for MFF fans at *svenskafans.se* in 2015.

<sup>28</sup> <http://svenskforboll.se/allsvenskan/tidigare-ar/resultat-2015/tabell-och-resultat/>.

mythology as an example of time that “leaves its mark on space, thereby sanctioning it” (Tuan 1977, 132). Such construction makes a direct link between how it was before, and how it is, or how it is supposed to be, now. One example would be AIK’s persistent use of its *birth year* 1891. The special *moment* of emotions and glory mentioned by Åke in the interview cited above is also cosmogonic. It marks a rebirth, a new beginning, one of the defining moments in the history of Helsingborgs IF. This cosmogonic time inscribes the creation of the world, but at the same time it relates to the present and to the future. The myth is a fluid mould that can accommodate elements that come with ongoing seasons. It can be used to strengthen the first mythical creation that resulted in the present character/spirit/collective structure of a club. I shall return to this thought in further chapters, as myths sustain clubs in the form of unstable continuity (Barthes 1972, 127).

The mythical time could be interpreted as “pockets of time”, especially in places like stadiums. Stadiums and arenas stand outside the normal social context. The time flow in them is “above the time of every day” (Kayser Nielsen 1995, 30). I interpret Kayser Nielsen’s statement as a recognition of the unique elements positioned in time that mark crucial events. Malmö FF supporters often mention the match in the European Cup final from 1979. Arvid, an MFF fan, mentioned it as an important event, followed by a match from 2014 in the Champions League against Olympiakos (interview with Arvid 30 October 2014). The first match marked MFF’s collective memory. The second match happened recently and Arvid experienced it, participating in a tifo choreography that showed the year MFF was established – 1910 (field notes 2014). Arvid expressed pride in the display and being able to state that one’s club has a long history.

Sport stadiums provide a specific experience, based on time, location and ritual. They exist outside of normality, so to speak. Memories stick to such places, and they are not necessarily “objective” (Halbwachs 1992; Burke 1989). The collective character of football rites does not guarantee objectivity. The elusive combination of strong emotions, personal involvement, and repetitiveness encourages creative interpretations that sustain *time outside time*.

In 2003, MFF came to Helsingborg to play against the local team, and they decorated their section with a picture and the text “slakta mjölkkos-sen” – butcher the milk cow:



"Butcher the milk cow". Picture from 2003 taken from the online archive of MFF Support, 9 June 2015. (<http://www.mff-familjen.se/visa-bilder/?ar=2003&manad=09&dag=15>)

The reference to this display came up in an informal chat with an HIF supporter who remembered it. He admitted that it was funny and recommended that I should look it up (football chat, January 2015). This illustration refers to a nickname of the HIF team, which was Milk Cow, *Mjölkkossan*. One interviewee explained: "Well it used to be called the milk cow. Because they always used to attract a big audience, when they played I think in 1940s or 1950s" (interview with Felix 6 February 2015). The cow symbolized HIF in its glorious years, and on the displayed canvas an MFF player is going to end its life. Although that nickname does not appear much anymore, and most of my interviewees would say: "it used to be called that", the cow got her second life as a part of the tifo and an insult constructed by MFF fans and made up using Helsingborg's own mythology.

*Mjölkkossan* is an example of how myths are recycled and produce historical sustainability. Supporters tend to be rather free and eclectic when



it comes to symbols and references. For instance, one ultras group<sup>29</sup> attached to MFF is called Rex Scania. Rex Scania gave an explanation for their name in an official declaration on their website and stated that this phrase meant “Kings of Scania” (Kungar över Skåneland).<sup>30</sup> This is, from linguistic point of view, an incorrect form. Rex Scania means literally King Scania (Skåne), and it would have to be Reges Scaniae in the correct Latin form. In an interview, a former member of Rex Scania laughed when I asked if people knew the name was not right and added: “I don’t think they know and I don’t think they care” (interview with Otto 15 April 2016). There is another ultras group, affiliated with AIK, that uses Latin, called Sol Invictus – Unconquered Sun.<sup>31</sup>

Football clubs offer a rich background, almost a playground, for toying with symbols, dates and people who left behind any kind of historical blueprint. The basic structure – playing matches at stadiums with 22 footballers and an audience – does not change. It is a solid frame for recollections to grow and thrive. It allows individual memories to enter, as they find a way to fit in. As a result, one match turns into many, and many turn into one, in a reassuring pattern of the cyclical flow of time. A few times my interviewees could recall a match situation or a player, but they were unsure which season it was or what match. Alex, supporter of Helsingborgs IF, tried to tell about his first game, but his narrative did not include a specific time or season. He simply did not remember:

My first match... I went to in 1998. [...] Or... 97... I don’t exactly... remember... no I think it was 1998. [...] and HIF did not win the game actually. I don’t exactly remember how it went, not sure who the other

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29 Ultras groups, originating in Italy, represent a trend in support that is visible nowadays in football. They are the most likely group to bring flares to stadiums, to organize displays and use drums.

30 The explanation of the name has since disappeared from Rex Scania official web page <https://rexscania.se/manifest/>

31 Sol Invictus means “Unconquered Sun” and was the official sun god of the late Roman Empire and a patron of soldiers (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Sol-Invictus>). Both groups, Rex Scania and Sol Invictus, are active on the stands, promote Italian-style support and opt for the usage of flares and smoke bombs. Two rather informal organizations of young men, who could be classified as trouble-makers in some social circles, choose to be named in Latin, with references to the late Roman Empire.



team was, but I remember that I was disappointed. It was like o-o or something, so I was disappointed. But anyway, it was so bloody... I don't know, it was so cool. (focus group with Kärnan 16 February 2015)

Memories need to be framed against a background that allows the preservation of some details that can be brought back from the abyss and reshaped in new circumstances. It has been shown that memories are often arranged spatially. We remember through places, not time frames (Marander Eklund 2011; Nylund Skog 2011). The ultras groups use recognizable and far-reaching connotations and can still claim a rich cultural capital. Their names seem to be a low-key version of a centuries-old custom of creating ad-hoc connections to the civilization of ancient Rome. This could be described as an example of cosmogonic time (Tuan 1977, 132). The idea of a divine beginning, a creation of a certain structure, reflects the present state of affairs, no matter how distant it is spatially, culturally or temporally.

The ultras groups seem to borrow a bit of the cultural capital that the Romans still represent. Their usage of symbols is quite straightforward, and even the form of Rex Scania should not be surprising. Latin is not a popular language nowadays, and hardly anybody would know the meaning of *Reges Scaniae*. Rex Scania presents a fine borderline between deeper historical context and half-baked modern knowledge of the long-gone civilization. This usage is intertextual in a sense that it requires a reader to search for connections outside of the football frame and presupposes some knowledge of Latin to decipher it. It provides a link to another *text*. It is performed, orienting the textuality of a group of fans towards a different textuality of another cultural context (Bauman 2004, 4). Such performances decontextualize and recontextualize symbols and messages, in this instance the apparent linkage to the Latin world (Bauman 2004, 8). The intertextual value of using the Latin language could be wasted should the translation be perfectly correct. To keep it understandable on a broader social level and gain cultural capital, the name had to stay simple.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Bauman and Briggs (2003) investigated the connotations of intertextuality and power while investigating language in the context of modernity and purification and hybridization. They raised a point that Latour's analysis of modernity misses on language and presents it as secondary. They argued for a deeper understanding of the roles language, oral traditions and textuality play (2003, 8–11).



AIK came to play against MFF in a match opening the season. Picture taken in April 2015.

Time flow provokes individuals to take upon themselves the burden of social memories that are shared. The little museum Malmö FF has inside its stadium plays the same role. The important bits are there, carefully arranged in glass cabinets. When walking through it and referring to many trips MFF had during past decades, an MFF official said: “This team has it in its blood” (interview with Linus 15 August 2012). This referred to the international travelling spirit of the players. He made a connection between the past, mostly the glorious 1970s, and the present squad. But how could they have it in their blood? There are no playing dynasties and many footballers change clubs on regular basis. Yet, the biological connection was made, a claim of continuation and stability. My informant was referring to it metaphorically, but the genealogy of things came to the fore. It was necessary for him to reassure me that the past glory has some sort of connection to the present. The awareness of those travelling players would then trigger something in the present team. When confronted with their own memories, people tend to narrate isolated events into a pattern, so that the past serves to interpret the present and project a view of the future (Rosenzweig & Thelen 1998, 68). The past is made into history.

Memories are transferable and adoptable, especially in fluid, heterotopic places like sport arenas. Heterotopic structures have their own time flow; they have a system of openings and closures that allows them to be used for specific purposes (Foucault 1967). They exist outside time and social space (Kayser Nielsen 1995, 30). The repeated, ritualized structure of a match, performed at a stadium, gives memories even more flexibility. The cultural notion of a collective experience of football has been around for more than one hundred years, and the intertextual pattern of its performance is firmly established. One knows when one sees a match; one has expectations. Fentress and Wickam suggested that memories could be treated as texts containing “specific pieces of information” (1992, 5). After all, memory is structured by an intersection of factors, such as language, collectively held ideas, and observations (1992, 7). The collective memories, performed in a ritualistic way, transform stadia into emotional museums. The following picture is an example of an intertextual reading.

It was taken in April 2015. AIK fans came to Malmö in considerable numbers and filled the away section.<sup>33</sup> The picture focuses on them. First, there were AIK colours, black and yellow, and many people wore black clothes, black and yellow scarves, and even balaclavas. The colours need to be interpreted as representing the club. Those who had covered their faces did so because they were about to lit flares, which is forbidden in Sweden, and nearby there were policemen with mini-cameras filming the crowd, trying to identify the responsible individuals. The crowd was adorned with flags carrying different messages, for example *Råsunda 1937–2012* – a banner commemorating AIK’s former home stadium built in 1937 and dismantled in 2012. There were banners referring to supporter groups – Ultras Nord,

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33 It is somewhat puzzling that families with children are placed next to away supporters who show no restraint in their use of strong words and gestures. One club representative explained that often the thought was that families require cheaper tickets anyway so they were assigned to worse places (interview with Carl and David, 2015). This sort of thinking was now questioned, and some of the clubs put the family section in the middle, with a prime view of the game. Another explanation I received was that a tough away crowd, ready for a fight, would be softened and pacified when seeing small children. This logic was applied to the entire stadium, and bigger groups of women and kids were supposed to have a relaxing effect in football (see also Dixon 2015).



This part of the stadium looks different from the away section. History is not produced only by the standing, singing, flare-oriented supporters. Nor is the style of engagement homogenous. The different ways of supporting reflect historical developments in football fandom. See Torbjörn Andersson's *Spela Fotboll Bondjävlar volumes I and II* for detailed historical descriptions concerning many of Sweden's clubs, and Mats Hellspong's *Stadion och Zinkensdamm* for discussions of Stockholm's sport-interested public in historical perspective. Picture taken in April 2015.

Sol Invictus or Black Army. All of them use the intertextuality around AIK on different levels. Ultras Nord and Black Army adorn their flags with a representation of a rat, a symbol that has been associated with AIK.<sup>34</sup> Sol Invictus, the Invincible Sun, refers to the sun on AIK's crest. There were also Swedish flags, blue and yellow, decorated with additional texts.

There were security men and photographers on the pitch, together with firemen ready for the flares to come. Isolated flames, smoke, flags and banners frame a group of standing men, as a certain aura of masculinity is produced in the intersections of sport-related activities and emotionality. The photo allows for intertextual reading as symbols and images are gathered amass in a somewhat random manner. This crowd is representative of European football. Pictures like this, with tifos, flares and choreographies,

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<sup>34</sup> I return to this symbolism in later chapters.

appear daily on different web pages.<sup>35</sup> This crowd lets others interpret it as a modern football gathering. This would be also an instance of collective experience driven by memory. The next photo was taken during the same match.

It depicts MFF supporters occupying the upper corner of the stadium. They were basking in the sun, unlike the away fans who are always in the cold shadow. Behind them, there were several intertextual messages. There was the Skåne flag, red with a yellow cross, and a picture of MFF's founding fathers. The Skåne flag is popular among MFF supporters, unlike Sweden's blue-and-yellow flag, which is mostly used by Stockholm fans. There was a banner depicting a griffin, symbol of the region. Supporters wear a different set of colours, sky-blue and white. All these elements frame the group, but also, as with AIK, enable tracing cultural connections and memories around them with intertextual interpretation. I am not able to give full descriptions. My information bank has limits and as references change every season, one finds it tricky to get it all. This is not unusual. On several occasions I asked officials from different clubs about such and such a reference, to which an answer was "I don't know what it is" or "I don't know why they use it like this".

Texts are shaped by repetition and transformation of textual elements that contribute to their composition (Frow 1990, 45). A match experience, performed through rituals that employ varied materiality, can become a text, a story to be told with a potential to produce history. Intertextual elements lend themselves to such an interpretation. There has been enough media coverage and publications to teach the general public what to expect from football. From a historical perspective, football has changed, but certain traces became embedded in the collective memory.<sup>36</sup> As a modern version of a folk tale, it provides a pattern ready to be filled with existing memories, providing a mold for future memories. A community that shares memories shapes standardized versions (oikotypes) that emerge as crucial for a given group. It is the collective that remembers and "decides which version is acceptable and which not" (Fentress & Wickam 1992, 74).

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<sup>35</sup> For example ultras-tifo.net who are very active on Facebook.

<sup>36</sup> One such persistent picture is the one of violence and the emergence of the term hooligan from the activities of previous decades.

Ritualized and established ways of performance create a structure for remembering. The time loop created in football stores myths and allows many references to nest snugly together. It allows its creators to change heroes, symbols, warriors without drastically altering its character. This process of keeping myths alive goes alongside the creative search for new tokens and new ways of expression. When an experience of a particular space is repeated on a regular basis, it takes a firm place in shaping an individual (Bale & Gaffney 2004, 25). Football histories start with activities at stadiums. A physical performance, a mode of communication, transmission, memories, symbols, myths and written accounts spring from it. The spatial end of things helps to reconstruct and organize memories. Pictures become intertextual signs as well. Supporters produce an image that is photographed and reproduced by different media. A match in one season becomes a reference for another. The cyclical character of the field appears in the recycling of material that can be transformed from materiality to text but also from text/story to materiality through a performance.

## Drums and stiches of memory

Football clubs like to embrace their past and show off with their museums, but there is constant negotiation about what should be preserved and what could fade into oblivion, as the accumulation of material goes on through the seasons. Recorded recollections of my informants produce their versions of history. Even references to facts, dates, statistics have been selective and the principles of selection are bound to differ based on time frame, social situation, and broader context (Burke 1989, 100).

Some of the motifs that exist in football – memorable win, away game, player, season, defeat – are fitted with changing content, acquiring mythical qualities. The current need (or stereotype) of a certain character or event drives a selection of available material. There is a “demand and supply” chain that matches the mythical mould with particular elements of the past (Burke 1989, 104).

Stickers, flags and banners have already been mentioned. Fans often brings to stadiums bags filled with fabrics. It takes some time to attach and





Djurgården supporters came with a range of banners, looking both bought and self-made, and displayed them carefully on the seats. Gefle IF played against Malmö. There were perhaps ten Gefle supporters. They displayed a lot of flags, and had fun. Since MFF supporters were on strike, those ten men singing were heard very well. Pictures taken in April and June 2016.

adjust everything. They use tape and strings. Some flags and banners are ready-bought, and many are self-made. Every little supporter group wants to be visible, and strives to have a good message for the home crowd and the visiting team. They are decorating their temporary home. This process is intimate. In the outside world, it can be regarded as the activity of wom-

en to make home “homey”, to make it beautiful and cosy so that the family members can feel in a certain space “at home” (Gullestad 1993, 161; Shove 1999, 139; Putnam 1999, 148).

The context of historical production of the home-like space has been gendered, as it has been looked upon as feminine activity.<sup>37</sup> Here, it is mostly young men who sacrifice their time, effort and resources to produce decorative fabric. During one of the matches, I watched a well-dressed man who came slightly late, took a carefully folded small white banner from his bag, and spread it on two empty chairs. Then he disappeared into the crowd. After the match, he came to fetch it, and folded it back carefully again (match observations 2016).

Those little flags have intertextual qualities connecting them to a certain club, such as colours and crests. They are further personalized. They represent individual involvement and stories, and individual interpretations of the past. The materiality that marks the space makes a whirlpool of history. The displayed messages carry historical references. In May 2016 a team from northern Sweden, Gefle IF, came to play against Malmö FF. They represented an underdog. They had a bad season, not nearly as much money as MFF, and just a handful of supporters – about ten. Still, they brought big banners with them. There was a flag of their region, Norrland. Further, they displayed a name of their former arena that is not used anymore (Strömvallen), and a banner of a supporter organization called Blue Boys.

Both teams, MFF and Gefle IF, share almost exactly the same shade of blue as official colours, and the nickname for both is the Sky Blues. However, fans from Gävle brought a message about differentiation, based on history. They had a text stating “the oldest Sky Blues 1882”. Gefle IF was established that year, Malmö “only” in 1910, thus being younger. Gefle IF could not boast being as successful or as rich as the Skåne club, but they could write that they were considerably older, and present that message to

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37 The Norwegian social anthropologist Marianne Gullestad wrote an article about home-making and decorating in the Norwegian context. She stresses that a home is both a shared and a female domain, and that in “In principle, the home as a whole is a gender-neutral universe. In practice, it is largely a female universe” (1993, 140) although it is also dependent on class and other social markers.





Picture taken during a fans' protest in Malmö in 2016.

the home crowd.<sup>38</sup> The construction of history – we are older than you – served a pragmatic purpose and created Gefle IF's characteristic image. The message would not have been as strong if it had not been performed through the match ritual and with the most successful of opponents who happen to have the same colours. The production was based on an inter-textual reading.

That same match provided a glimpse of a purposely failed ritual. Although Gefle IF had just a few supporters, they were strangely loud in a big arena, confronted by around 15,000 MFF fans. I realized suddenly that something was amiss. Something I did not understand. The usually singing Malmö crowd was quiet. The drums were quiet. Ultras groups, often responsible for providing the atmosphere, refused to cooperate. When I asked an MFF official about it he said he was not sure, just that there was

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<sup>38</sup> As I was a photographer on the pitch during that game, I sat on the Gefle supporters' side. The beginning of the game was slow and the home crowd was not singing much (due to a strike from the ultras groups, as it turned out later), and I was not much occupied. One of the Gefle fans handed me his phone and asked me to take a couple of pictures, which I did and made him very happy. I learned later that those pictures ended up on the supporter club's website, commemorating their excursion to Malmö. The historical production, based on a historical reference, made it into their history.

a conflict. It was a protest against a police action against some of the supporters, members of an ultras group, connected to troubles around a friendly match against a Danish team some months before (observations 2016). A single banner was pinned to the net separating the supporters from the pitch with a text Freedom for Ultras and two hands breaking chains (observations 2016).

MFF fans' behaviour during this match could be described as passive. They did not sing much, did not move, and all of a sudden the match felt strange. During the second half, the upper corners tried to sing, but carrying a tune seemed difficult. Without performative engagement, the meaning got somewhat lost. MFF fans did not perform the ritual that was established. That evaluation is not only provided by my understanding of what a match should look like, as, for example, there was a bitter discussion in MFF's *svenskafans.com* forum after the game. There were also comments in the local press. The collective expectations and mythology of match framing provoked a reaction from the crowd and from me. The rites – rhythmic drums, rehearsed chants, established songs and games – repeated in ritualistic fashion, kept recreating this social reality. Once the drums were suddenly silent and people passive, the ritual failed. The function was not fulfilled – the match failed (at least its first half) to provide an established frame for emotional connections and the experience could not be repeated as it usually would be (see Geertz 1957; Bell 1996 (1992), 29). Gefle IF fans took more symbolic space and snatched a bit of home from MFF. This example highlights how the performance must happen in order to construct an arena in a cultural sense.

The historian Niels Kayser Nielsen wrote about football arenas, expressing the curious character of that urban space that is not easy to define:

At the stadium, one is both at the home ground, but also out in deep waters, where one must probe forward innovatively, exposed to the double condition of safeness and searching, [...] in a continuous interpretation of life as a “city-zen” – in the area of tension between being exposed and being comfortable, and between placelessness and a “homely” sense of locality. (Kayser Nielsen 1995, 42)



The sign greeting away fans is vandalized with stickers from different clubs, but also with Helsingborg's own material. Picture taken in November 2015 in Helsingborg.

The *placelessness* is especially visible in the away section. Supporters enter a space that is not theirs, yet it is designed for them. This is nobody's land that needs to be filled with identity for 90 minutes. A sign from Olympia stadium, home arena of HIF, says "Welcome visiting supporters", yet it does not spell out warmth. The sign has been abused by various stickers and many attempts to remove them. It is hung on a fence that separates stadium and away supporters from the rest of the world. In the top of the picture one can see barbed wire. This is a danger zone rather than a cosy spot to enjoy football. Often, especially before popular matches, the security checks for away fans are extensive and long. Frisk search is common, accompanied by sniffing dogs and "secret" police. One reason for it is the ban on pyrotechnics in Sweden, which is commonly ignored by some supporters. That does not prevent the activity, which I shall return to in the following chapters.

The entrance to the away section at Friends Arena in Stockholm is not charming either. Massive doors have no decorations. The sign announces "Away fans" and nothing more. It looks like an industrial piece of architecture, leading to a warehouse rather than a stadium. Friends Arena has been described by fans as unfriendly, a theme appearing in many interviews, but this entrance stood out as particularly emptied of feelings. These were beyond the control of the supporters. Their sleek surface made them unreachable. Not far away, though, someone had put a DIF sticker on a glass door. Away supporters challenged the space, stickers being a popular artefact to state their presence.



The door to the away section at Friends Arena does not look very inviting. Djurgården fans left a sticker on one of the glass doors, trespassing and marking territory. Pictures from Friends Arena in Stockholm, March 2015.

The stickers decorating different sections, areas around stadiums and even spread around cities, caught my attention. Stickers are often based on references to clubs and present a wide range of messages, stories and affiliations. They are artefacts anchored in a club, but used by individuals in creative ways. This activity takes the internal, protected football museums to the streets.

### A mock war on stickers

Lampposts in Swedish cities are decorated with all kinds of stickers. All sorts of constructions close to stadiums are also covered in colourful sticky papers. This is a pan-European phenomenon associated with a modern style of support. Maria, a fan from Stockholm, explained the procedure when we talked about the making and selling of merchandise in football and in hockey:

In winter we sell at Hovet, mostly stickers and scarves, now we sell more T-shirts, spring is coming. We can also have special prints for special games, like we would order 100 shirts, for example when we play against Göteborg. We order stickers from an ultras shop in Poland, we ordered 26,000 stickers last year, they are very good, quick and cheap. We must have stickers! (interview with Maria, 5 March 2015)



Picture 1.

Maria was partly involved in those processes as she was a board member in one of the supporter organizations. The collection of stickers presented below gives just a glimpse of what football-related spaces look like. The stickers are intriguing in the vicinity of the away section. While conducting observations I discovered that the away section's toilets were plastered in all kinds of stickers from different teams. One is not allowed to stick anything on stadiums. In toilets, one is not watched by securing. Every visit to an arena ended up with me photographing the toilets. One needs some background information to situate stickers. They are independent narratives that feed on local mythology and historical references.

This first picture was taken in Halmstad in 2016. I attended the match with two friends. Halmstad BK played against Degerfors IF on a warm May Saturday. Halmstad was no longer in the highest league and during that season they were trying to get back into Allsvenskan. The entire away section was covered in stickers, often stickers on top of other stickers. The selected example is AIK plastered over MFF. Both stickers are in the colours of the clubs. AIK have chosen a depiction of an old commuter train that used to run in Stockholm municipality. A person remarked, seeing the picture, that it is *the classic train* (football chat 2016). They are no longer used in Stockholm. On the little black train one can see numbers 1312. This usually stands for a numerical abbreviation of ACAB - All Cops





Pictures 2 and 3.

Are Bastards. The number might be a coincident or it might mean something different, but a message against the police force is often communicated like this.

The Malmö sticker has a visible letter ø which does not appear in the Swedish language, but exists in Danish. MFF fans use that letter to differentiate themselves from Sweden proper. The region of Scania was Danish until 1658 and there are recurring symbols and references that mark this part of current Sweden as not exactly Swedish. There is a sense of territoriality as well. Both stickers are an invasion on Halmstad's grounds. It is a reminder of the previous season when the local club was in the highest league and the strong clubs from big cities came here.

Pictures 2 and 3 both come from Malmö. Picture number 2 was taken in the toilet for away supporters at the MFF stadium. It was taken when Djurgården came to play. The text says: "Protect the children. Do not let them spend time with Djurgården supporters". It is a direct message against DIF. It has been composed so that it resembles texts on cigarette packages that warn against death and health problems connected to smoking. The message was composed using an intertextual frame of an un-

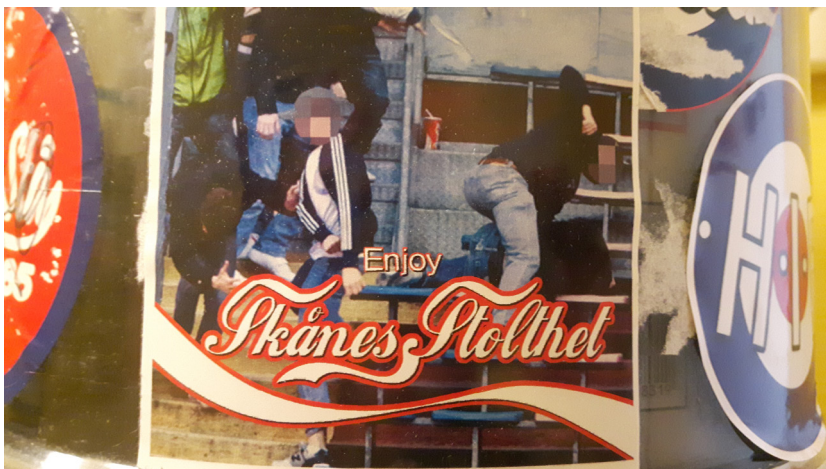


Picture 4.

healthy activity – smoking cigarettes. Contact with a specific group (DIF fans) would be then translated as also being risky to children's' well-being.<sup>39</sup> Picture number 3 comes from the same match. It is a direct warning to away supporters and says that any cleaning after supporters and their stickers will be directly charged to Djurgårdens IF. Someone put a sticker right on the note. Some supporters do not want to cooperate. Some see it as their right to use the stickers, even if this can hurt their club financially. This is not a grave crime, but it tests the borders. These stickers mark narratives that exist between Djurgårdens IF supporters, another club's supporters, and Djurgårdens IF as a club. A conflict and rivalry are materialized and signal historical production.

Picture 4 was taken in Helsingborg in 2017, minutes before the first match of the season in Superettan. HIF's stadium, Olympia, was under renovation for two years and in 2017 was finally ready. There were new lampposts too, freshly decorated with stickers. One of them was in the shape of a shield with HIF's colours and the date when the club was established – 1907. The black sticker over it says "The police lie – supporters are

<sup>39</sup> Sven-Erik Klinkmann analysed humour in connection to stereotypes and group stigmatization in the context of Swedish speaking minority in Finland (2014).



Picture 5.

punished. No to arbitrary access ban”. Tensions between police and fans mark a long history of urban unrest and crowd evaluations. The first sticker tied to the narrative of origin and the number of years HIF has existed. The second one marked a conflict between the two groups – fans and police, which needed to be interpreted through history. There were previous instances of police imposing bans. Their actions resulted in fans being punished. This narrative produces a history of unfair conflict where power is unevenly distributed.

On picture number 5 there is an older sticker photographed in a pizzeria toilet close to Olympia stadium in Helsingborg (2017). The Coca-Cola logo is appropriated and the picture features fighting fans. The text says Pride of Skåne. A pop cultural background frames a violent situation. The sticker brought to mind the 1990s, and it depicted a bygone situation. Physical violence on football terraces in such form is rare in Sweden. Most of the so-called hooligan encounters happen outside stadiums (Green 2009). There is a strange sense of nostalgia here, as something dark, illegal and harmful has been framed with a hint of irony and presumably social acceptance (to some degree) of violent outbursts (Brabazon 2004). Most of the open conflicts I observed were symbolic in nature and performative rather than seeking physical confrontations.





Picture 6 and 7.

Picture 6 comes from a toilet at MFF's stadium's away section. It was taken in 2017. The mirror was decorated with all kinds of stickers. Some were put on top of others, some were partly torn. This assemblage of different clubs' stories features a sticker based on Djurgårdens IF's history. It is blue, has a reproduction of a nineteenth-century picture of a man accompanied by his name – John G Jansson.<sup>40</sup> He was the first chairman of the organization when it was established in 1891. AIK is obsessed with their first chairman, Isidor Behrens, but Jansson does not appear as often in DIF-related material.

Fieldworking in toilets is slightly awkward socially. In Sweden, mixed gender toilets are rather common, which helps in obtaining material as men are more likely to have stickers around their toilets. Yet sometimes one needs to frequent men's loos and on occasions that attracted curious gazes, but never any questions. Picture 7 comes from a lamppost near the central train station in Malmö. It was also taken in 2017. The picture represents an MFF player called Tobias Sana, previously a midfielder in IFK Göteborg. During a match between IFK Göteborg and MFF Sana was

<sup>40</sup> [http://www.difarkivet.se/djurgardens\\_idrottsforenings\\_styrelser\\_sedan\\_1891.asp](http://www.difarkivet.se/djurgardens_idrottsforenings_styrelser_sedan_1891.asp).



Picture 8 and 9.

warming up and he got annoyed by the IFK Göteborg crowd (someone threw a banger in his direction) and he responded by throwing a corner flagpole at the crowd, something he later regretted.<sup>41</sup> The text on the sticker is a pun on his name – Sana – and a phrase in Göteborg dialect meaning “calm down” – sansa däj. The abbreviation ABM – Anything But Malmö appeared on many other stickers around Malmö.

Picture 8 was taken in May 2017 at Friends Arena, which is AIK’s new home stadium. Their previous grounds, Råsunda, were demolished in 2013. It was a heavy blow to the club, and stickers, banners and flags with Råsunda are still common.<sup>42</sup> The arena was in use between 1937 and 2012. The sticker on the next photo was found in Malmö in 2016. It states that Djurgårdens IF is 125 years old. A short form of the name is used – Djurgårn. The birthday celebration was put on stickers and promptly brought to Malmö. Those two stickers refer to the importance of numbers. The stadium of Råsunda had its year of birth and the date of its passing.

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.aftonbladet.se/sportbladet/fotboll/sverige/allsvenskan/malmo/af-article22718829.ab>

<sup>42</sup> I return to the discussion of football stadiums in the fourth chapter.



Picture 10 and 11.

DIF fans produced stickers with a claim of longevity. Råsunda, a place that does not exist anymore, was transformed into symbolic capital and the materiality of banners, T-shirts, flags and stickers. This capital is spelled out through dates, through assembling the past. There was Råsunda in the past that needs to be commemorated. DIF experienced upheavals too, but the club can claim 125 years of stability.

The two stickers on pictures 10 and 11 are connected to AIK. The first one features King Gustaf V of Sweden (1858–1950). He is depicted with the first shield AIK had. His son and heir Gustaf VI Adolf became the official royal patron of the club<sup>43</sup> but Gustaf V did not have much to do with AIK, as far as I can see. Picture 11 is a cartoon-like representation of Kurt Hamrin, AIK's player from late 1940s and early 1950s. Hamrin spent two years in AIK's junior team, and then played in the main squad for three years before becoming a professional player in Italy. Stickers with Hamrin seem popular and versions of his image appear often.

These stickers represent small, materialized narratives that are performed when they are stuck on structures like stadiums. They are tailored to be *readable* by those familiar with the field. Sometimes messages are simple and straightforward, sometimes they need contextual knowledge. These

43 <https://www.dn.se/arkiv/sport/kungligt-aik-arv/>.

tiny pieces of historical performance are flexible and reusable. Grand elements from Swedish football, but also Sweden's history, make their way here and are applied inventively as a form of *creative communication in small groups* – in other words *folklore* (ben Amos 1971, 3–15). I present here only a fraction of the sticker photos taken. The examples chosen highlighted the diversity of historical engagement. As mentioned before, the events or characters from the past are taken to the streets. Collective memory takes its cultural form, and transmits traditions through this specific genre of small sticky illustrations (Assmann 1988; Glassie 1995). It is an unofficial way to spread knowledge and perform historical bits in order to mark a space, gain territory, bring forth a message, engage in a discussion, celebrate one's identity or protest.

Such activities are especially visible in the area of the away section, as this part of the stadium is contested at every match by different participants. Stickers are small, easy to use, easy to design and not expensive, as explained by my informant Maria. They represent the forefront of a conflict, a mock war of insults, wit and creativity driven by history. Stickers not only highlight references from the past. As Sara Ahmed puts it, forms of materiality can bring the bygone into present use and consolidate certain images that tie emotions of, for example, pride or happiness, to events from the past, thus producing history (2004, 202). History is produced even in such a humble activity as putting stickers around towns.

## Concluding remarks

The main focus of this chapter has been on the general awareness that the clubs have history. This, in turn, is used by clubs as institutions, and by the individuals involved. Although an event from the past does not have to be positive to create a positive narrative, one can say that the production results in *sustainable narratives*. They are created and performed in order to sustain identities, continuity, and/or mythology.

Groups and clubs tend to be able to maintain a coherent image because time seems to run in a somewhat different way than outside of the football context. Football is full of time capsules preserving and constructing emotions and memories that contribute to a club's image. There is a hero story,

there is a traitor, there is the worst season ever, there is the shock of relegation to a lower league, but there is also a title, there is the legendary coach. Awareness of history is present in football. Those references are kept in glass cabinets, but figuratively and literally speaking, they are used in the active production of history at stadiums in match situations by different groups of supporters. The history is taken to the streets as football-oriented narratives are found in small capsules of time in urban spaces. Stories are performed through materiality. Varied rituals give them relevance and meaning. For example, the practice of plastering small messages before matches produces history through references to the past appearing in the present.

Narratives are produced in printed books; they are displayed on tifos during matches and glued to lamp posts as stickers. People incorporate their own stories with the ongoing football developments, enabling some elements, myths and legends to survive the tides of time. To keep such an unstable environment running for such a long time, one has to be able to establish strong links and anchors that allow continuity to be woven. Football is fluid in terms of changing participants and social circumstances. Historical references help to produce an image of a stable institution adorned with heritage and traditions. This process depends on a chosen time frame. It can look like the golden era, or the focus is on the trouble ahead, and with that in mind different references from the past are applied. History under construction requires creative recycling – hence the production of sustainable narration. Clubs and their fans are framed in a specific context that forms a firm, recyclable base and allows for spontaneous and rich historical productions.

The following chapter explores in greater depth the pragmatic dimensions of history and its production, with the focus on more consumer-oriented approach. The recyclable history can act as a specific form of cultural capital.

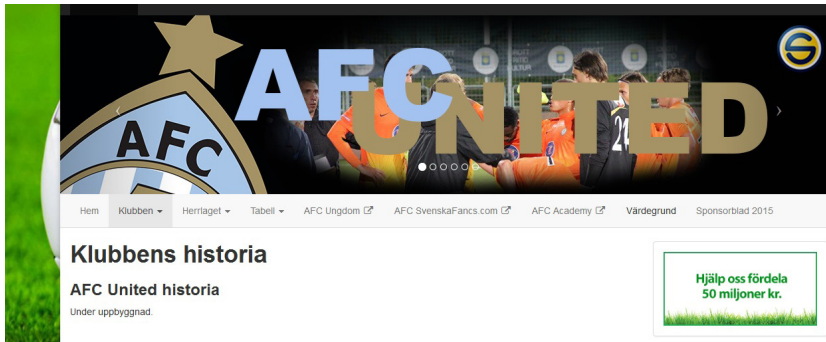


### 3. Cultural capital of one hundred years

Money issues appear often in football narratives. Although necessary, money is not an easy topic. Supporters often express discontent at massive foreign investments that make clubs into toys for rich oligarchs (Herd 2017). Clubs use their histories quite creatively to counterweight affluence in some of (relatively) new clubs that do not trace their birth back to the nineteenth century, but have substantial financial backing. In the 2017 season, a new and young club, AFC Eskilstuna (previously AFC United) entered Allsvenskan. The club was met with resistance and criticism from other Swedish clubs.

During a match between Djurgårdens IF and AFC Eskilstuna at the end of May 2017, DIF fans organized a complex display protesting AFC Eskilstuna's admission to the highest league. About ten minutes into a game a banner appeared in the standing section: "Money can't buy me love". Later, I found leaflets attached to seats all over the stadium. They pointed out that AFC is a threat to Swedish football. When DIF scored a goal, after initial joy came an angry, rhythmic shout: "Horungar, horungar, horungar!" – Whore's kids. After the half-time break, the DIF standing section displayed a number of stern messages, one of them about sending Swedish football to its grave. The game was coming to an end, with the score 4–1 for Djurgården, and another chant was initiated: "AFC, you are nothing" (ni är ingenting)! The tune was "Go West" (observations 2017). The entire match was a staged protest against a new club, which, according to the fans, bought its success.

Narratives that were displayed and performed during that game presented a certain view of wealth, economic resources and a sort of "respectfulness" based on the past. In this chapter, I engage in a discussion of economic issues, club rejuvenation and class markers. The historical under-



Screenshot from a web page of Athletic FC United, March 2015, when the club was in Superettan. The text says 'The club's history. AFC United history. Under construction'. In 2017 it advanced to Allsvenskan, changed location and name again, settling on AFC Eskilstuna. After one season in Allsvenskan, the club was relegated to the lower division.

standing of class appears in the material gathered throughout the fieldwork and contributes to producing history of clubs. What can carry the feeling of continuity in an unstable, ever-changing environment? How do current pragmatic issues concerning economy trigger the production of history? What can help to sustain the continuity?

## What money cannot buy

Swedish clubs can make some pragmatic use of their long histories, sometimes longer than 100 years, and they apply those narratives to counterbalance monetary capital with cultural capital. This refers to resources that are not necessarily economic, that one can use while building an image and establishing a position in society (see Bourdieu 1984). The recurrent theme in the interviews was "money is not enough". While focusing on the illusive ideas of *traditions*, *golden ages*, *olden days*, being able to *go back in history*, many of my interviewees produced narratives that helped them bring out a distinction between the real, traditional clubs and the new commercial, *artificial products* of modern-day football.

Considering the economic changes in football, its globalization and commodification, one could expect that personal involvement and regionalism



might not play such an important role anymore (Kennedy & Kennedy 2010, 2012; Giulianotti 2005; Baudrillard 1990). More money means better arenas, better players, and could translate to more success. To be able to win is the ultimate goal. The privatization (private ownership) or professionalization of club football has not happened in Sweden as it did in, say, England. The professionalization of the highest league did not occur before 1990.<sup>44</sup> It is not possible for individual investors (sponsors) to own more than 49% of a club. Although this is linked to less money, Swedish supporters and club representatives are generally proud of this state of things, as they can claim ownership of their clubs and say that no rich oligarch or sheik would be able to turn their clubs into personal toys.<sup>45</sup> One supporter said “we don’t need another Chelsea”, criticizing developments in England’s top league and its money-oriented approach (football chat 2013).

A Djurgården fan from Stockholm, Joel, remarked in an interview that the English Premier League was attractive in the 1980s and he and his friends would travel there several times a year to watch matches. Then it became a rich men’s league and his group turned instead to lower divisions, the Championship, League One and League Two (interview with Joel 5 March 2015). Many interviewed fans and even club officials remarked that money came at the cost of identity, which historically, one wants to believe, was working-class related. Football tried to be more than simple pastime and entered the premises of the experience economy (Van Uden 2005). Joel described a common trend that involves money, too much money, as opposed to something genuine or real.

Another Djurgården fan, Hubert, was quite aware of commercial pressures in the modern world and remarked on the lack of club ownership in Sweden:

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44 The rule that football should be an amateur sport was abolished in Sweden in 1967, but Swedish players went abroad to play professionally decades before that (Sund 2008, 52–61).

45 As in Germany, there is a 51% rule in Swedish football, which means that a private investor cannot own more than 49% of a given club. Thus, at least theoretically, clubs are owned and ruled by supporters who secure their place as club members. Although generally supporters are very much in favour of this rule, some call it a fake democracy that does not matter in the end and prevents a much-needed influx of money into Swedish football.

Oh but if that happened in Sweden so we would lose some of the soul. On the other hand it is an entertainment industry... So if you don't have the capital, the money, you can't buy players, you have to be more dependent on the club's network, so it is more challenging perhaps to grow and get better (pause). But then you cannot just buy all that ... because it is about the soul too. (interview with Hubert, 5 March 2015)

The use of the word *soul* makes a connection to something that is alive. Supporters often use vocabulary that makes a distinction between organic and artificial. Fans associate their beloved clubs with concepts like “a living organism”, “family”, “home”, “family feel”, “born into the club”, “our birthday”, “born supporter”, and even a stadium being one’s “wife”. All those phrases appeared in interviews about clubs and their histories. On the other hand, privately owned clubs from the big Western European leagues, most explicitly Paris Saint-Germain F.C. and Chelsea<sup>46</sup> being the prime examples given by my informants, were described as “artificial products”, having “no heart”, being “just for the money”, being “unreal” and “untrue”. This striking difference emphasizes what many supporters feel about the new successful clubs and the creation of calculated and controlled environment designed to win titles.

A reference is created with positive connotations of the old. The rising stars of European football, like Paris Saint-Germain or Red Bull Salzburg, have history and build history, but their history is narrated as *new, artificial*, because of the recent economic advantages and rapid success. Money “might make things easier, but money only is never enough” (interview with Jesper 25 November 2014). Losing a soul makes one dead, lifeless. Selling a soul implies making a pact with a devil and facing repercussion, which is a theme popular in European folklore,<sup>47</sup> including the Nordic sources (Wolf-Knuts 1991, 155). Because of the emotionally loaded descriptions of the *real* and *fake*, there is an emphasis on resisting the economic developments.

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46 The names of those two clubs always came up spontaneously in the interviews as the prime examples of the issue.

47 The most famous story is probably the one immortalized in Christopher Marlow's *Doctor Faustus* (1611) and Goethe's *Faust* (1890).

Hubert quoted above appreciated the style of the English league. He attended a Chelsea match in London and liked the atmosphere. He said that it was family-friendly and not frightening at all. He also referred to the USA and praised their ice hockey and American football for being just fun and entraining, seeing it as a model for development. Still, there was a fair bit of nostalgia in his interview, talking about his older brother who introduced him to football. Throughout the meeting, Hubert referred to his club as *entertainment* and pondered about its “entertainment value” in the context of the more radical supporters with flares and offensive chants. The more polished look of football appealed to him, but even he was afraid of losing something should there be a price tag attached so explicitly. Hubert confessed that he has not really seen a live match in Sweden since the 1990s, but would still describe himself as a supporter who cared and kept an eye on what was happening to his beloved club.

Many of my interviewees did not want to feel this was all about money, and the production of history helped them to manoeuvre. Stretching the period to the nineteenth century positions some of the newly rich clubs as relative newcomers who claim wins and titles without a proper background of traditions and heritage so emphasized by informants. This image creates a dichotomy and provides an alternative narrative for clubs that are old, yet not successful. Their history is produced to counterbalance “unfair” foreign investments. There are, of course, old clubs that are rich, successful and popular. Such a *money vs tradition* story exemplifies the use of narratives as a source for making sense of everyday life and a strategy of dealing with “time, process and change” (Herman 2009, 2). Lavish investments in football seemed to take away the importance of regions of even spectators. Emphasis on historical narratives downplays the role money can have.

The stress put on age and the date of origin reflects the need to fight somehow those economic evils that take football away from supporters and give it to rich investors interested in results only, at least according to the Swedish supporters. Displaying one’s heritage is a way to affirm the club’s existence. MFF’s journey to the Champions League in 2014 took the curious shape of a struggle between tradition and heritage versus *new money*.

One of their opponents was Red Bull Salzburg, an Austrian club bought, renamed and remade by Red Bull, company known for producing a pop-



Picture taken in Malmö in 2016.

ular sugary energy drink.<sup>48</sup> When MFF won in the final match and qualified for Champions League, internet forums exploded with a sense of relief that a *traditional* club with history, as fans often phrased it, went through and not this *new money* hybrid without soul. This showed that money was not everything, and somehow that was a sign of historical justice (nethnography, 2014). Even supporters from other Swedish clubs expressed their joy that MFF won. Entries from fans of, among others, AIK, DIF, IFK Göteborg, IFK Norrköping, GAIS and Sundsvall praised MFF for not giving in, for making Sweden visible, but also commenting that even Salzburg's style of play was unnatural and plastic, just like their club (entries from svenskafans.se 5 August 2015).<sup>49</sup> On MFF's Facebook page there appeared comments from other countries, for instance Austria and Germany, thanking them for winning this match, for example: "Thank you sooo much malmö Greetings from Austria" (original spelling, nethnography 2015). What were they thanking them for? A good match, un-

<sup>48</sup> Red Bull sponsors many activities associated with extreme sports: <https://www.red-bull.com/se-en/>

<sup>49</sup> The local store ICA Malmborgs made a decision to take away Red Bull energy drinks from their shelves and put MFF water bottles instead before the team from Salzburg came for a match against MFF in 2014 (<https://www.sydsvenskan.se/2014-08-27/ica-malmborgs-ersatter-laskedrycken-red-bull-med-mff-vatten>).

expected result (RD Salzburg won the first match) or that it was not Red Bull that was going to play in the Champions League? Seeing this particular team suffer seemed to unite supporters.<sup>50</sup> After the game such stickers appeared around Malmö, mocking the Austrian club and their new logo.

The crude devaluation of those clubs as not having history came from MFF's side. Swedish supporters' forums referred to the club playing *corporate football*. Red Bull owns a club in Germany as well, called now RB Leipzig, founded in 2009 and with a logo unmistakably linked to Red Bull's original logo. This energy drink company purchased another football club in the USA now called New York Red Bulls, founded in 1994. As with Salzburg and Leipzig, their logo has just a different city name on the crest. This is a business-like take on football, making it more like a marketing tool for one company.

The uniformity of this enterprise, commodification in the purest form, seems to erase all that the fans care and talk about: traditions, regionalism, history and all the small differences that make clubs special and unique. These elements are often on clubs' crests, but Red Bull's focus appears to be on sporting achievements. The energy drink has successfully associated itself with many sports,<sup>51</sup> but its efforts within football are not met with joy on the part of the fans. As one supporter put it:

We want to avoid what has happened in other countries, that somebody rich buys a small club and tries to build PSG for example. But such possibilities don't exist in Sweden really, even if you buy a club there are taxes and rules, so I don't think that it would work. It would just be that some clubs would lose their history, change crests and colours and such. (interview with Anton 10 August 2015)

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<sup>50</sup> Same joy was expressed when RB Leipzig lost the German cup final in 2016. Further, fans of Borussia Dortmund refused to travel to Europa League fixtures against RB Salzburg in 2018. The fans organized a sale of special shirts and symbolic tickets and donated the money to Austria Salzburg, a club that was established by the fans when Red Bull bought the original Austria Salzburg and renamed it. The t-shirts had printed text "Tradition beats every trend". (<http://www.ultras-tifo.net/news/5172-borussia-dortmund-fans-refuses-to-travel-to-away-match-vs-red-bull-salzburg.html> published online 6 March 2018).

<sup>51</sup> <http://www.redbull.com/se/en>



Logos taken from the web pages of the respective clubs (retrieved 4 June 2015).

“Losing history”, as Anton phrased it, is a fear present among fans, as it signals losing identity, and that would materialize itself, as he pointed out, through changing crests and colours. The “traditional” clubs are at pains to strengthen their branding and make their logos recognizable and marketable. The commercial idea of “branding” or “brand content” is no news in the football world.<sup>52</sup> Several informants used a phrase referring to MFF as the strongest brand in Malmö. Helsingborgs IF was described as a good brand for the city, as recognizable as the ferries across the Öresund to Denmark or the medieval tower called Kärnan (Andersson 2011, 75).

From the perspective of MFF fans, their history and traditions become a counterweight to financial investments. One supporter commented on Champions League matches from 2014:

Salzburg... yes let's talk about Salzburg. They say “oh we had support on the stands” but when they came to Malmö, those “devoted fans” (makes with his hands a sign for quotation marks)... and it is 100 years old club, MFF is. They were shocked. They think they know what support is. (interview with Theo 2 February 2015)

For Theo, Malmö's age and traditions contributed to its success and contrasted with the commercial club from Austria. In his opinion, it was only right for MFF to win as they belonged to the traditional European football with strong support, flags, flares and chants. Although you can buy new grounds and players, paint new beautiful logos, you cannot fake history

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<sup>52</sup> The basic elements of branding strategies and choices are explained, for example, by Philip Kotler (1999, 85–93).



The colours on this photographed sticker represent MFF. The text says “Support your local team” and has trash bags with logos of FC Barcelona, Juventus, Real Madrid, Liverpool and Manchester United, gathered around a rubbish bin. This sticker, like those described in the previous chapter, is a short story of social tensions that appear in football. MFF is a big strong club in Sweden, but not internationally. Their budget, investors or scale of support cannot be compared to the super-clubs that play year after year in the final stages of the Champions League. But MFF is a local club and its prestige on the home grounds can be compared to the rich Spanish or English clubs. There is a prejudice against people supporting big foreign teams and not their own small but local ones. Picture taken close to the central station in Malmö in 2017.

around them, just build them up little by little. In order to be able to re-cycle, one needs something to work on. Theo has followed MFF since childhood; his personal story was connected to the club. He grew up with football culture and participated in the changes. Throughout the interview, he stressed the *organic* character of it, changes coming almost naturally, as if shaped by fate and MFF’s glorious history. What bothered him the most was the unapologetic and commercial approach of Red Bull, changing crests and demanding attention and recognition, for which normally you would need, according to his narrative, decades if not centuries (interview with Theo 2 February 2015).

The actions of Red Bull disturbed the acknowledged rituals associated

with football. There were no founding fathers, no nineteenth-century working-class origin, no fan devotion through difficult years, no celebrations of the regional character, no unexplained rivalries, no evolution of stadium culture that would leave a mark on supporters. It was, to Theo, a pure sporting enterprise that left the important rites behind. An absent ritual could become *unnecessary* if the reality still worked without it. The roles that were ascribed to the different elements in the football structure were not fulfilled, as they would normally be (Burkert 1996 (1983), 62). Swedish supporters, like many of their European counterparts, saw how little their voice would count if all the attention was given to muscles running on the pitch. There was a need to see a failure once the ritual was not performed correctly, i.e. disregarding traditions and history.

Not everybody was as critical of what Red Bull had done to football. Two researchers in sports management, encountered during a congress in football studies in May 2015, expressed their respect and remarked how quickly the clubs from Leipzig and Salzburg were moving up in the football hierarchy. They were familiar with the common evaluation and the “dead bull” sticker, on which one of them commented, “that is such bullshit” (football chat 2015). In their opinion, there was nothing wrong with a bright new club that paved its way to success. For many people things like deep regional roots, traditions, and loyalty to the club are as important ingredients of the game as players on the pitch. Success is welcomed, but it is not exactly necessary. Supporters want to feel that they are an important part of it, that they create football as well. There is a degree of power play as fans can express, a certain kind of ownership that allows them to put themselves higher in the football hierarchies (Herd 2017).

## Clashes of histories

Economic issues in various forms were always present in the football environment, and a businesslike approach to the game was visible as early as



the 1890s (see Giulianotti 1999, 42).<sup>53</sup> Money is both a remedy and a threat. Economy can be presented as a blessing or a curse. Fans, claiming ownership of the club, are able to reshape the meaning that economy has. One can use terms like institution, association, organization, even business, as such vocabulary often appears in the context of clubs. But this entity has characteristics of a social movement as it requires individual involvement and it attempts to write its own history. There is a huge amount of oral communication, informal knowledge, which helps one to become familiar with the environment, its special features, songs and routines that need to be performed in a specific time and space. It is the ability to produce its own history that results in creating an image, as individual narratives can influence how a group is viewed and evaluated.

The criticism towards Red Bull clubs was reflected in the way many Swedish clubs reacted to AFC (previously United) Eskilstuna. The observations opening the chapter provide one example of various matches when the young club, in the highest league for the first time, was viciously attacked. AFC is a hybrid of different clubs merging together, changing names from Athletic FC to AFC United and then AFC Eskilstuna over a short period of time.<sup>54</sup> Right after being promoted to Allsvenskan, it changed the name and home grounds to Eskilstuna, and merged with the club from there.

The supporters of big, old clubs that dominate Allsvenskan took AFC's presence in the league almost as an insult. That club, coming from nowhere, having almost no support, changing names and locations, seemingly every other year, delivered an underlying message that no one wanted to hear: that money is enough to have high-level football, in the sporting sense. That money, and not traditions, heritage, prestige, organized sup-

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<sup>53</sup> Already in 1892 in England there was a price list for players that were currently for sale (Andersson 2002, 52). Football from the start encapsulated some of the class divisions, for example the push for amateurism was partly due to the "gentleman's ideology" as a "real gentleman" would lose money on his hobby rather than earn it (Andersson 2002, 46). Torbjörn Andersson presents cases from Swedish football crowd disturbances in the 1910s when officials tried to raise the prices of tickets to stop thugs (understood as lower classes with limited income) from attending matches (Andersson 2001, 6).

<sup>54</sup> On their official website the club states that it was established in 2007, merged with another club called Väsby United and became AFC United in 2013 (<https://www.afc-eskilstuna.se/historia/>).



The banner was a protest against AFC Eskilstuna, a club that, according to DIF supporters, was driven by capital rather than history, tradition, or strong support. Picture taken in May 2017.

port, flares and songs, can take a club to victory. It would seem that a thick wallet could destroy it all, and just buy the experience. Throughout football's 100 years of history, different performances became institutionalized and deemed as necessary. The anthropologist and historian John J. Macaloon wrote in the context of the Olympic Games:

Spectacles institutionalize the bicameral roles of actors and audience, performers and spectators. Both role sets are normative, organically linked, and necessary to the performance. If one or the other set is missing, there is no spectacle (1996 (1984,) 380).

Red Bull's or AFC's approach to football disturbed the ritualistic character of the performance and the relationships between the fans and clubs. Fans with their feelings and devotion were supposed to be secondary. DIF supporters pointed out that it would not be so. Their protest stated: *Money can't buy me love*. The distributed leaflets had a message of threatened supporter democracy, praised the 51% rule that makes it possible for fans to have democratic influence over the club and provide support during matches. The text stated that these factors were viewed with envy by other European

football nations. These cultural understandings were presented as equally important to the quality of athletic performance. AFC Eskilstuna was accused of jeopardizing everything Swedish football stood for, reducing emotional engagement and history to money.

In this narrative, success needed to happen together with emotional investment. One cannot buy love through success. There is a strict line here: success can bring money. Yet money should not be the sheer reason for success. Perhaps one could go back to the folk belief that money cannot buy you love or happiness. Fairy tales are full of narratives about wisdom, strength and patience winning over artificial power or wealth. How many protagonists were doomed because they followed easy money, sold themselves to the highest bidders? There is a moral here, coated in emotions and striving for the correct way of producing history. The ethnologist Fredrik Schoug remarked on a similar pattern of disapproval in Swedish hockey when the success of a “bought team” from Malmö was frowned upon as a sense of belonging was sacrificed to money-bought victory (Schoug 1997, 53).

The censorship happened even before history was written by the new and ambitious clubs; ingredients were scrutinized, with both Red Bull Salzburg and AFC Eskilstuna, before the matches/seasons. Newly produced histories of the “new money clubs” failures contributed to the story with the moral ending – modern evils did not win. This, in turn, produced the history of MFF and Allsvenskan too: a history of 100 years of importance in the local community rather than cheap success. The approach of Red Bull, for example, could be juxtaposed with the sense of cultural heritage being produced at stadiums. In many interviews, there was a notion that Red Bull had bought a beautiful old building and made it into a flashy supermarket with loud music and bright lights.

One could point out that this obsession with age, heritage and tradition is a translation from patterns that exist in a broader social context. “Old money” versus “new money”, established aristocracy, although impoverished and living in dire straits, still claims a better position than those who are just set on earning cash. Literature provides examples of this process, for example *The Great Gatsby* (1925) by F. Scott Fitzgerald. Social differences and class distinction are not about cash but taste and aesthetic choices (Bourdieu 1984) and those are often based on age, hereditary titles and items.

The anthropologist Kate Fox stated in a book about English society that the upper classes do not buy furniture, they inherit it (2004, 117). Clubs' usage of history, heritage and tradition refers to a similar method of establishing distinction and hierarchy. Like the use of Latin phrases, it is a practice translated from the outside, known, acknowledged and not questioned much. Because it happens in football, in the context of play and its own sense and nonsense, it can be interpreted as being out of place. However, it highlights the "common" dimension of the practice that is disturbed because of the translation to football.

During an interview in 2016, a former player mentioned economic issues. He was in favour of the Swedish model, and tried to point out that mystical ingredient that money just cannot buy:

Åke: But then – with members you can work long term but less money. Privately owned, well ... hmm. Unfortunately, this sport, too, is about too much money. Then you just start thinking about how much money I can earn. It's lost a bit of what football is about. Heart, loyalty ... those values are really important if you're going to form a team. There are clubs that have so much money and (inaudible) successes of course ... but ... football is much, much, much more than just money and success ... it's fun with success ... but then it's much cheaper when you find such a feeling in people .... To do something together. Now I sound like the Social Democrats ...

I laugh.

Åke: So... to me it's difficult to see why you would buy a player for millions... Why? (Laughing). There are so many who can perform. [...] But I know that the world is very selfish. And has always been and will always be . (interview with Åke 3 November 2016)

Åke was aware that it has always been based on money and profit. Yet he pointed out that it is not the trophies as such, but the emotions and being

a part of something that are most important. The official history that needs numbers, victories, titles that clubs themselves can provide is deemed as secondary to the memories and personal narrations that come from peripheries rather than the centre. Those who should be only consumers, spectators, become by their own proclamations co-producers and co-owners by influencing historical constructions. The polyphony of voices contributes to myth-making.

This sense of loyalty and building something together means that clubs rely on individuals and their involvement in spreading the stories. It is the voluntary work that keeps it going. Many clubs have museums, but to transmit joy, anger, despair, years of hope and disappointment, other kinds of institutions have to be formed – human museums. Just like material objects collected in a secluded space, people gather memories coloured by emotions and store them in forms of various stories. In the following section I shall investigate transmissions based on human agents. They sustain football fairy tales.

## Human museums and the class question

Some of my informants presented their own opinions as to why football became such a popular sport. They usually signalled the intersection of group identity and individual involvement. One MFF official connected it to the lack of personal success. He thought the collective success of a club made it appealing for many to become fans. In his own words:

And for many people this might be...perhaps it'll sound a bit harsh, but it might be the only thing that they are proud of in their lives. It might be where they feel that they are successful. They are cheering for the right team and the team is successful. [...] but the main thing with MFF is that we have long proud history, being the most successful team in Sweden, and of course for a city like Malmö with its background as the fourth biggest city in a region [...]. Yeah, you can say whatever you want but we are still the best. [...] We've always been the regional team, since we are the biggest team in the region and the region has, like I told you before, we have a history of being a bit different from the rest of Sweden, we have

history of being Danish, we are looked upon a bit from above, when you speak with people from Stockholm making fun of our dialect, and this is something we are proud of, of course. (interview with Linus 15 August 2012)

The cultural scholar Tara Brabazon commented that time in a museum “is not linear. It is not chaotic. It is circular, like a conversation, assembling linked ideas that mushroom into bigger narratives about the self and society” (2006, 47). This observation about traditional museums could be applied to football in general. Because it lives through conversations, it glues together many different perceptions and ideas about the society, from titles won, through economic issues to working-class narratives. This helps to create a specific structure whenever football is happening, attracting views, ideas and images like a magnet, ready to be applied. The effect could be described as *human museums* performed by fans, players and officials. Whenever one affiliates oneself with a club, a curtain opens to reveal a collective display of a football-framed life journey.

No matter where you turn, clubs never fail to show how their history fits perfectly with their strong, successful images, and makes their new victories all the more logical. It was like that in the past, and then surely they win again. For Linus, the club meant strength and a threat to those outside of Skåne. He was keen to produce a narrative based on the “us versus them” dichotomy on several layers – us in Skåne against the rest of Sweden, our dialect and the Stockholm dialect, our successes versus other teams’ titles. History helps to construct an image to frame the club against other competitors. The process works both ways, as Linus explains it, as the club’s image reflects back on the city that finds itself within the circles of MFF’s glory. Since MFF has been in Malmö for more than one hundred years, it seems that the two share and exchange memories.

One informant remarked, that “Football is a traditional sport. [...] You can pass it from generation to generation” (interview with Jan 24 October 2012). MFF, HIF, AIK and DIF are all more than a hundred years old. It is a long period of time encompassing several generations. It is not only about fathers bringing their sons to matches. Those clubs try to represent something stable in ever-changing social reality. The historian Jan Samu-

elsson commented that employing history has a stabilizing effect to some extent (2014, 151), and such application of history is traceable in football, but they produce their history in an ongoing process. Because clubs can produce history through collective memories and in dialogue with other clubs, dramatic upheavals rarely manage to damage them deeply. Leaving players, fired coaches, and demolished arenas seem to be transformed into threads that weave the turbulent history without shaking supporters' faith and devotion too much.

For Arvid, MFF supporter, history seemed important and the club, the city and social developments blended together:

It is very important for Malmö. And... yes... I think it is very important. And there are two sides to it. First of all, one of the two, if not the one most successful team in Sweden. We have a history of winning, and we are always talking about that and always proud to mention that, especially to other teams you know, we thrive on that. The late 80s, the 70s, the 50s, that sort of thing. That history is very important. But also there is the history of Malmö FF as a part of Malmö, the working-class club. I'm not sure that the kids of today would understand that, would get that. But at least my generation... I was born in 1972... and the old ones... I think we understand... we understand the connection to the working-class movement and the harbour and the industries and all sort of this. Kockums... you know the shipyard? That connection is very strong. Or was very strong. Now it's not like that anymore, because MFF has the hegemony in the town. So it is the club for everyone. [...] So that sense of history has perhaps lost its meaning, but to me, at least to me personally, it's still an undercurrent all the time. (interview with Arvid, 30 October 2014)

In the interview quoted above Arvid was unsure how the working-class background would be reflected in contemporary MFF, with pricey tickets, a shiny new stadium and VIP lounges. However, he was able to construct a narrative connecting working class, the lower strata of society, to the industries previously present in the city and to the club. Arvid produced MFF history and Malmö's working-class history at the same time. He acted as a *human museum* preserving stories that were fading away. This narrative, based on collective memories of class divisions



within the city, seems to transfer tensions from the history of the club through personal experiences. The presence of the working class requires another protagonist. A non-working-class adversary is needed to create sense in this context (see Stewart 1979). Arvid's story stretches to the beginning of the twentieth century when MFF had a local opponent, IFK Malmö that was considered a bourgeois club, while MFF would attract the working classes.<sup>55</sup>

Certain qualities, certain sets of collective recollections stick to the image of MFF as a working class club. These narratives have a positive character and *working class* is reconstructed as meaningful. Genuine hard work is connected to pride and honour. Having a working-class background carries desirable qualities that differentiate older sport organizations from newer that are less attached to place and more to capital. It brings those clubs closer to the mythical origin of the working-class cities and their general social influence as centres for the British industrial revolution, which are considered as cradles for modern football (Harvey 2013). The commercialization of the game contributed to changing perceptions of it. What has been considered a product of the people, produced for and by working classes, is being repacked and sold for high prices. As Pierre Bourdieu put it: "In brief, sport, born of truly popular games, i.e. games produced by the people, returns to the people, like 'folk music', in the form of spectacles produced for the people" (1978, 828).

Fentress and Wickam (1992, 87–143) have a chapter discussing social collective memories based on class.<sup>56</sup> Working-class identity has been recognized and written about. It carries some memories that would contribute to the construction of identity, especially dramatic events like strikes that were later retold and romanticized. Referring to Maurice Halbwachs, Fentress and Wickam state that there used to be a prediction of "factory-based patterning of memory of the working classes" (1992, 120). The memory has been connected to a specific place – factories. Could there be

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55 Torbjörn Andersson presents a story that in 1934 IFK Malmö reported MFF for breaching the amateur rules and paying the players bonuses in cash when it was not allowed. This was supposed to cause the deep rift between the clubs (2011, 135).

56 Fentress and Wickam (1992) provide a discussion of women's memories as not visible or acknowledged.



then a structural connection between experiences of factory and football?<sup>57</sup> The salient point is that the working-class ethos cherished nowadays might be strengthened by the possible pattern of creating narratives based on historical events. The difference could be one of scale. Unforeseen drama in football can happen any day, with profound intensity, and repeatedly throughout the year.

MFF's working-class ethos requires a club with another baggage of cultural capital, and IFK Malmö was described as a club for rich people. IFK Malmö was relegated from the top league in the 1960s. MFF became a club for everyone, simply because there was no alternative when it came to elite football (interview with Theo 2 February 2015). The working-class narrative is visible in the MFF storytelling, especially because it can be contrasted with IFK Malmö, which has been described as recruiting players with "a bit more bourgeois background" (interview with Jesper 25 November 2014). Although not visible in the sporting arena, IFK Malmö still exists in the popular imagination and pops up in stories about MFF. While shadowing in Stockholm during Djurgården's match, one person engaged in a narrative about someone in Malmö who so hated IFK Malmö that he refused to buy yellow dresses for his daughters, yellow being the IFK Malmö colour (football chat 2015). When MFF was going to play against Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) in the qualifications for the Champions League in 2015, there appeared a Facebook page announcing a match between PSG and ... IFK Malmö.<sup>58</sup> A sport journalist from Malmö, Max Wiman, wondered in his blog entry how such mistake could be even possible, but some fans commented that supporters do not mess with each other by

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<sup>57</sup> One of the most famous stadiums in the world, Old Trafford, home to English team Manchester United, has been called the Theatre of Dreams. For instance, Iain McCartney used the term in his publications about the stadium. McCartney even referred to Old Trafford as "the Mecca of English football" (McCartney 2010). This categorization gets some analytical depth in the context of Mats Hellspong's investigation of sport stadiums and audiences in Stockholm. Hellspong remarked that the modern sport audience, like football spectators, is more like old-fashioned theatre audience. Theatregoers were not a tamed group – they were responding to plays, commenting, booing or clapping. There was interaction between the scene and viewers as it was not a passive consumption of a product (2013, 257–258).

<sup>58</sup> <http://blogg.sydsvenskan.se/wiman/2015/09/03/gult-far-bla-fans-att-se-rott/>

accident, the reference to IFK being a clear sign of trying to annoy MFF (field notes 2015).

The ghost of the former rivalry is still around, and it is nourished by personal stories. In a way, MFF needs this narrative to have a contrast. As IFK Malmö disappeared from the front pages and is not out there competing for top titles, their memory is carried through MFF fans who keep the story alive. (see Billing et al 1999, 120-123). It allows MFF to differentiate themselves from a “bourgeois club” and keeps that bit of the past up in the air. Otherwise, this would be hard to do in the Malmö of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with heavy industry disappearing, poverty associated mostly with immigration, and MFF being the richest and most powerful club in Sweden. There is something curious about this narrative, as 50 years on, it is that reference that is lifted and discussed by my informants. It would seem that people took the roles of museums rather seriously. Keeping the badge of “working class” makes MFF less about money, less about the modern rich club with sound investments and a healthy budget – something that they have become.

All interviewees associated with MFF referred to the club’s roots in the working-class movement, social democrats and Eric Persson, a former MFF chairman and an outspoken social democrat as well (see for example Tapper, Sjöblom & Andersson 2013). Making a contemporary connection, one person stated that football “is still a sport for working men” (interview with Erik 10 February 2015). Being a working person, my informant’s narrative produced a certain understanding of the club’s past in relation to the his private life story. He managed a specific display of connected identities, his personal museum of football history.

The city has been transformed and so was the dimension of a working class as it became romanticized. When evaluated from the perspective of economic development presented at the beginning of this chapter, working-class qualities can be seen as fetishized and becoming a sort of insurance, historical capital, to sustain an image. There are still negative connotations coming from popular understandings of the working class. They appear in evaluations of masculinities that are expected to appear in the football context. It highlights an image of the old-fashioned masculinity

connected to low income, drinking and fighting.<sup>59</sup>

The football myth of creation is torn between middle-class and working-class ideals. On the one hand, it was established as an activity for English boarding schools but derived from earlier forms of folk games and activities (Andersson 2002, 41–48). The working classes quickly found themselves attracted to the “new” invention (Andersson 2002, 51). Football became a recommended activity for office-bound middle-class men, but for those from a working-class background it offered, it was argued, a good mix of rules and regulations that would help to develop character while engaging in physical activity (Andersson 2002, 83–84). Slowly but surely, football became more concerned with gender rather than with class, as the activity was described as manly and prescribed for boys only (2002, 76–77).

Considering the Swedish clubs, it seems that a few still carry working-class badges. One of the clubs with an established mythology of working-class traditions is Hammarby IF in Stockholm (Andersson 2016, 265; Rosengren 2005, 158). In an informal conversation, a person asked why I chose predominantly working-class clubs (football chat, 2014). From the historical perspective, one can see this as a development rather than a pre-existing category. As Andersson remarked, “The middle class gradually pulled away from the football field itself and instead handled the ideological control through football federations, judiciary and sports journalism. The situation was actually similar to that in England, where the bourgeoisie tended to cease active participation in the wake of the working classes’ invasion” (2002, 87).

Such narratives bring out the merging of class influences and almost a sort of hybrid rather than competing collectives. The conflict of ideas seemed to be about money as well. One of the supporters related this:

Yes... we... because that was the polarization in Malmö, and that was the... the er... rich boys’ club. And I don’t know if you know the story from the thirties because then they told on Malmö... because then we had amateur rules you could not pay the players. Everybody did, but under the table. MFF did too, but they put it down in the books, so it was sort of in the open, and they were pretty open about it. And then IFK Malmö told

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<sup>59</sup> I return to the theme of gender expectations in chapter five.

the Swedish Football Association about it. So MFF was relegated for a couple of years. So the chairman, the person who built the club, the legendary Eric Persson, he never never got over that. Cause he also thought it was this upper class against the working class. [...] So that's one of those crucial little moments also, an affirmative thing that created what MFF is today. It goes deep. We are who we are because we are not who you are. (interview with Arvid 30 October 2014)

The narrative is accepted and the specific character trait of the club assumed even now, although the story happened decades ago. The image is built on the principle “we are not you”. The imaginary of what working-class means came to live when contrasted with “the other”. It became a part of the oral textuality and so its meaning is audience-dependent and its interpretation is performed and actualized within the club's context (Seitel 2012, 77). Referring to the working class adds to the coherence of MFF's image since it links it to the city and its former social structure. This narrative is a part of the “vernacular”. The vernacular, “developed in person-to-person interaction without the mediation of institutional codes or controls” (Noyes 2012, 18) allows a group to perform their identity as it is understood within a certain cultural frame. The working-class performance cannot happen in a cultural void, it needs the context of a group acknowledging it (Seitel 2012, 101). Referring to the Kockums shipyard, the docks and manual workers established a mode of communication and understanding within Malmö. When forced to move outside the frame, my interviewees see the lack of balance in what was, and what now is, the working class.

Torbjörn Andersson questioned the “purely” working-class or bourgeois character of clubs and showed tides of influence depending on geographical location or political orientations in different cities. Andersson stated that both AIK and Djurgårdens IF are presented as based on a working-class ethos, but their beginnings were a bit finer and more sophisticated than the urban myth would have it (2002, 101–102). What emerges is the working-class ideal that clubs would like to implement in their narratives. This ideal turns into a weapon against clean, well-fed and well-groomed corporate football. Rather than striving to reach the “rich and

famous”, clubs manifest their humble connections.<sup>60</sup> The “working-class” badge contributes to sense-making. As history is produced through the lens of the present, it makes sense when even rich, dominant clubs show humble versions of their histories. The interpretation relies on “the immediate situational context” that provides the frame for producing such histories to make sense of everyday reality (see Stewart 1979, 27).

The connection is important because it stresses continuity. These men were tied to the spot where they worked all their lives. Social or working mobility among them was limited and they constituted the city – as the story would have it. One has to consider the strength and persistence of the myth. Both the former players from MFF that I interviewed had a university education, one becoming a lawyer and one a historian (field notes 2014). Such positions are not exactly in tune with the working-class image. However, they too referred to the lower-class character of MFF. The constant production and performance of historical references keeps such categorizing alive.

It should be noted that modern Malmö is associated with high immigration, with an estimated 43% of people with a foreign background in 2015.<sup>61</sup> The MFF squad is truly international, but migration does not take on a “historical” narrative as the working-class does. If mentioned, it usually is connected to racism, and the fight against it. Clubs like MFF and AIK praise themselves for being the best integration projects in the country (field notes 2015), and AIK attracts young players and supporters from Stockholm’s suburbs (interview with Carl and David 5 March 2015).

It is still the working-class identity marker that is more important. It might be that the cultural capital embedded in the lower classes counterbalances the stigma of humble origins. In other words, one gains a sort of heritage and traditions with that image. On the other hand, no

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<sup>60</sup> At the same time there is a distinction between the city and village. Djurgården fans often showed a banner saying “Hej Bönder” (Hello Farmers) to almost everybody who was not from Stockholm (field notes 2015). This was commented on by an HIF supporter who said that the capital thinks everything else is just one massive village (football chat, 2015).

<sup>61</sup> <http://malmo.se/download/18.6fb145de1521ab79coa7f349/1460644990500/Malm%C3%B6bor+med+utl%C3%A4ndsk+bakgrund+2015.pdf>; <http://malmo.se/Kommun--politik/Statistik/Befolkning/Utlandsk-bakgrund.html>

one wants to remember that there were neo-Nazi followers on the stands before the ethnic diversity was acknowledged (football chat 2013). It seems to fit uneasily within the greater football club story. All museums are selective, and so are the human museums, especially in the context that is ongoing, cyclical, with replaceable protagonists. The stability of clubs that are more than 100 years old depends on an illusion of continuity, as they need to be old, yet full of youthful energy that allows for new creations.

### A hundred years old and forever young

During the fieldwork, history and historical references were strongly present in all four clubs. Different upheavals and dramas needed some sense of stability and continuity. If football were to focus on such processes only, it would lead to fossilization – creating a space that preserves something that lost its socio-cultural relevance and it could be replaced by other processes (see Shove & Pantzar 2006). Although preoccupied with history, some clubs more than others, the drive is for the future, for the next season, the next possible win, and the next title. One needs to manoeuvre with a lot of luggage from the past and be able to accommodate new stuff. Football is old, and forever young. As analysed at the beginning of this chapter, clubs show their historical importance through crests and colours, and the colours play a profound role in a stable image. In this section, I focus on the material aspect of memory represented by official merchandise and the rituals these items can be used for. Players are discussed in later chapters of this dissertation.

The teams tend to be referred to by the colours that they use. Malmö is then *himmelsblå* – “the Sky-Blues”, HIF are *di Röe* – “the Reds”. This is an international phenomenon, as for example Manchester United have the nickname the Red Devils. Those colours are important, but their origin is not always known, even to supporters. A Djurgården fan expressed his own surprise that he was not familiar with the story behind the colour scheme:

Interviewer:     Where do your colours come from?



A smoke display by Djurgårdens IF supporters during a derby match in Stockholm against AIK. The smoke represents the official colour compilation that appears in the DIF crest. Picture taken 10 August 2015.

Anton: I don't know actually. I think... I should know this. They were chosen so... (laughs)... I sort of guess it has something to do with the sun and water... something like that.

Interviewer: OK.

Anton: It is nothing that... I should know about this... It's not something we talk a lot about. There is no... mythology around it. And the first crest was just like silver... square really. Then they changed it and got the colours. But I actually don't know. (10 August 2015)

It might be that specific colours are chosen “just because” without any deeper meaning. Specific interpretation can appear later, and this seems to be the case with Djurgården's colours. The club states that there is no



agreed explanation why red-yellow and blue were chosen. It happened in 1896. The rationale of this arrangement was expressed in a romantic-nationalistic poem from 1908 written by Johan af Klercker, who presented yellow and blue as the colours taken from the Swedish flag, and red was supposed to represent love (from dif.se).<sup>62</sup> The reasons seemed to have been added after the colour combination was created.

Colours are usually reflected in teams' home kit patterns. Their style has changed during the last century, but the colours have stayed (more or less) the same. There is a level of mythology when it comes to the shirts. The unveiling of a new design is an event in its own right. Sometimes clubs provide elaborate explanations why players' kits look this or that way.<sup>63</sup> Many supporters cherish a shirt obtained during or after an important event and wear it when going to matches. The modern shirts are quite expensive, approaching a price of around 60 euros (about 600 Swedish crowns). The commercial battle over football happens on shirts, as they tend to look like advertising billboards. One player commented that it felt much better in Malmö, because their match shirts did not have an overabundance of ads (interview with Peter 30 October 2012). Sometimes fans can sense economic trends through the sport gear, as one person remarked that Real Madrid's numbers on shirts look a bit funny so that they can appeal to the Asian markets (football chat, January 2015).

The value of such shirts goes up (at least theoretically) when they bear players' signatures. They can be gifts, but one can buy them from a club's store with the signatures of the present squad. It happened once that a shirt like this was lying on a table, waiting to be signed, while I was waiting for an interview with one player. Footballers were having their lunch. Around them moved an elderly lady, who worked for the club and was in charge of the lunch, and she made sure that they had enough food

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62 <http://alliansen.dif.se/2012/05/28/dif-skolden-en-bla-gul-och-rod-favorit-se-dan-1896/>

63 In the beginning of 2018 season, AIK's team was playing in all black kit, and the official message from the club explained that AIK reached back to its old history and used a design from 1901. It was a tribute to the dark kit AIK had 117 years before. Many of the items which appeared in their souvenir store sold out quickly (<https://www.expressen.se/sport/fotboll/allsvenskan/darfor-spelar-aik-i-helt-svarta-trojor/>).



and that everything there was in order. She even gave me something to eat. As I waited, she strolled at one point to the shirt on the table, casually picked up a pen and signed it. I held my breath. Did she really do it? Somebody sitting close to me noticed and exclaimed: “Hey did you just sign this shirt?” to which she replied: “Yes, I always do” (observations 2015).

This simple act of signing a name on a shirt seemed bold and unexpected to the onlookers. First of all that woman clearly did not belong to the playing squad, but her evaluation of her role and position let her have the confidence to place herself among the team “stars”. She transgressed the symbolic space and became a member of the “time honoured male preserve” (Welford 2011, 365). She stretched the understanding of an insider, and gained symbolic access to the exclusively male team.

There was another level of controversy in the lady’s action and that was the shirt itself. It is a piece of historical evidence. Those colours represented the club for a century. Football reality is unpredictable and unstable. The shade of a piece of cloth becomes a firm pillar of a club’s identity. Through that, clubs can claim that they have been there and unchanged. This means that several generations cared for this institution, spent money and time attending matches and cheering them on. Claiming such longevity is a bold statement, and clubs want to see and present themselves as a stable element in ever-changing social contexts (interview with Linus 15 August 2012). That works well on a commercial level, and the ease with which shirts can be produced in large quantities, along with various paraphernalia bearing the club’s colours, helps to maintain a stable, well-rooted and traditional institution. There is an economic element in the history of the colours. They are supposed to be purchased, so that fans can exchange cash for a collective identity, nostalgia, a sense of belonging. It has to be on sale in order to spread. A club narrative goes forward, sparking a chain reaction for producing history, which is visible in the commercial side of producing new (yet old) souvenirs.

The garments used 70 or 80 years ago do not resemble their modern counterparts. However, clubs realize that history sells. It has become popular to make retro shirts or retro-inspired shirts. This is another twist on producing history, and quite literally. The old-new materiality is based on



AIK's and Djurgården's versions of their retro shirts that were sold commercially. Accomplished and recognizable footballers that played for AIK (Daniel Tjernström) and DIF (Vito Knezevic) present the shirts. Pictures printed with the permission of both clubs.

nostalgia while serving its purpose as commercial mass-produced goods that generate income. The modern interpretation of the past is strengthened by selective visualizations. While editing the past and tailoring it according to present needs, clubs can get some sort of former glory – the past golden days' reference. Different versions of retro shirts, binding past and present, produce a connection. Fans get to re-enact the past and they seem to become each other's historical recollections. The “cultural memory”, in a way, goes back to “communicative memory”, as the more institutionalized modes of memory (produced by institutions, organized on an official level) become relevant in face-to-face interactions and possible to transmit from individual to individual. A past is pumped full of new life in a new form – resurrected shirts adorn new bodies. The myth of stability and continuity is dressed in new clothes, and produces the past anew.

Apart from the shirts, scarves are popular garments that reflect the colours and crests of clubs. They come in different patterns and designs every season. Although they are material objects, they are, as the ethnologists Tine Damsholt and Dorthe Gert Simonsen put it, “materializing” (2009), morphing and shifting while being used, worn, or put on display. Sometimes they are used in more extraordinary rituals. Colours play a part in identification and distinction, but can be considered sacred objects too (Derbaix & Decrop 2011, 278 – 282). Before a derby between AIK and Djurgårdens IF in 2015, AIK fans put a DIF scarf on a stick and burned it



A flaming scarf, held on a stick, is seen further in the picture. This action took place about ten minutes before the start of the match, and although dramatic it did not gain much attention. A small flame was not that noticeable in a big arena that can hold 40,000 people. Picture taken in Stockholm in August 2015.

while waiting for the match to start (match observations 10 August 2015). The stadium was already filling and Djurgården fans were on the other side of the pitch. The smell of burned fabric briefly filled the air as flames consumed DIF's colours. This was a highly ritualistic act – destroying another team's symbols in front of them.

Roland Barthes remarked about the meaning of sports that “all our modern sports are in this spectacle from another age, heir of ancient religious sacrifices” (Barthes 2007, 3). This performance just before the match, the burning of a colourful scarf, is reminiscent of old conflicts when the symbolic destruction of enemies came before battles, when sages performed rituals to ensure that their side would win. An item representing the other team was annihilated in front of them, becoming an insult.

A shirt can acquire historical meaning by itself when something extraordinary happens. Sometimes this action requires only a change in the main sponsor. Examples are not common, but they happen. One such episode

took place in 2012 when AIK played a European qualifier match against a Russian team from Moscow. AIK was forbidden to use the name of their main sponsor on their shirts, Åbro, because it is a brewery and such advertising is forbidden in Russia. AIK and Åbro then made a creative move and for this one match gave that space to Amnesty International, thus making a bold political statement.<sup>64</sup>

I was informed about this campaign by a supporter who commented that it was an interesting move. The reference appeared in several football chats. It created something unforgettable, lasting. The general narrative about that match was positive, but some fans raised their objections to mixing a club in politically charged activities. Amnesty carries a badge of not being political and UEFA accepted the request.<sup>65</sup> A message advocating human rights in a country that is continuously criticized for not respecting them has strong political connotations even though it is framed in a neutral narrative.

Moral implications aside, this match became memorable for many because of the unusual shirt that players wore. It has been woven into the mythology of the club that praises itself for being big, strong, and not afraid of bold statements. When my informants told me to look up this match it was because of the shirt and not the score or the actual meaning of the game itself. The space on the shirt that was strictly commercial acquired a political or moral dimension. Amnesty International has a history of its own. Its actions are not without controversies and Amnesty is both praised and criticized. The white fabric of the AIK shirt served as canvas for mute criticism of the other team's country. This was, in a way, a good commercial move. Covering one's sponsor led to the *revealing* of the sponsor as a result of having the unusual name on display.

Another example of history-telling with the help of a shirt was presented by AIK in 2016. That year the club celebrated its 125th birthday and during the season money was collected to make a special monument to commemorate its founder Isidor Behrens. An entire campaign called

64 From AIK's official press statement, <http://www.aikfotboll.se/Article.aspx?contentID=6029>.

65 From AIK's official press statement, <http://www.aikfotboll.se/Article.aspx?contentID=6029>.



AIK's squad before a match against CSKA Moskva in 2012. The white shirts had the official sponsor's name (Äbro) covered and replaced with Amnesty International. In an internet publication Fotbollskanalen wrote that AIK "raised the issue of human rights in Moscow" (<https://www.fotbollskanalen.se/europa-league/aik-lyfte-manskliga-rattigheter-i-moskva/>). Picture: Bildbyrå.

"Raise Isidor" was established (field notes 2016). A special shirt appeared as one element of those efforts, referred to as "retro". Its special features were the old club's crest on the breast and its grey colour, as seen on the advertisement photo. The shirt is a bit peculiar. It looks like normal, modern sport gear, and it is not styled on the past models. Its uniqueness comes from its being grey as it is a bow to AIK's mythology.

As the story has it, AIK played in black shirts but in the 1920s the club was very poor and the players had to use same shirts over and over again. The constant usage and multiple washings affected the black colour, making them grey, as my informant Maria said in an interview in 2015. This, in turn, is one of the possible explanations why the nickname of AIK is *Gnaget* – a slang word for rodents.<sup>66</sup> A rat is an official symbol of the club,

<sup>66</sup> The translation into English is not easy. *Gnaget* comes from "gnawing", a verb. It refers to a rodent. The name "Gnagare" (Rodent) is used by supporters. Another explanation states that in the late 1920s AIK "gnawed" its way to the highest league, hence the name *Gnaget*. I return to this nickname in chapter five when discussing collective identities.





AIK players with the special “retro” grey shirts on. Picture retrieved from <http://www.aikshop.se/sv/articles/2.396.5052/jubileumstroja-efterslapp-sponsor> (June 2016).

and its grey colour is said to refer to the washed-out black shirts.<sup>67</sup> It is an intertextual connection that is not easy to understand unless one knows the history and the folklore surrounding the club (Stewart 1979, 13–14). The grey shade of the shirt does not automatically connect to AIK, but once the textual layers are peeled away, it becomes an iconic representation of the club’s history. Yet, it is not a “natural” process, it has to be understood and transmitted. The intertextual context is applied to the present, producing a history of hardship and devotion, but also pride.

One could interpret this new retro shirt as being driven by a myth, an oral narrative that is materialized in a piece of fabric. The story behind the nickname and the rats involved make up a captivating story that lived its own life. The story behind this commercial manifestation is one of harsh conditions and struggle, of being tough and not giving in. It is a contribution to creating a certain image based on a past that is not glorious but

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67 The Swedish ethnologist and folklorist Jan-Öjvind Swahn remarked in an essay about rats and mice that both rodents have in general negative connotations, rats being associated with death, enemy, difficulties etc. (1993, 67). Yet, Swahn also showed that in many different types of Swedish folk tales rats are smart, helpful and compassionate, working together with protagonists and protecting them (1993, 74–77), providing a varied picture of symbolism attached to rats.



Printscreen from a Youtube clip depicting the moment when fans forced Jordan Larsson to take the shirt off in 2016.

heroic, and the cultural capital encapsulated in times of despair. It is a version of how AIK came to be what it is today.

The importance of the shirt, the wearable history, becomes visible in times of trouble. In 2016, Helsingborg was relegated from Allsvenskan to the league below, Superettan. In the dramatic last match, HIF lost to the team from Halmstad. Present on the pitch was Jordan Larsson, son of Henrik Larsson, former HIF player, an international star, and then coach of HIF. After the match a group of angry, masked fans approached Jordan Larsson and tried to take the red and blue shirt off him. The news about the incident were reported abroad, for example *The Daily Mail* and *The Guardian* wrote about it.<sup>68</sup> A one-minute long clip on YouTube shows the event. The screenshot comes from the video.<sup>69</sup>

The whole drama took only 49 seconds. The action, though aggressive, was highly symbolic. They tried to take back the colours from an important player – son of the coach and former star Henrik Larsson. With the

68 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/sportsnews/article-3954834/Henrik-Larsson-steps-son-Jordan-attacked-masked-hooligans-Helsingborgs-suffer-relegation.html>  
<https://www.theguardian.com/football/2016/nov/23/henrik-larsson-leaves-helsingborg-son-attacked-fans>

69 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9z6q4iZleLo>.

anger and frustration mounting, they went to humiliate their star player, because he did not meet their expectations. The club was going down. The shirt did not belong to Jordan Larsson, he was just entrusted with it when he was first admitted to the club and presented with it.

The dramatic incident concerning Jordan Larsson was a *reverse rite* – he was marked as “the other”. The shirt, associated with the club that Larsson failed to help, stirred action and provided a point of reference that allowed for the ritualistic behaviour. A symbolic sacrifice was performed, with the actor – a player – being stripped of his HIF identity. That sacrificial ritual was needed to restore the image of a club, to separate the elements that were connected – Larsson and HIF. As the anthropologist of religion Walter Burkert puts it:

Sacrifice transforms us. By going through the irreversible “act” we reach a new plane. Whenever a new step is taken consciously and irrevocably, it is inevitably connected with sacrifice (Burkert 1996 (1983), 64).

In that fatal match Jordan Larsson took a form of an offering that would shift the importance from players to the fans and the club. Burkert remarked that in “human ritual, too, the aggressive gesture can become so important that its object is unessential” (Burkert 1996 (1983), 65). It was the action of the angry supporters storming the pitch and taking the shirt off that became the core of the story. That “gesture” of “rescuing” HIF’s colours was the main point.

The colours of the fabric embed the past and represent the club as a whole. Their meaning is complete, providing grounds for a myth that feeds on the present but requires an established past (Barthes 1972). The colours decorating various fabrics are both a sign of commerce and commodification, heritage and traditions used in everyday (or perhaps every-match-day) activities. These shirts and scarves produce history in their commercial contributions to football, but they can result in historical references usable in the future.



## Concluding remarks

This chapter investigated how *human museums* are formed with narratives circulating and contributing to building images of clubs and individuals. One such narrative is the working class as a form of cultural capital that can add value and produce positive connotations in a club's image. People, emotionally invested in football, carry the reference and contribute to producing a certain history with it.

Continuity and stability were analysed in this chapter. They are fragile categories. Being a century old means that there is a substantial capital in the form of traditions, stories, figures and collective memories. The visible dichotomy of money vs. history is employed to highlight differences in approach between football based on economic advantages and football based on traditions and emotions. The emphasis is put on the value of history that is framed in a broader social context and the cultural capital that it represents (Bourdieu, 1984). The strong presence of economic factors in modern football, from rich investors to lucrative sponsors and sky-high prices for the best players, has created a need for a counter-narrative that can emphasize other advantages and capital that clubs can have, should they lack financial backing.

An item of clothing, a humble piece of fabric, can be used as a strong historical canvas able to accommodate hundreds of young athletic bodies that enact it and make it materialize. Football shirts and colours became strong markers of stability that can stir the process of myth-making around them. Yet, clubs need other elements of materiality, namely football stadiums, preferably arranged as oval structures with rectangular pitches inside. They claim social importance, becoming meaningful and storing emotions and memories. The following chapter focuses on geographic locations, bricks and concrete that are transformed into narratives.



#### 4. “...our history is engraved in concrete”

A space made of concrete can become animated with an overflow of emotions. Matches are opportunities to stage feelings, conflicts, allegiances, current problems or nostalgic inclinations. During the Stockholm derby in 2015, fans of AIK and Djurgårdens IF filled the Friends Arena with almost 40,000 spectators. There were official announcements, but they were drowned by the shouting crowd, and no one was listening. A banner ap-



The text says "Norra Ståplats mer än bara sången – Vår historia står skriven i betongen" (The Northern Stands are more than songs – Our history is engraved in concrete). A YouTube clip from a derby in Stockholm between Hammarby IF and AIK, 24 July 2016. Screenshot obtained from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bumlszy1oRs>.

peared among AIK fans: “Ni är inget utan Bajen” – you are nothing without Bajen.<sup>70</sup> A response was raised on the other side of the stadium: “Firman Bajs” – Firman Poo, referring to the hooligan firm called Firman Boys associated with AIK. The black and yellow AIK crowd was not happy. “Fuck you” was heard and middle fingers shown in the general direction of DIF supporters. There were many banners on AIK’s side. One had a text: “Råsunda’s grass grows now in heaven”. DIF fans had a complex display with a banner stretching across their section saying “Kings of Stockholm”. AIK had smaller pieces of fabric with Stockholm’s coat of arms. The list could go on. Visible messages pointed out to space and the use of it in producing history. Geographical regions, towns, locations, and symbolism tied to them often appear in football.

This chapter focuses on the historical exploration of geographical regions, stadiums and grass in the narratives about clubs. History is produced in a local context. As already mentioned in the previous chapter, memory is often arranged geographically rather than temporally (e.g. Ny-lund Skog 2011; Kayser Nielsen 1995, Glassie 1982). Football expresses territorial tendencies. The ethnographic description opening this chapter illustrates how certain rituals must appear in order to produce the space that can gain life as a reference for further narrative explorations. Meaning has to be performed. How is physical space important for producing history? What elements of the spatial historical narratives are useful? How is geographical location used in creating history? What happens when a space disappears, when a stadium is dismantled?

A stadium is a complex structure that could be described as liminal, heterotopic, panoptical, material, gendered, politicized, historical, performed, and narrated. This list does not exhaust the potential for studying processes and performances there. This chapter focuses on a fraction of the possible entry points for investigation that provide the best way to research the production of history based on territoriality.

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<sup>70</sup> Bajen is a nickname for Hammarby IF. DIF and Hammarby IF share a stadium in the southern part of Stockholm.

## “Skåne Team” or “Pride of Stockholm”

Football clubs often state their location in their names. A town or a city district ties a club to a specific geographical community, marking insiders and outsiders on a physical level. In this section, I shall investigate the meaning and functions of historical references that are based on the locality of MFF, Helsingborgs IF, AIK and Djurgårdens IF. Clubs and their supporters use traces of the past to promote or re-forge the links with their physical surroundings. This constructs a specific atmosphere that surrounds them. AIK and Djurgårdens IF are the key players in the Stockholm derby (which includes the third Stockholm team, Hammarby IF), whereas HIF and MFF have a “Skåne derby”,<sup>71</sup> which was referred to by Stockholm fans as a “fake derby” (interview with Joel 5 March 2015). The polarization becomes visible on another level, as the capital is positioned in contrast to the southernmost region in Sweden. Malmö and Helsingborg share a geographical region while DIF and AIK share a city.

A common reference to the past concerns the origins of Skåne. Now a part of Sweden, it belonged to the Danish kingdom until 1658, when after a series of military conflicts it was ceded to Sweden (Andersson 1955, 200–201). Although the event took place more than 350 years ago, it is used eagerly by supporters. MFF has a chant referring to it:

We are from Skåne, red-and-yellow Skåne

Here bloom rapeseed and poppy

We have never chosen to be Swedish

Free Skåne from the Svea State<sup>72</sup>

Vi e från Skåne, rödgula Skåne

Här blommar rapsen och vallmoäng

Vi har ju aldrig velat va svenskar

Befria Skåne från Svearike land

It is a known chant, though perhaps not the most popular. In 2009 Malmö supporters were filmed singing it boldly and loudly at the central train

<sup>71</sup> As the clubs reshuffled after several seasons, HIF started playing in the lower league in 2016, and another Skåne team – Trelleborg IF – was promoted in 2017. Hence that meeting was the Skåne derby in 2018 (field notes 2018).

<sup>72</sup> My translation of the Swedish text.

station in Stockholm. Shouting in the middle of a capital that you would like to free yourself from the Swedish occupation, the fans danced and jumped, to be surrounded by policemen trying to separate them from a handful of approaching Djurgården supporters.<sup>73</sup> The seriousness of the message was contrasted by the crowd behaviour. Men were jumping and dancing happily. They were aware of the scene they created as big Skåne flags were waved above their heads. It is quite common for fans from both Helsingborg and Malmö to have Skåne flags rather than Swedish ones. The MFF team has tiny Skåne flags on the back of their shirts (field notes, 2015). The political message might surprise, but the reference to the antagonism between Skåne and Sweden proper is visible.<sup>74</sup>

The supporters of Stockholm teams shared the feelings about Skåne in interviews. Maria said that she was going to “northern Denmark” while referring to Helsingborg. Another supporter, Joel, mocked the local dialect and said that he did not understand a thing when attending matches in Malmö because it is just Danish. Both sides play with the same reference, using it simultaneously as a point of pride and an insult. This double-edged attitude was illustrated in a sprayed message near the castle ruins of Brahehus.<sup>75</sup>

The picture was sent to me by a friend and features a sprayed signature of a MFF supporter organization (ultras Malmö) which is spelled with the Danish “ø” that does not appear in the Swedish alphabet, making a connection to Skåne’s Danish past. Another component of this picture is a small text “Danskjävlar” – Danish bastards, and an arrow pointing to the larger text. This is a political discussion taken to the informal setting. Danish spelling points to the region’s history and it is embedded in a football context, which influences how the message is interpreted. There is another level of intertextual reading in this photo. The “Danish bastards” phrase is commonly associated with a Danish television series *Riket*, where one of the characters, played by the Swedish actor Ernst-Hugo Järegård, shouts those words in many episodes, the most famous one happening

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73 The clip is available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NXwKrlqtRJg>

74 There are stickers with the flag and the word Freedom distributed all over Malmö, a call to free Skåne from Sweden has happened online, for example.

75 Brahehus is located close to Jönköping, almost exactly half-way between Malmö and Stockholm.



during his monologue on a roof. The phrase has a cult status, and it connects this act of vandalism (as the photographed cultural exchange was performed by devastating public property) to popular culture and the intertextual reading that is possible in the Swedish context. The intertext is visible here as one work contains reference to other sources that build up possible and more complex meanings (Worton & Still 1990, 19).

The textuality of MFF's supporter organization, its geographical location, the location's historical developments and a pop cultural reference make up an intertextual monument of four words and an arrow. The physical place is of interest. The message was sprayed near castle ruins, and the structure was completed in the mid-1650, which would place it around the time when Skåne was being transferred from Denmark to Sweden and both countries were at war. The physical relic from the past, built in the seventeenth century, has been brought back to play a part in the modern-day discussion framed in football fandom. The Stockholm-Skåne exchange highlights the flexibility of evaluating an event from the past. Inclusion and exclusion are not fixed but float around.

It is performed within a context of sport, where the *us vs. them* mentality tends to be taken for granted (Giulianotti 2007, 271). Supporters use

another dimension as words have history (Worton & Still 1990, 18), the names of regions and nations especially so. It adds the extra layer of textuality that is possible here, as they employ heavy, loaded categories to their advantage. Ambiguous historical events and rivalry are compressed in some terms that cannot be used without activating a whole network of meanings and symbols. They would not work in just any context, but the specific structure and characteristics of football allow such uneasy terminology to flourish and gain firm ground. Stockholm as the capital plays part in polarization between the centre and periphery. A supporter from Helsingborg, Felix, remarked that he did not like teams from Stockholm in general, contrasting it with HIF being from “a small city” (interview with Felix 6 February 2015). References have pragmatic value that can be performed in order to produce historically anchored identity.

The use of the term “danskjävlar” has a comical effect and it could be related to other usage of humorous messages in different social situations. The folklorist Ida Tolgenbakk analysed cultural exchanged concerning a group of young Swedes working temporally in Norway. That group was labelled “party Swedes” – “partysvensker” (2014, 158). The term connected an ethnic identity with, presumably, easy-going lifestyle. Tolgenbakk gave an example of a graffiti where the text in Norwegian, saying “Party Swedes; Go Home!” was countered with a message in Swedish: “But Norway is Swedish” (2014, 172-173). The reference to, as Tolgenbakk described it, cultural and historical connections both countries shared in the past, turned into a humorous commentary of modern social tensions.

Commenting on beer labels, Jan Samuelsson wrote “Pictures and texts from chronologically and geographically different environments are blended in a blissful mess, without it being clear in what way they belong, if they do it at all. [...] with or without major history skills, one creates one’s own construction of the past” (Samuelsson 2014, 144). Such messy displays appear often at stadiums where protagonists and events from different decades are pulled together to make an image of a club. Below there is a picture from Olympia stadium during a match between HIF and AIK on 19 July 2015. Flags hanging from the standing sections marked historical-cultural dimensions of HIF that fans wished to construct and communicate.





Helsingborgs IF's players thanked the fans for support after winning the match against AIK. On the left one can see the standing section decorated with Skåne flags and the blue banner with a white cross. The stadium, Olympia, was half-way through renovation during that time. The arched structure in the background was dismantled in November that same year. Picture taken on 19 July 2015 in Helsingborg.

The flags included, among others, one of Skåne (red with a yellow cross), a flag of Freetown Christiania<sup>76</sup> located in Copenhagen (red flag with three big yellow dots) and a blue banner with a white cross. I had to ask HIF's supporter liaison officer (SLO) I was shadowing that day, what the flag was. To me it resembled the flag of Scotland, but he laughed and said that it was representing Luggude härad, a "hundred" which had been an old Germanic geographic division and which had been located in that area of Sweden, dating back to the thirteenth century. In an article from 2006 published in *Helsingborgs Dagblad* (30 August 2006) a local flag expert Kennet Karlsson said that the Luggude härad banner had not existed before, and the flag was designed based on a seal from 1524.<sup>77</sup> Helsingborgs IF supporters presented

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<sup>76</sup> Christiania is a part of Copenhagen. It is a former military area that was occupied by squatters in the 1970s and still holds its status as a society within society. It is controversial because of open cannabis trade, though it has become one of the tourist attractions in Copenhagen (see for example <https://www.visitcopenhagen.com/copenhagen/culture/alternative-christiania>).

<sup>77</sup> <http://www.hd.se/lokalt/helsingborg/2006/08/30/regionsflaggor-valkomnar-besokarna/>

a unique mix of geography and history during the match.

Such display requires a high degree of intertextual reading. For me it was a total mystery and I could not find any connection between a white cross on a blue background and the club. But for those schooled in the context it made sense. At the time, I did not think of asking any AIK fans if they understood the message, but some of the HIF supporters encountered later did not know the story behind it. How much does one need to know? How important is it for the collective?

This particular historical reference might be of some interest to HIF fans since there is rivalry of claiming Skåne as their region.<sup>78</sup> HIF fans produced history with bits and pieces that appeared most relevant to them. Going back to the thirteenth century created a differentiation between them and Malmö FF as both teams compete for position in Skåne. That one fabric pushes the local identity back in time and points to another historical and geopolitical arrangement that predates the idea of Skåne as a political unit. The historian Hayden White commented that a version of history is chosen from different alternatives based on moral or aesthetic preferences (White 1973, 433). I suggest that it is the production of history, not just choosing a version available from the past. The past stays as a form of *cultural inventory* available for those with access. Such cultural inventories are sources for folk knowledge and references that can be transmitted in a society (see Blank 2013, 6–7). Knowledge of the past can be shared through banners, producing history framed in football.

There is a constant creative search for elements from the past. In 2015, fans from Malmö came to play against Djurgårdens IF with a banner saying that Stockholm’s bloodbath was the best thing that ever happened.<sup>79</sup> This referred to events from 1520 when the Danish king Christian II was in conflict with a part of Swedish nobility. The king promised amnesty at first, but then on 8 November 1520 about 80–90 people were executed, mostly clergy and nobility supporting the regent Sten Sture the Younger

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<sup>78</sup> HIF supporters refer to the club as the “Pride of Skåne” and MFF calls itself “Skåne team”. Malmö claims wide support from southern and eastern parts of the region (field notes, 2015).

<sup>79</sup> The match took place in September 2015 and was accompanied by unrest among fans (<https://www.sydsvenskan.se/2015-09-20/oroligt-kring-mff-supportrar>).



Before the match between Malmö FF and AIK in 2018 I found this sticker in the toilet. The text says “Förinta Skåneland” – Annihilate Skåneland. It is in the colours of Sweden’s national flag and works as a marker of differentiation, being plastered on the premises of the Skåne club (as MFF likes to call itself). Picture taken on 9 April 2018 in Malmö.

(Andersson 1955, 116). MFF supporters reached back to that event in Swedish history and aimed it against a Stockholm club. Once again, the history was played in Danish-Swedish tones. The aim of the display was a quick and easily recognizable insult with, possibly, a witty or double meaning attached to it – the suffering Stockholm of the sixteenth century would translate to the suffering Stockholm football team of the twenty-first century. David Lowenthal remarked in his book *The Past is a Foreign Country*:

Time travel’s temptations are manifold: to enjoy exotic antiquity, to inhabit a happier age, to know what actually happened, to commune with forebears, to reap the rewards of being modern among ancients, to correct the past or to improve the present (Lowenthal 2015, 63).

One has to verify the statement produced by MFF supporters in its context. Its meaning is produced there on the spot on the stadium (Worton & Still 1990, 17). Its content is stretched and applied outside the supposed settings, making a historical event into a football reference. It is shaken

from its comfort zone and shown around like a dug-up skeleton. It becomes a myth as the meaning loses its value, becomes impoverished but it lives on and its form can be refreshed by other content (Barthes 1972, 117–118). Like a decaying body, this reference has a strong stench of being inappropriate and unsporting. It is the immediate context that is somewhat unfitting, yet it becomes a part of the football tale on this occasion (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1975, 106). In all the examples above, location is given historical perspective that positions the clubs in the present and reflects on the future. It is a ritual communication, often based on the past and recontextualized. It results in historical production.

The communicative process described above is dependent on possibilities of performance, the immediate context of those expressions as well as linguistic elements and historical references that need to be activated while being performed (Ben Amos & Goldstein 1975, 5). The context in football can be narrowed to particular material structures that hold their power over the game and supporters and over the memories and narratives that are shaped inside their walls. They have an impact on their own, which means they are not only providing a stage, they can produce history as well.

## The concrete materiality of emotions

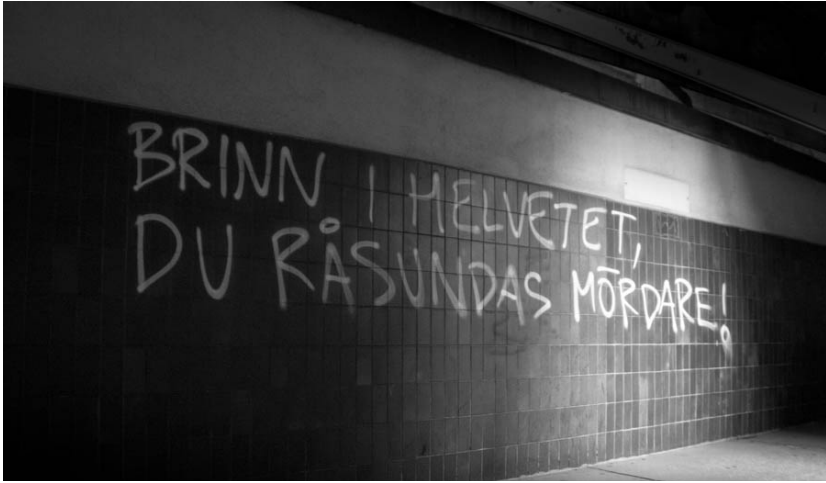
Stadiums are mythologized by clubs; they are referred to as homes. They are places of glory, infrastructures for storing memories and emotions. Christian Bromberger remarked that “A football stadium is one of those rare spaces where collective emotions are unleashed [...] where socially taboo values are allowed to be expressed (the crude affirmation of one’s dislike of the Other etc.)” (1995, 302). The architecture, an oval or a square shape surrounding a pitch, is a vital element for every football club. It can, as Tara Brabazon puts it, “visualize power, providing a link between visibility and authority” (2006, 23). Big arenas that can host twenty, thirty, forty thousand people evoke awe and respect. Clubs are judged on the quality of their home grounds; if the stadium is nice looking, modern, comfortable, has good facilities, or if it is historical, classic space (field notes 2015–2016). The sport scientist John Bale and the ge-

ographer Chris Gaffney remarked on “historical sense” as one of the senses to be found in a stadium experience. They pointed out the importance of varied written (and audio-visual) reproductions of the concrete structure with spectators:

Every stadium event is a historical experience. People know when and where to gather to participate in a particular event. Historical documents (programmes) are produced, memorabilia are purchased, and sometimes even bits of the stadium are taken home as mementoes. After the event, history is documented in the papers, popular opinion is expressed on the radio and the action is replayed on television. Each popular treatment of the events of the stadium heightens the sense of historical import. (Bale & Gaffney 2004, 34)

A stadium can be described as a liminal, heterotopic construction that allows people to participate in certain rituals and engage in a behaviour that would be not accepted, or not appropriate, elsewhere (Herd 2013). It is a historical place through its relative longevity, as stadiums are not changed often, and through personal connections that tie it to human lives. Stadiums house memories. Aleida Assmann took a closer look at a phrase “the memory of places” and concluded that it “is both convenient and evocative. [...] it is evocative because it suggests the possibility that places themselves may become the agents and bearers of memory, endowed with a mnemonic power that far exceeds that of humans” (Assmann 2011, 281).

This agency that Assmann mentions takes intriguing shapes in a time of crisis. When football homes start crumbling, disappearing and are given drastic makeovers, they enter different narrative contexts, provoke reactions and stir emotions. In the following section I present two stories of challenged and abandoned stadiums. The arenas acquired characteristics of living organisms and became elements in creating artistic expressions of football fandom. The sport sociologist Richard Giulianotti introduced the term “topophilia” to describe the “deep affection of people towards particular social spaces, or ‘places’” (1999, 69). Giulianotti stressed that there is psychological connection with these places, sport being a good example, that lets them be entrusted with meanings and emotions (1999, 69). This



The picture of an underground passage with a message sprayed “Burn in hell you murderer of Råsunda!” Picture: Henrik Kullberger.

connection is manifested through cultural modes of engagement that are established in football.

In 2012 the Stockholm clubs AIK and Djurgårdens IF were faced with the harsh reality of being evicted from their home grounds and moved to new arenas that they did not own. The move prompted anger and disappointment. There was hard criticism towards the governing bodies of football. AIK had played its matches since 1937 at Råsunda stadium, which the club partially financed (Hagström, Johansson & Jurell 2010, 18). From a historical perspective, Stockholm clubs never occupied fixed places. Both AIK and Djurgården have changed their home arenas during their long histories and battles with city councils, presenting a challenge for urban planning. An AIK supporter commented:

And you have to know, AIK used to have Stockholm Stadium and moved to Råsunda, and DIF had the Stockholm Stadium but could not play high-risk games at their own place, so they played them all at Råsunda. (interview with Martin 25 January 2015)

Three mighty clubs in one city is a tight squeeze. The decision to close Råsunda and then demolish it was not taken lightly. Carl, when referring to the process, said:

But our arena where we played, actually everybody loved it. Eh... we can say that people complained about that arena too because it was quite old, and cold, it needed to be freshened up... there was a lot that happened on the way during the process, there were some violations and corrupted politicians, and people who wore many different hats at the same time... a bit like that. (interview 5 March 2015)

The situation described here by Carl was one of a chaotic approach that was not focused on the best result for football or the club. Rather, the question of where the matches should be played was classified as a problem for the municipality, taking into consideration money and issues of city life, and not the feelings or preferences of fans or the club. The position of the club and “real football” was jeopardized, in Carl’s opinion, by money in the form of corruption, involving corrupt politicians. The last match came up in many interviews, making a dramatic narrative of a lost home. Maria became emotional when referring to the last match:

There were flowers and a minute’s silence... I have never seen so many men cry! [...] The last time we played at Råsunda I was working as a steward, not security exactly but being there to help, and I was by the eastern stand, so with Firman Boys and the like. And there were 27,000 at Råsunda. [...] And it was Thursday and they were supposed to come on Sunday to just take bits of the stadium, like you know, like memories, like you do when you close an old stadium. But then seconds after the match everybody was so emotional and I hear all this noise “frum, frum, frum!!!” and then I look around and they are ripping off the seats one by one. And then there is this huge noise and I look and just think “oh my God they took the door!” (interview 5 March 2015)

Flowers, farewells and tears accompanied Råsunda on its last day as a football arena. It was treated like a member of a family that was escorted in its last journey. The place was mourned in a personified way. There was

a funeral ritual well known and established in society – silence, tearful goodbyes and flowers. The rites that Maria described link to Arnold van Gennep’s analysis of funeral rites of passage that are liminal and focused on transformation (1960, 146–147). The transition, making Råsunda a different entity, was about to begin.

Maria described a common practice of allowing supporters to get a piece of an arena before its annihilation. The same happened to the third big Stockholm club – Hammarby IF.<sup>80</sup> When their home ground Söder Stadium was closed, fans helped to dismantle it. Maria referred to those bits and pieces as “memories”. A piece of materiality became loaded with spiritual powers. Fans did not dare to wait those couple of days when they were supposed to come and take part in the demolition. It happened right away after a match, with the air still filled with singing and chanting. The club had been prepared to leave Råsunda behind and the decision to demolish it was final. Fans were able to make sense of the tragedy and use it pragmatically to enchant the image of the club. René Girard commented in an essay on violence and the sacred: “The purpose of the sacrifice is to restore harmony to the community, to reinforce the social fabric” (Girard 1996 (1977), 244). AIK fans had no say in the process, but the stadium was not just abandoned. The meaning of the past grows if there is an exchange with the present, when the past can be applied to the present situation (Rosenzweig & Thelen, 1998, 178).

The tragedy of losing an arena is connected to losing a storehouse for memories that is able to accumulate many individual connections over long periods. As Aleida Assmann puts it:

Even if places themselves have no innate faculty of memory, they are of prime importance for the construction of cultural memory. Not only do they stabilize and authenticate the latter by giving it a concrete setting, but they also embody continuity, because they outlast the relatively short spans of individuals, eras, and even cultures and their artefacts. (Assmann 2011, 282)

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<sup>80</sup> Hammarby IF played their last match there in June 2013, and the arena was torn down in 2015. (<https://www.svt.se/nyheter/lokalt/stockholm/nu-rivs-soderstadion>)



The term cultural memory that Aleida and Jan Assmann introduced is a stage after transition from communicational, face-to-face, everyday memory transmission (A. Assmann 2011; J. Assmann 1988). The way Jas Assmann described these concepts resembles an understanding of folklore. In his own words, cultural memory “preserves the store of knowledge from which a group derives an awareness of its unity and peculiarity” (J. Assmann 1988, 130).

Space is crucial for memory and for history. The folklorist Henry Glassie commented that for people who are not professional historians, it is not the time sequence that matters most, but a connection to place (1982, 196). The landscape undergoes visible change and thus it provides people with history in the context of their existence. As Glassie puts it, “the past forces itself on the present, and the past unalive in the present is not history” (1982, 196).

The stadium, because of its longevity and purpose, becomes a *memory storage*. The arena is imbued with special power for displaying collective memories because it ties to family histories and to individuals, which makes it into a “generational place” (Assmann 2011, 284). Supporters did not shy from talking about Råsunda as a home, a family member and a living being. Martin commented in an interview: “Friends Arena... (he sighs). Råsunda, I mean Råsunda is your wife. We lost Råsunda, so we lost a wife. I strongly support that they should have their own arena” (interview with Martin 25 January 2015). In another interview Kristian said “About Råsunda – I was not like... that worried. But we understood what we lost when we went to the new arena. Then it hit us” (phone interview 28 April 2016).

Both Kristian and Martin had technical arguments why the new Friends Arena is not good, mostly due to the acoustics, size, and the fact that the club does not own it. Emotions and memories, that were connected to Råsunda, were torn apart by bulldozers together with the concrete structure. The narrative constructed around the loss of Råsunda could be described as a “basic human strategy for coming to terms with time, process, and change – a strategy that contrasts with, but is in no way inferior to, ‘scientific’ modes of explanation that characterize phenomena as instances of general covering laws” (Herman 2009, 2). This is a story of a lost home, forced migration, political decisions that did not take into consideration ephemeral elements like feelings. This space joined past events together,

“...OUR HISTORY IS ENGRAVED IN CONCRETE”



The picture above was taken in August 2015. The structure of Råsunda was already completely demolished. A tall fence protected the gravel on the side. The picture below was taken at Råsunda in 1991 (Bildbyrån).

not a time period (Glassie 1982, 201). It was the materiality of space that let decades sift through and crystallize the mythology around it.

In an informal conversation with an employee from Stockholm Museum I was told that there were discussions about preserving the site somehow, but there was not enough justification for the action – it was just a football stadium (football chat 2016). Råsunda lacked the kind of cultural capital required to become valuable for the world of museums. Its materiality did not become a strong enough narrative. The instructions in the ongoing performance of the stadium that made sense for so many fans, management and players, did not translate successfully to the official forms of cultural memory (what could be classified as heritage) represented by, for example, state-run museums.

Moving to the new stadium is not about moving to new changing rooms and facilities, but about transporting a whole emotionally loaded invisible museum of personal narratives that were produced, performed and then woven into the bricks and steel that made up Råsunda. The stadium went through a “generational chain” (Aleida Assmann 2011, 284) as fathers introduced their children to the “.<sup>81</sup> Thousands of people became connected to football during a century of AIK’s history, and the space for the connection was, in the memory of many, Råsunda.

The Danish historian Niels Kayser Nielsen wrote about historical experiences of a stadium: “Both as a place of objective remembrance and as a communicative everyday memory, the stadium performs its part as an inward object of identification in relation to the local users” (Kayser Nielsen 1995, 31). The repeated experience of football contributes to creation of identity, and it becomes a lasting element of reference that ties together a large group of people. It is, as Nielsen puts it, “a meta-social comment on being a citizen of a city” (1995, 31). Stadiums are heterotopias, islands in terms of time and space, where logic can be a bit different and life rhythms become specific. It is a place for rituals and sacrifices (Lefebvre 1991, 34) and it leaves a strong mark when it is sacrificed itself.

With the closure and then demolition of Råsunda the sense of continu-

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<sup>81</sup> Some supporters spoke with pride about how they became members of the club within hours of being born, or registering their children immediately as well (field notes 2015).

“...OUR HISTORY IS ENGRAVED IN CONCRETE”



AIK crowd at Friends Arena. A text saying “Råsunda’s grass grows in heaven” is visible in the left upper corner. Picture taken in August 2015 in Stockholm.

ity was broken. The stadium, a storage box or a family album, disappeared. The space became the past. Banners and flags commemorating Råsunda appeared; for example, a banner with the text “Råsunda’s grass grows in heaven”. The place was given a soul and sent to heaven. There is a trace of affective economy, a form of investment through emotions. This form of capital surrounding Råsunda was too great to leave behind. Fans needed to find creative ways to save it. Sara Ahmed points out that it is through emotions that identity-building narratives are created. Through “affective encounters” people and objects can be perceived “as having attributes, which ‘gives’ the subject an identity that is apart from others (for example, as the real victim or as the threatened nation)” (Ahmed 2004, 52–53). Råsunda’s history was produced together with a collective effort to somehow keep the disappearing site alive. On the other hand, it became a filter that made emotions visible and possible. The gentle narratives, tears and sheer powerlessness of the situations are not often a part of media footage from a football event.

The stadium became a tattoo motif. I interviewed two tattoo artists from Stockholm and both named Råsunda as a popular choice among foot-





The pictures were retrieved from AIK's Facebook page, from a photo album entitled “AIK tattoos”. It contains more than 400 photos. Many limbs and torsos have Råsunda-themed tattoos.

ball-interested clients, especially after it was demolished (interviews with Håkan and Henrik May 2016). The arena came up when bigger tattoos were designed and interwoven with other symbols, like AIK's founder Isidor Behrens and the rat that is used by some of the supporter organizations. One of the artists stated that his client requested a tattoo of a number sign from the specific section at the stadium where he used to sit (interview with Håkan May 2016).<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Ethnologist Birgitta Svensson analysed historical development, forms and functions of tattoos in different social contexts (1998, 2012).

Shirts commemorating Råsunda were printed, and in 2013 an impressive photo album was published, where the demolition was closely documented in large, beautiful photos. The arena got new life as a form of intertext, which suggests it is not just a former sport facility, but acquired a number of textual meanings and then is used itself to mark belonging, commitment, memory, nostalgia, group identity, ideological standpoint etc. As John Frow presents the concept: “intertextuality requires that we understand the concept of text not as a self-contained structure but as differential and historical. Texts are shaped not by immanent time but by the play of divergent temporalities” (1990, 45–55). By *text* I understand here Råsunda, as the idea of textuality can be applied far beyond written or printed sources (Worton & Still 1990, 1–44). It became a reference to the past, a symbol of former glories, and the lost home that was dear to many. The demolition was transformed into a story of yet another blow to the club that AIK survived. Modern technology allows the former stadium to live its life as a digital footprint, for example on AIK’s Facebook page. Nostalgic pictures and videos are shared regularly, including footage from the 1930s when it was being built. Tara Brabazon sums up the complex meanings around spaces like Råsunda:

While sport is trivial, it has a powerful symbolic significance and consequence. For disempowered communities, sport is able to carry popular memory from week to week, from season to season. The shirts, scarves, songs and humour incubate a sense of place, even when terraces are lost, stadia are demolished and television coverage discards local sensitivities for globalized coverage. (Brabazon 2006, 35)

Råsunda was born in the popular mythology and through narratives that grew around it; it died and was resurrected in various forms of creative fandom art. Råsunda’s meaning was not exactly given in its form or function, in its physical existence. Rather, the structure got its strength and agency because it was able to accumulate memories through emotions and allowed the performance of memories through commemorating it (Sheer 2012). It is “talked to life”. It exists as a symbolic monument and a holy place. Råsunda was a sacrificial stone that was sacrificed and mourned. The textualities that

were acquired during the 75 years of its existence were able to lift it to a reference of its own. The number 75 was tattooed on quite a few arms (interview with Henrik, May 2016). To understand the meaning one has to be able to recognize Råsunda and its emotional transformation. When Råsunda “was killed”, figuratively speaking, it became a “sticky sign” (Ahmed 2004, 92). It acquired characteristics that help it to hold other identity markers together. Ahmed wrote about “stickiness” in its negative form as certain insults stick to certain bodies (2004, 92), but the process could be applied to the grief and nostalgia carried by the former glory of Råsunda.

AIK is not unique in commemorating its former arena,<sup>83</sup> and its “death” helps to establish its mythic status. Mats Hellspång pointed out that sport arenas around Stockholm were fluid in a sense, coming and going, used by many different clubs simultaneously (2012). Hellspång remarked that for example Råsunda existed already in 1912 and was used for the Olympic Games, then it was demolished in 1936 and rebuilt in 1937 (2012, 84). Råsunda had a long history and it was important for many clubs and purposes. The connection to AIK became the strongest. It was not enough for the city of Stockholm to preserve it.

It should be noticed that such “memory resurrection” is not a given pattern that follows when a stadium is changed. MFF moved, although only about 50 metres, to a new arena in 2009, but the old stadium, built in 1958, does not represent the same emotional or nostalgic capital as Råsunda has had for AIK. MFF supporters would say that the new one is so good nobody really cares about the old one, or that it could be demolished anyway, because it is just in the way of Swedbank Stadium (interview with Arvid 30 October 2014; interview with Theo 2 February 2015).<sup>84</sup>

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83 For example Gefle IF produced banners with the name of their former arena, Strömvallen, and the time frame of its existence, 1923–2014 during a match against MFF in Malmö in 2016 (field notes 2016).

84 Still, some of the fans do not appreciate the name of the sponsor (Swedbank) attached to their home arena, and refer to it as “New Malmö Stadium”. Such a phase was also used when MFF played group matches in the Champions League in 2015 because Swedbank is not an official UEFA sponsor and the name could not be used (field notes 2015). The games were officially at New Malmö Stadium. In late 2017 it was announced that the stadium will not be called Swedbank from the new year on, but just Stadion (field notes 2018).

The old arena in Malmö did not capture that strong emotional investment. Perhaps the move did not cause that much trauma as the Swedbank Stadium is used almost solely by MFF. The club is more invested in key figures like Eric Persson their former president, but the physical structure failed to be granted immortality. Its history was not produced as vehemently as it happened in Stockholm. One can say that MFF is the only top club in Malmö that can claim the entire city. AIK, Djurgårdens IF or Hammarby IF compete over the Stockholm territory, making it more meaningful to have special sanctuaries of one's own. The history of the urban space is not challenged much in Malmö, while the capital teams engage in discussions involving physical locations in particular periods of time (Hagström, Johansson & Jurell 2010, 21).

It is crucial that Malmö stadium still stands there and it is used by IFK Malmö. The building just decays slowly rather than being drastically removed from the landscape. On the other hand, there is a past reference to the Malmö stadium that MFF fans would like to forget. In 1992 AIK won the league after 55 years,<sup>85</sup> and they secured the title after winning against MFF at the Malmö stadium. AIK supporters came all prepared with paraphernalia, and after the match they invaded the pitch. Some of the iconic photos from that year were taken after that match: half naked players celebrating and a big banner resembling a newspaper's front page and important images in AIK's narrative.

A person working for MFF, Jan, said in an interview from 2012 that it was a painful experience. It was an impetus for Malmö supporters to get better organized as AIK just took over Malmö's arena. In short, a strategic place in MFF's history got a connection to AIK and their narrative became embedded in that stadium. In a sense, their space became contaminated. As Jan remarked, after the unfortunate event MFF Support was established. A kind of vow was taken that this would never happen again.

The match in 1992 could be classified in terms of cosmogonic time (Tuan 1977, 132). A single event affected the relationship, the structure and physical property of that stadium, it created a different zone that exists in a specific nexus of time and space. Its purpose has been established through

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<sup>85</sup> <http://www.aik.se/fotboll/ar/1992.html>.





AIK player celebrating the win at Malmö stadium after winning 2–3 against MFF. Photo: Bildbyrån.

the ritual performance of celebrating AIK fans and players – to stand as a monument of collective memory of a victory. It is a myth set in a “pocket of time”. The event – a league title won – was the catalyst that produced a narrative by eager supporters, media coverage, and transmission of the reference through communicative and cultural memory (Assmann 1988), remaking it into folklore. A form of historical production happened, in AIK’s context, but Malmö saw the symbolic destruction of their arena, as the black and yellow crowd changed it into an icon representing their long-awaited triumph. This is not to claim that a single event took Malmö Stadium away from Malmö, but it has created an image and it has had a lasting effect (that has to be kept alive, of course). A place that should be secured in MFF’s history became jinxed by AIK. The club from Stockholm performed their bit of history there and managed to preserve the product.

AIK supporters brought the reference back during a match in Malmö in 2017. The game took place in late October and MFF had already secured its 20th title, leading by 10 points over AIK who were in the second

place. MFF fans presented a beautiful display with flares about the amazing result. The AIK crowd responded with a banner saying that it was in 1992 they came to Malmö that they showed them how support should be done, thus giving them a lesson in being supporters (match observations 2017). AIK brought up history to undermine MFF's glory. They employed the past to produce history in a somewhat classical attempt to poke a hole in MFF's legitimization of power (Aronsson 2004, 62–63). The production happened as they attempted to frame MFF's success in AIK's narrative.<sup>86</sup>

AIK might have lost a place of concrete, wood and brick, but gained a resurrected symbol of pain, evil faith and endurance that is able to enchant AIK and its present supporters. The past has been used to scaffold the present and build the future. It is memory that became culturally mutated to be a tradition (Glassie 1995). The creative expressions that saved Råsunda strengthened the image of the club and added another brick to solidify its identity. The past can be used to interpret the present, as singular, isolated events help to produce a pattern – a mythical version of the past, setting the tone for the future (Rosenzweig & Thelen 1998, 68).

## Housing homeless souls at Tele2

This section investigates a situation when the final sacrifice could not be completed and a club, Djurgårdens IF, was left in-between spaces. Around 2012 all the Stockholm big clubs, AIK, Djurgårdens IF and Hammarby IF, had to move their home grounds and play home matches at different, bright new and, according to many informants, emotionless stadiums.

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<sup>86</sup> The attitudes from Malmö stand in contrast to Helsingborg. Stadium Olympia in Helsingborg is a cherished, mythical construction that underwent another renovation between 2015 and 2016. It is an example of a changing structure that has occupied the same spot. A book about the arena (Joelson 2009) pays tribute to the historical space of sport competition, but also tells the story of the city from the perspective of a physical space with a very specific purpose. One could risk a comment here that since the club had a turbulent history, going up and down the different series, struggling financially, not being able to go back to Allsvenskan for 24 years, its stadium became a stabilizing element, an anchor of continuity.

AIK supporters expressed a unified view that they have had it the hardest. As David and Carl expressed it:

Interviewer: How was it moving to Friends Arena?

Carl: With what?

David: Moving here, the stadium...

Carl: Moving here was very difficult for AIK. It is still very very hard. Many of our supporters... not all... some have matured to like it...

David: It goes like from two sides.

Carl: It was so... with the other Stockholm clubs... we had the toughest move. It was of course difficult for Djurgården and Hammarby... well it was easy for Hammarby because they moved just fifty metres...

David and I laugh.

Carl: So they stayed put in their area. Of course so did we. We are two kilometres away from where the arena used to be. Djurgården moved from one part of the city to the part where they have played hockey for some time now. But our arena where we played ... everybody loved it. (5 March 2015)

Although hard and emotional, once Råsunda disappeared, the club and supporters were given an opportunity to mourn it, make a closure, and use it in expressive, creative ways. AIK was allowed to bury its dead man of concrete. Hammarby IF supporters tore its old Söder Stadium to pieces, taking away seats and bricks.<sup>87</sup> No such situation occurred with Djurgården.

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87 <https://www.sydsvenskan.se/2014-11-08/hammarby-fans-plundrade-soderstadion>

The club just moved to Tele2, which they now share with Hammarby IF. This is far from a desirable situation and caused a lot of friction. Still, many fans express healthy pragmatism when it comes to changing arenas. Anton explained both pros and cons of the move:

Interviewer: What do you think about the new stadium that you have, Tele2?

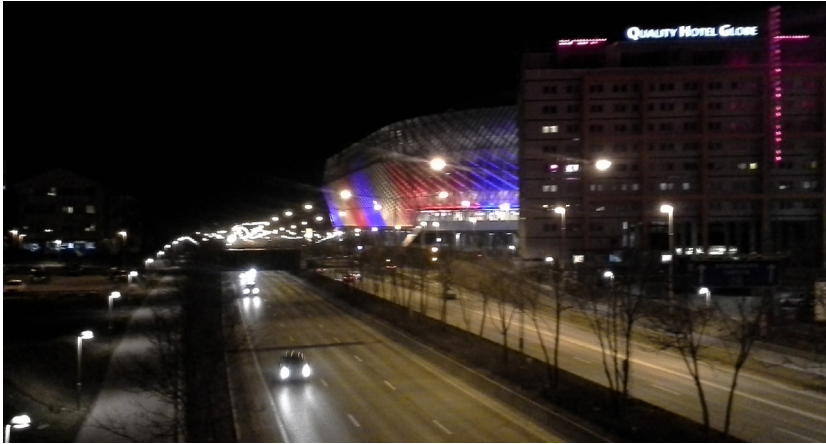
Anton: In the beginning it was rather... it felt wrong somehow. Stadium... our previous stadium... that is where you felt at home. I can say that I still feel that it sucks that we can't have our own stadium, but if you see past this you see that it supports Djurgården as an organization. And supporters as well. Because there are more spectators, better, it's easier to create a good atmosphere. You can see it as boost... we have become better too, we were maybe not that present at the old stadium... it was almost nostalgic in the end there. There were very few... almost no new people came to watch football there.

Interviewer: Oh OK...

Anton: It was inconvenient to go there, difficult for families as well. (10 August 2015)

The change has had some positive impact that is visible in numbers and statistics, but Anton would still say that Tele2 did not feel like home. It is very difficult to mark the arena as a specific territory, as neither Hammarby IF nor Djurgårdens IF formally owns the grounds. Thus, when the match is a home game for DIF, the arena is lit in the club's colours, blue, yellow and red, as seen on the picture below.

Technology makes it possible to stretch the meaning of belonging. The lights provide an impression of inclusion and ownership. Just as AIK with Råsunda's memories, Djurgården supporters bring with them banners that represent their old arena, Stockholm Stadium. For example, there



After a match between Djurgårdens IF and IFK Norrköping, Tele 2 arena was lighted in the colours of Djurgårdens IF. Picture taken near Tele 2 Arena 5 March 2015.

was a banner with the text “Sofialäktaren”. Alma, who worked for DIF, explained to me that it was the name of a part of the previous stadium, because Queen Sofia Street right was next to it. In her own words, it was to create a “feeling of home” in the new place (shadowing 2015). Traces of heritage and traditions were plastered on the new structure in an attempt to create home.

The contrast between the old and new arena is staggering. Djurgården’s previous home stadium was a historical construction erected for the Olympic Games in Stockholm in 1912. Its peculiar brick structure is to some extent outdated and not comfortable for modern-style support. For example, the track-and-field tracks put the stands far away from the pitch. Mats Hellspong pointed out that the arena was an example of romanticizing the Middle Ages that materialized in sport architecture, producing other structures inspired by this style (1991, 103). With vines and roses growing around its walls, Stockholm Stadium looks a bit like a medieval stronghold, evoking history through aesthetic choices (observations 2015). Djurgården was threatened with losing something precious, decades of memories anchored in their former arena. The new Tele2 is modern; it has a roof and has bright new facilities. But it is removed from Djurgården’s traditional territory, which is Östermalm, and plunged deep into Hammarby IF kingdom, with

“...OUR HISTORY IS ENGRAVED IN CONCRETE”



Stockholm Stadium. Pictures taken in August 2015.

their former arena, Söder Stadium, being just a short distance away from the new one. Hammarby IF fans call Tele2 their New Söder Stadium, to the annoyance of Djurgården (football chat 2015).

Changing to the new arena prompted sarcastic reactions from other clubs. When IFK Norrköping came to play in the Swedish Cup against DIF, their supporters had a banner saying “We would rather share a pool



with Elfsborg than move together with Bajen”<sup>88</sup> (shadowing 2015). This display led to a discussion that there was an apparent friendship between Norrköping and Elfsborg FF clubs and their supporters (football chat 2015). The fluidity that had been present through the 100 years of Swedish football became a narrative of shame and mockery as the idea of DIF becoming “brothers” with Hammarby IF, was predicted several years before.

In 2009 there was a joke going around on the internet that these two Stockholm clubs would be merged and become one entity. Martin referred to it in the interview:

There was this page... hifdif.se and people spread the rumour that they were supposed to merge, and some journalists bought it. The video is so funny. DIF supporters all stuck up and in suits and then Hammarby hobos, singing together. The media bought it and it was just a big joke. But then, when it happened for real everybody cracked. And yes they share a stadium. (25 January 2015)

The web page mentioned by Martin existed in 2018, and the video made for this purpose is to be found on YouTube.<sup>89</sup> It is in the style of charity videos where different artists sing together for a common cause. Elegant and clean-shaven DIF supporters embrace hippy-looking Bajen fans who have long hair, beer cans in their hands and wear sweat jackets. The song, accompanied by ringing bells and emotional hugs, features a refrain saying: “Blue and blue, green and white, together we shall go; together we will be bigger than AIK”.<sup>90</sup> The colours refer to the stripes on their shirts, two shades of blue for DIF and green and white for Hammarby. In short, the video is a mockery of the two clubs in an apparent attempt to become bigger and stronger than AIK. Territory and colours were merged together. The established symbols were used to produce a mock identity and mock history.

The song was uploaded first in 2009. When both DIF and Hammarby IF

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<sup>88</sup> Bajen is a nickname for Hammarby. Elfsborg FF is another football team from Borås.

<sup>89</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fhTOVGg9oSA>

<sup>90</sup> “Blått och blått och grönt och vitt, tillsammans ska det gå, tillsammans kan vi bli fler än AIK”.

announced the move to Tele2 in 2013, the joke became reality. People were quick to upload funny pictures and comments, especially on Facebook. Terms like DHIF, HIFDIF, or South Brothers (Söderbröder) became common. During the derby match between AIK and Djurgården in 2015 one of the favourite chants was “Söder family – Djurgården and Hammarby” (shadowing 2015). The use of the reference resulted in a narrative that would make sense of the situation. In theory, making two old clubs with strong support share an arena would be unthinkable. It should not happen. It was a joke, but once the pragmatic decision was made, the Swedish football scene was left to use its creativity to re-establish its faith in the ideal – clubs owning their unique arenas. This was a reminder of the fragility and insecurity in the football world, as the aura of cultural heritage and importance does not prevent city planners from disregarding emotions based on collective memory.

In the video, the local lore about the people interested in football has been applied to a certain artistic genre, to a specific type of music. There needs to be understanding of both elements and their original positioning for the joke to work. Borrowing a term from folklore studies, one could see this as a process of re-situation (de Caro & Jordan 2004). This re-situation means that there is a process of taking elements from their sociocultural context and applying them to an artistic one, which might have a playful dimension. The established mythology around Stockholm clubs lent itself to the song, making it a chain process of transferring references from reality to fiction, and back to reality again. In this music video, one finds production of history based on “common-sense” references that are contrasted with “nonsense”. Their duality is a construction that feeds each other. As Susan Stewart remarked, “manufacture of common sense and the transformations by which nonsense is made out of common sense belong to the same social universe” (Stewart 1979, 7). This is an “unreal situation” only if one agrees that it goes against what would be considered proper. The football past does not support such evaluation, on the contrary; yet the creation of the narrative and its mythical persistence (as in “this is how it should be”) disregards the evidence. It is possible to produce a message that could be used to ridicule since different discourses that appear here borrow from each other in a constant process of reworking the social context (Stewart 1979, 15).

The joke became an intertext (Worton & Still 1990, 45). As an intertext,



it underwent a transformation over a period when it was appropriated for use in a broader context. It was *decontextualized* in a sense that, although in 2009 nothing extraordinary was happening, such a video with a claim that DIF and Hammarby were merging was considered funny and worth making. Then it was *textualized* as it really happened and was laughed at. Finally, the real-life event was connected to the online joke and *recontextualized* as a cruel fairy tale that came true (Arvidsson 1999, 173). This particular narrative of pain and shame is performed through the additional historical reading of the developments on the Stockholm football scene and additional meanings are brought once the narration happens. The imagined and the factual world interfered with each other, allowing the overflow of creative expressions done and performed by the supporters.

Another point of discussion concerning arenas is the pitch and the grass that grows on them. AIK still plays on real grass at Friends Arena, although described as bad (e.g. interview with Kristoffer 6 March 2015). DIF though was forced to move from natural to artificial. As Joel commented: “Grass...a delicate question...especially in Helsingborg (laughs). They think we have chosen it, we had no choice really” (5 March 2015). The issue of grass is present in Swedish football. Thus, in the next section I shall look at how the pitch influences the production of history.

## The history of grass

The football pitch is designed for one purpose – playing football. Because of the climate and the season structure (the football season in Sweden is from spring to autumn, unlike most European countries that play from autumn to spring), the early spring months are filled with worried discussions about pitches, their quality and colour.<sup>91</sup> As more interviews and observations were collected, it became apparent how much attention was given to grass, and how it went beyond its material features. Swedish supporters talk a lot about grass.

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<sup>91</sup> In popular culture a reference to sizes measured in football pitches is rather common. This visualizes the magnitude for the general public. In 2017 farmers in Skåne appeared in an ad comparing the size of their fields to that of football pitches (observations, 2017).



Picture from a Swedish football magazine Offside advertising the English league, stressing that they have played on real grass since 1994, thus being “plastic-free”.

In recent years a sort of conflict has developed within Swedish club football, as several top-league teams have started playing on plastic, artificial grass, for example Elfsborg in Borås, Hammarby IF and Djurgårdens IF in Stockholm. The logic behind the move has been that Sweden is a cold country and artificial grass makes it possible to play outside even in February or March. The counter-narrative is usually constructed around the notion that all clubs used to have real grass all over Sweden before and it was fine even without modern technology. The producers and consumers of this discussion form a specific historical audience. Criticism of modern football appears alongside nostalgia for bygones, putting the “golden age” of green pitches in the past.

It seems problematic to grow a good pitch even in the southern part of the country. Modern arenas are somehow not grass-friendly. In several discussions with football officials I was informed that the shape of stadiums that are closed structures prevents grass from growing evenly.<sup>92</sup> One person said it was because the wind could not sweep the place freely, and he pondered on how that was needed to make the grass grow (interview with Linus 15 August 2012).

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<sup>92</sup> Before the 2013 season there were many discussions about the conditions of grass on MFF's stadium. Fan forum and the local newspapers worried a great deal if the grass would be all right.



Information for Elf-whining; football is played on grass! (Retrieved 26 April 2016).

The quality of a pitch is of course vital for football, and criticizing another club's arena is a common insult. The dichotomies of real-artificial, traditional-new, natural-plastic are strongly spelled in the discussions about grass. The ideological conflicts are then extended to the pitch. A slogan “football is played on grass” appears often, especially when one is confronted with an artificial pitch. Before a league match against Elfsborg, AIK's supporter club Black Army posted a picture about grass on their Facebook page: The message indicates that it is easy to have a real pitch and that football needs to be played on grass, not plastic. AIK's “own” grass at Friends Arena has been criticized as being poor, brown and making the game horrible. A player from DIF brought up the subject in an interview:

Interviewer: How do you feel about DIF's new arena?

Kristoffer: Tele2?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Kristoffer: It is a fantastically good arena. One of Europe's best in its class. Also with the acoustics... comparing to Friends Arena...

Interviewer: So the sound is better here?

Kristoffer: Oh yes. And of course there is the thing about the grass... but I would rather have the artificial grass we have at Tele2 than the grass at Friends that is never good really. So we have a much better arena than AIK have actually. (6 March 2015)

Kristoffer mentioned sound quality because it is crucial for songs and chants, a feature of modern football that is regarded as necessary for a good match. He talked about grass and AIK had nothing to be proud of, in his opinion. The picture presented above shows the ideal that is hard to achieve. Grass is often brought to arenas in wide strips and assembled inside before a season begins. Black Army's message is based on a construction that to some extent ignores practices present in football. AIK's relation to grass, meaning AIK's supporters as well as officials, seems to be influenced by the loss and demolition of their home arena Råsunda, which was discussed in the previous section. One of the banners at their new arena has the text “Råsunda's grass grows in heaven”.

When the stadium was officially closed and then turned to rubble, Råsunda emerged as this nostalgic spiritual hybrid of resistance and memory, as discussed previously in this chapter. The mention of grass strongly connects materiality with spirituality. Grass in a sense is immortal. As long as natural conditions are favourable, it will just keep growing. Individual blades of grass together make a strong structure that enables the game to take place, just as individual supporters make a wall of songs and emotions that makes football happen. The metaphor is both simple and powerful. The organic component of the stadium structure, both immortal and vulnerable, is said to grow now in heaven, being again immortal yet non-existent.

One hears now and then about fans buying small pieces of pitches when grass is changed or the structure renovated. I was told in an informal conversation that a person had a friend with one such piece of grass that was planted in their garden and it is carefully looked after (football chat 2016). Another story claimed that this piece of turf started to smell so it was thrown away after some time (football chat 2017). Players touch the pitch when starting the game or make the sign of the cross when stepping on the grass. They sometimes kiss it after scoring a goal. There

are certain rituals embedded in the very function of the pitch. The sport sociologist Richard Giulianotti writes about football in an African context: “The rituals include wearing charms on fingers or toes, urinating on the field, smearing players’ faces with the blood of sacrificed animals, or burying the latter beneath the pitch” (Giulianotti 1999, 20). Perhaps European football is not as explicit with performing rites, but they are present and play a vital role.

Old clubs with history and heritage use elements like “real grass” as a form of capital to be weighed against *nouveau riche* clubs bought by wealthy investors and representing the new, “plastic” form of football that is money-centred and focused on quick success. Grass in the Swedish context is used to a similar effect. It needs time and care, it is a living organism and it connects players and fans to the environment. It stresses the “olden days”, the mythical time when grass was green naturally all over Sweden. The clubs who fight for their grass maintain traditions.<sup>93</sup>

Symbolically speaking, it is the grass grown locally, on the home turf, and not just bought and imported from abroad. This is another of modern development fans need to deal with, as footballers are often foreign purchases.<sup>94</sup> I was informed that when Elfsborg IF got their artificial pitch, fans from MFF came to the away match with seeds and threw them on the arena, thus making a strong point in contrasting the growing, living thing with a plastic, factory-made structure (football chat 2014). The pitch is most important to players. Kristoffer, a player from Djurgårdens IF, brought grass to the fore once again:

Interviewer:     What would be good to change in Swedish football?

Kristoffer:       Just that more Swedish players would get to Europe and play there... so we need to have grass at all the arenas in Sweden.

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93 Henrik Sandblad in a publication about modern sporting arenas commented that a common word designation a football stadium in Sweden – *valla* or *vallen* – is derived from an old Swedish form *valler* which means fields and has been preserved to some extent in agricultural vocabulary (Sandblad 1985, 307).

94 I attend to the position of players in the sixth chapter.

Interviewer: Real grass?

Kristoffer: Oh yes. The whole of Europe plays on real grass. We have to do that too. Then we have to have the same match tempo and the same season as in the rest of Europe. We should play like most of Europe autumn to spring instead of spring to autumn. And not like having the vacation in December and January when the national team plays. Then they are in full season and we are on vacation. I think we need to do that.

Kristoffer, like many of the supporters, was critical of developments in Swedish football. The new artificial pitches were discussed, criticized, and framed in a narrative that relates to the past ideal. Although the clubs choose artificial grass because it is supposed to save money, supporters look at it differently. Members of the HIF supporter club Kärnan regarded grass as one of the principles in modern football:

Alex: But it is important to us anyway that football should be played on real grass.

Interviewer: And it is really common right now, the artificial grass.

Alex: Yes, and it is just horrible. But we have a clear stand about it [...].

Robin: I think you lose something; you lose some value in football, something that you probably cannot describe in purely economic terms.

Alex: And we actually think often, that other supporters... that they just accept without protesting really. If you heard that together with the renovations Olympia would get plastic grass then you would have demonstrations outside the arena (laughs). You would have a hundred people screaming in front of the city hall that they can't do it.

Robin: You can't really put it so that it can't happen in Helsingborg.

Alex: No no... of course not.

Robin: It is an important principle for us. And you need principles in football as well. (focus group 16 February 2015)

The ethical, moral meaning of the pitch was spelled out strongly. Grass becomes an objective in the ideological struggle between old and new, natural and artificial. Nature in the form of green blades is transformed into a surface of cultural meanings (Damsholt & Simonsen 2009, 17). Football used to be played in mud and snow, even at quite a high international level. I interviewed separately two former MFF footballers who played in 1979 when the club reached the final of the European Cup.<sup>95</sup> When asked about semi-finals they both referred to the quality of the pitch:

Interviewer: Is there anything special you remember about the match against Wisla Krakow?

Jesper: I remember quite a lot... from the away game against them... that there was a horribly bad pitch (laughs). The weather was very bad, just that. It was a disgusting, grey pitch. (interview with Jesper 25 November 2014)

Interviewer: Is there anything that comes to your mind about the match against Wisla Krakow?

Sune: Comes to mind? The only thing that comes to my mind is the really bad pitch. So much snow. (interview with Sune 12 November 2014)

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<sup>95</sup> MFF played the final against Nottingham Forest, and the semi-final was against Wisla Krakow, the first leg played in Poland, the second in Sweden. European Cup (also known as European Champion Clubs' Cup) was rebranded as UEFA Champions League in 1992.

Jesper talked about the away match in Krakow, Poland, while Sune's answer referred to their home win. They were referring to two different matches, two semi-finals, one in Poland and one in Sweden. Those were important for the club; they paved the way to their biggest international success. Memories expressed in interviews circulated around grass, or lack of it, stressing the toughness and difficulty of those encounters. Nowadays, clubs are punished by UEFA if their pitches do not meet required standards but in the 1970s rules were not as strict. From the match described by Sune there is a photo of three players celebrating a goal in deep snow that was lying in piles around the pitch. It has been described as “iconic” by many of my informants, and in the local press (field notes 2016).

The image of players running in the snow narrates a glorious past, toughness and difficulties. It was a victory over another club and weather. The materiality of the pitch takes on a processual, relational and performative character (Damsholt and Simonsen 2009, 14). It is not only a surface required for playing a match. It is an element in the network that influences history and is influenced by history. It contributes to the narrative-making as a pitch can enhance a victory (as with MFF in 1979) or be blamed for failure. In the 2016 season, some teams, it was claimed, were already playing better on the artificial grass than the others. The disappointed comments based on the statement that “football is played on real grass” contributed to the framing of this rather new challenge in Swedish football<sup>96</sup> (field notes, 2016). The grass, or lack of such, could potentially influence match results, and in turn the freshly made history.

The grass can be described as one of the actants in a narrative, acting in a context that is present around it and generating new impulses that cause action. The agency given to the grass comes up in the narrative form; grass is “talked to life” (Hébert 2011, 73; Herman 2005, 1).<sup>97</sup> The term “actant”

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<sup>96</sup> The article in Aftonbladet stated that MFF proposed that artificial grass should be forbidden in Swedish football as it appeared to hinder Allsvenskan clubs from progressing in European-level tournaments (<https://www.aftonbladet.se/sportbladet/forboll/sverige/allsvenskan/malmo/ff/article23409251.ab>).

<sup>97</sup> Actant is a term associated with the STS field (science, technology, society) and used by ANT's founding fathers Latour and Callon. The term was first introduced in structuralist narratology.



has been used in narrative theory to describe the relation of the subject and object of a tale and the possible exchange of their positions. When agency is attributed to the pitch, it becomes an active element in the network, contributing to the speed, the style of the game, to scoring and conceding goals, at least in the opinion of my informants (interview with Kristian 28 April 2016). The tense production of history is connected to grass because it is alive. It grows; it needs soil, water and sun. It is vulnerable to the seasonal changes and weather. Just like players, it is always there, always performing the same function, and yet different, renewed and replanted, rejuvenated from one season to another.

According to the linguist Algirdas Greimas, the total of six possible actants in narratives can be arranged as three oppositions. The grass in the football narrative could follow the distinction of helper–opponent (Hébert 2011, 71). Because the material analysed here is neither a printed text nor a tale per se, it might be tricky to set it in the perfect shape for Greimas’s system of actants and roles, but the grass helps or creates problems, enhances or threatens. It is given life in the way it is described and referred to. Its immediate materiality/activity on the pitch is transformed in narratives that produce history.

The pitch needs to play a special role in constructing failure and success, glory and suffering. The pictures painted in interviews make a clear distinction between genuine and artificial, real and unreal, for example. Quoting the sociologist Dorothy Smith, one can comment that “the rules, norms, information, observations, etc., presented by the teller of the tale are to be treated by the reader/hearer as the only warranted set” (Smith 1978, 35). It is how the teller presents the tale that facilitates its interpretation.

It is not natural for grass to grow evenly and nicely in football conditions. When enclosed behind stadium walls, trampled match after match, it needs all the possible technological help to stay green and strong. As Smith pointed out, “The actual events are not facts. [...] A fact is something which is already categorized, which is already worked up so that it conforms to the model of what that fact should be like” (1978, 35). It is a hybrid of the ideal, of nature’s possibilities and limitations, and of the game’s requirements. The so-called hybrid grass makers, for example Des-

so Grass Master,<sup>98</sup> state on their website that they are perfecting the natural sport pitch. It is considered a great thing, demanded by fans in Sweden. One person very strongly advocated for it and asked rhetorically why clubs would be so stupid not to invest in such pitches, as it was not more expensive than the plastic carpets they had already (football chat 2016). That grass is a mix of artificial blades and real ones being planted around them. The degree of “realness” or “naturalness” is disputable, and the approach is pragmatic. Faced with the inevitability of “plastic”, one could at least opt for a hybrid.

This layering exemplifies the very character of football, its hybridity that connects the real with the unreal, the artificial with genuine, emotions and economy. The meaning of grass stretches far beyond the pitch. It ties into the discussions of modernization, historical developments, and the intrinsic character of football. Dorothy Smith argued, that “social rules and definitions of situations can be viewed as if they provided a set of instructions for categorizing responses” (1978, 38). While talking about grass, fans talk it through, make it an actant that is relevant and displays agency. It can be both a chivalric figure and a villain, depending on the narration and on the narrative produced.

## Concluding remarks

The dimensions presented in this chapter – regions/cities, stadiums and grass, are all used as historical references to build up the traditions of the future (Glassie 1995). The produced narratives come from emotional engagement with places and artistic expressions that are possible in the football context through collective memories. Every story needs a stage on which it takes place.

Narratives based on locations influence the character, attitudes and evaluations of clubs. Location and home stadiums are crucial elements in the football world, but as shown in this chapter, rather flexible in spite of their material and static character. Narratives about locality are embedded in the collective memory and mythologies that have grown around the physical

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<sup>98</sup> See for example: <http://www.dessosports.com/hybrid-grass>.

placement of the football game. They frame and influence historical production, they do not provide the final story of concluding evaluation. History, as Henry Glassie put it, “like the weather, is an inescapable condition. It must be watched so life can be adjusted to its power” (1982, 500). Changes and upheavals connect to the place and make people into active participants in historical production through the materiality of spaces like stadiums. “Simultaneously changing and unchangeable, history is place. [...] It joins saint to rebel, warrior to farmer, God to man. In place, the person is part of history” (Glassie 1982, 201).

Through the ritualistic performance of the past, material culture gains agency and it is “talked to life”. Bricks and buildings enchant and provoke emotions and memories, and their role does not disappear with physical destruction. Rather, they can be re-situated in a textual process as symbols and references, getting new forms as texts, banners, songs or even tattoos. The roles of stage, event and character, which are needed to make a narrative, can then be exchanged as, for example, a stadium can play all those parts.

The way the steel and bricks “become” is pragmatic in yet another way. It lets the participants, the supporters, build up their identities and establish links with their beloved clubs. We get a glimpse of how stories can be reworked to strengthen or to hurt. When a location is performed, it becomes an actant that stirs actions. Stadiums need to “happen” in history in order to produce history. The repetitive, ongoing process at work here is based on matches with an engaged and outspoken public. Football fans occupying terraces are viewed through specific constructions of collective identities that are based on recollections, expectations but prejudice. The following chapter focuses on collective identities that are produced through the references to the past, resulting in producing history.



## 5. Our history – our identity

A tense match started the season in 2015. I attended as one of the photographers on the pitch. There were flares galore, and strong emotions were invested in the performed identities of MFF and AIK. When standing on the MFF side I saw a small flag hanging at the AIK end, but I could see only four big letters spelling “HATA” – hate. I wondered what they hated, so I went on my pilgrimage around the arena. It actually said “HATA ALLA” – hate everyone. As the players marched in and Malmö crowd got up, lifted their flags and started singing the MFF anthem proclaimed “Oh we love Malmö FF”, AIK put up a huge, dark, dirty looking old banner saying Gnaget, and started the flare frenzy. A minute into a match, it had to be postponed and players hid in the dressing rooms as thick smoke lingered around the stadium. An acrid smell pervaded the air. My eyes hurt and my nose become itchy. The noise was constant and I felt as if my head was starting to vibrate. From either side came songs, chants and deafening noises. Booing and whistling suddenly broke the melody, just to resume after the crowd had finished commenting loudly on the referee’s decision. As MFF attacked the goal in AIK’s half, the Stockholm supporters eagerly rewarded sky-blue players’ every mistake, thanking them for missing, slipping, shooting over the goal etc. They screamed and shouted at them, trying to disturb their efforts, and then burst into exaggerated laughter and clapped fiercely when MFF’s actions ended nowhere near their goal. Then there was another chant on MFF side, rhythmic and loud: “Ut med Gnaget!” – “Out with Gnaget”.

This chapter focuses on history produced by constructing/maintaining a group identity. The first example is AIK, as the club became the focus of many football discussions. The second example is the ultras movement, which represents a type of modern football fandom that balances on the verge of unlawful behaviour. As groups, ultras construct their image with

the help of history. Additionally, their productions have a historical effect and are used as invocations of the past.

Collective identities built on historical references stand in the centre of this chapter. Historical narratives, as demonstrated by the historian Hayden White (1973), are never stable. The ongoing change of the future to present and then to the past influences how the past is written about. Social reality with its moral stances and cultural ideas influences how the past is viewed and produced. The production is a balance of power. Who is able to write history? How are past narratives visible in different groups? How do they influence the construction of group identity in this context? The two identities discussed are a product of historical selection as well as an answer to evaluations and opinions expressed in the present context. The chapter ends with a discussion of masculinity – a crucial ingredient in a football crowd.

An identity is a result of the positioning of one's vision, other clubs, media, security, social expectations as well as collective memory. The examples analysed in this chapter circle around a tough image, symbolic (and sometimes physical) conflicts and persistent negative evaluations of the previous decades of football history. In a somewhat stubborn move challenging the ideal produced by the wider common sense (Stewart 1979), individuals building those collective identities do not try to negate the dark, negative connotations, but rather delight in them and use them in a new context.

## “Out with Gnaget!”

That match that I referred to was a test for two big clubs. MFF had won the previous season, but AIK, disregarding this, claimed to be the biggest and best.<sup>99</sup> Perhaps because of the unapologetic attitude, AIK is often selected as the club nobody sympathizes with. Several interviewees bluntly stated hatred for AIK (e.g. interview with Erik 10 February 2015). Supporters from Helsingborg and Malmö commented that the local Skåne derby matches between their clubs are the most important, but they pointed to

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<sup>99</sup> AIK has had the most members, around 20,000 registered people according to information presented by the club on their website, claiming that their brand is the strongest (<http://aik.se/aik-har-starkaste-varumarket-2/>).



Picture taken in 2015 during a match between MFF and AIK I described in the opening section of this chapter.

AIK as the most troublesome opponent. As one person put it:

Felix: Eh... I really don't like this team but I think it is actually... AIK is probably... the most... dedicated. I don't know actually if they are the most dedicated fans but... it seems to be... there are interesting matches and what do you say... the... ambiance around the game seems to be quite nice.

Interviewer: Why don't you like them?

Felix: I don't know... probably because they are from the capital, and quite aggressive, self-righteous, that sort of thing (laughs). Being from a small town in the country, you know, it's hard (laughs). Because we are HIF supporters and we should really hate MFF but I really don't care about them. I am ... but I don't like AIK. I don't like Stockholm teams actually. And I mean things like that normally don't make much sense but like... they are probably very nice people (laughs). But you have to have protagonists, I guess. In all the sports. (interview with Felix 6 February 2015)

Felix started evoking AIK as an example of a Swedish team with solid support, a club that means a lot to its fans, but his narrative slipped into “not liking them”. Such feelings are especially visible among fans of other Stockholm teams. When attending a Djurgården match I was approached by a person who heard that I was writing about football. He asked me if that was true, told me to take notes and delivered this statement:

I hate AIK. My hatred for AIK is bigger than the love for my girlfriend.  
My hatred of AIK is bigger than my love for Djurgården. (football chat 2015)

What followed was an informal exchange of the levels of hate towards AIK in a small group standing around me, which many of them enjoyed. One person delivered a narrative about celebrating AIK's relegation from Allsvenskan to the lower league Superettan. He said that this was the only time he bathed in champagne. He poured the liquid into the bathtub and dived in, but did not realize that it was going to be rather cold, then tried to stay there and just drank as much as he could, presumably still lying in it (football chat 2015). Some of the men standing with us smiled and laughed. It seemed that it was not the first time the story was told. Bathing in champagne is a part of modern mythology surrounding the rich and famous. It suggests excess and lavishness.<sup>100</sup> The story is as important as the actual event. My informant might have been exaggerating, but he chose a form of mocking and shaming AIK – through an extraordinary bath and a tall story. More than that, he did not celebrate his own team's victory, but the mortal enemy's defeat.

Historically speaking, AIK is a strong and visible club on the Swedish football scene. They have won several titles and they have a large and active group of fans. One of the supporter groups affiliated with AIK is called Smokinglirarna – which could be translated as the Tuxedo MVPs. They present themselves as a more serious version of support than that represented by the flares of the ultras groups or the Black Army with its shady

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<sup>100</sup> Roland Barthes in his book *Mythologies* has a discussion of wine and its mythical status.



past.<sup>101</sup> Smokinglirarna plays on the “finer” part of AIK’s history, when it was more openly associated with the upper stratum of society.<sup>102</sup>

A sophisticated narrative is possible, as AIK’s history is long and rich, and those “finer” elements are used, but there is a dark undertone concerning a club. AIK can provoke strong reactions, which, as Felix in the interview above pointed out, might stem from the dichotomy of the centre and periphery. This Stockholm club’s claims to glory and greatness are evaluated as exaggerated by its own people, as interviewed AIK associates remarked:

Carl: AIK has always the attitude of winning. Many AIK supporters are like that. It doesn’t matter if we have the worst team in the world; we are going to win this shit. And of course it presents unrealistic expectations, but the AIK world is a bit unrealistic. We are the best and that is that. Maybe we have players that have two left feet it doesn’t matter, we still should win.

David: And that is a bit of that mentality that we are the biggest, the cockiness...

Carl: We have no statistics to prove this. We are not the club that has won the most, but we think like that anyway.  
(5 March 2015)

As Carl said, the club has no statistics, no proof in trophies or titles that they have actually been very successful. However, they have a collective ego and the attitude to behave as such. Emotions and collective identity are

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<sup>101</sup> I shall come back to both later in the text.

<sup>102</sup> There have been numerous publications in the popular press stating that some members of the Swedish royal family support AIK. They were photographed during matches, and Prince Daniel, husband of Crown Princess Victoria, was used in an ad AIK had on its website. There is some discussion of what club the king supports. In one publication, the newspaper *Aftonbladet* stated that although the king is an honorary member of AIK (as were kings before him) he actually truly supports Djurgårdens IF (<https://www.aftonbladet.se/sportbladet/fofboll/sverige/allsvenskan/djurgarden/article11160739.ab>).

more important than a dry number of titles won. It is not easy to compose a myth of success when the reality offers no strong support. Although my usage of the term “myth” is not as precise as in traditional folklore studies, where the distinction between myth, folktale and legends has been debated at length (see Bascom 1984), it is a narrative that is forged and twisted in its natural habitat, and the “ugly duckling” story presented by Carl is an example of a myth. Myth studies used to refer to indigenous societies without formalized history (Eliade 1984; Malinowski 1984), but some of the modern contexts, like football, present a mix of collective memory and more established official history that feeds narratives well. AIK’s choice of narratives illustrates history production that is directed at sense-making of life processes through experience (Rüsen 2005, 2–3).

AIK won titles in the past, but not as frequently as, for example, Malmö FF. Before the gold in 1992, they had to wait 50 years for the glory. The club attracted attention and support, fostered a famous hooligan firm that made its way into Swedish popular literature,<sup>103</sup> and became associated with violent behaviour and unrest. The two stories run almost parallel, producing a fluctuating image. Both are fed from the same source – the past football events that reinforce a simpler, standardized version of actions, injecting singular situations with multiple past versions of them. That produces history in the form of a “*natural* image of reality” (Barthes 1972, 142), in other words a myth. The example of AIK’s identity fits in this description. Selections and multiplications produced essence of things that “appear to mean something by themselves” (Barthes 1972, 143). The techniques to achieve it, the ritualistic manual, became visible when the club officially embraced its darker side instead of fighting against it.

## AIK vs. Not-AIK

That match in Malmö in 2015 was proclaimed beforehand as important and tough because it was AIK that was coming. Yet, as stated by several people, AIK was at least in theory much weaker than the previous year’s proud Champions League participant MFF (football chat, 2015). The myth struggled to

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<sup>103</sup> See *En av grabbarna* by Johan Höglund (2005).

be trustworthy, but it was persistent, even in this case of a *symbolically strong AIK*, as Bascom described the process of transmitting mythical beliefs:

Myths are prose narratives which, in the society in which they are told, are considered to be truthful accounts of what happened in the remote past. They are accepted on faith, they are taught to be believed, and they can be cited as authority in answer to ignorance, doubt, or disbelief. Myths are the embodiment of dogma, they are usually sacred, and they are often associated with theology and ritual. (Bascom 1984, 9)

AIK came to Skåne to produce history and reproduce themselves, and went back with a fairly acceptable result (for them) of 0–0. This I judged from the slightly aggressive euphoria among the away fans after the match was over. The “dark narrative” and dangerous undertone displayed by AIK and presented in the ethnography opening this chapter was not only their own marketing decision. It went hand in hand with the evaluations, based on past encounters and provided by the others. As Carl and David elaborated:

Carl: AIK has much harder tone in ... what should I say... how people see AIK. Even how many AIK supporters perceive themselves. This is the picture that AIK itself has built up. And of course the media contribute to this. They write about AIK supporters that are horrible and so on. And sometimes they get it right but more often than not it's just... [...]

David: But... but... you could read that the Black Army, that was so dangerous... and they were like that in the 1980s, but they're not like that at all nowadays. If you write about them now, then...

Carl: Or actually that it's now quite marginalized in our supporter world. They still exist, they organize trips and so on, but this is now more like an open supporter organization, everybody can join really, girls can be there too. But it was not like that, probably not at all like that in the 1980s.

The club has found itself associated with dangerous movements and even an active hooligan firm that became known as Firman Boys. Their mythology was partly cemented by a book written by a former member, Johan Höglund, entitled *En av Grabbarna* – “One of the guys”. One of the leading supporter organizations called Black Army carries a darker image that was documented in a journalist’s publication that presents a one-sided image of masculinity.<sup>104</sup> As Carl and David said, this imaginary belonged mostly to the past.<sup>105</sup> But once established, myths tend to be refreshed. The broader outline of the AIK story has been a result of interpretations of the past provided by written publications and the popular press. What arises around the club (trouble) is treated as something coming from within, rather than a combination of factors that are contextual (Smith 1978, 38). When put like that, AIK becomes a “not-liked” club by virtue of its own history, although that history is always written in relation to others and not in a void. The club became the reason for its own bad behaviour. The evaluation of the club is also an instruction in how to read and interpret the textuality of AIK’s character (Smith 1978, 38).

Neither the public nor other clubs would let go of this narrative of the “big bad wolf” AIK seems to be. This is not to say that this particular club is so dangerous, but it was portrayed as such. AIK was branded as something one should hate, even prompting creative shoe decorations that I was allowed to photograph.

AIK supporters and employees were aware of the situation and of the common evaluation of their organization. You cannot be friends with AIK; you must have it as an enemy. One could ask how a club could overcome such negative opinions, and how it should be counterbalanced. As presented in the match observations, AIK supporters adopted what seemed to be the best solution and stated that they in turn hate everybody. The aforementioned banner proclaimed a strong emotional message in the form of material artefact, a piece of fabric hanging from the

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<sup>104</sup> Sännås 2005.

<sup>105</sup> As in 2017 the firm still exists and some troubles have occurred in Stockholm, but the scale and social meaning is very different from the 1980s.



During shadowing, one person volunteered to show me his shoe. There was an embroidery saying “Hate AIK”. The owner was very proud of his shoe. Picture taken in March 2015.

stands. It was facing Malmö supporters, letting them stare at eight bold letters – hata alla – through the entire match. The “affective investment”, described by Sara Ahmed (2004) ties together love on one side and hatred on the other. Ahmed’s examples include racial and political production of hate. Here the hating on display is a boiled-down reference that rests on a selected past that fed a myth and produced history. In that “fabricated” statement, the past is sifted through and given a shape of ongoing conflict. The display was over the top, as on the embroidered shoe, or in the story about a champagne bath. The effect was almost comical and ironic.

The usage of hatred was one of the many possible shades of identity one could have. It was possible to construct that identity through the ritualistic performances of historical productions. It had to be grounded in the past to produce a historical narrative for the future. One should



Picture of AIK banner stating “Hate everyone”. Next to it, there is another banner saying “AIK über alles”. It is a clear historical reference to German history as the phrase “Deutschland über alles” was taken away from the German anthem after the World War II as it became connected to Nazism and fascism. It is a controversial sign to have, especially on display in big letters, when the club prides itself in working with integration. I connect it to “reflexive anti-reflexivity” which I discuss in the sixth chapter.

point out that the stories of violence and misbehaviour surrounding AIK’s supporters had not just been pure imagination. One person told a story from his childhood when he went to see his local team play AIK. After the game Black Army was chasing local supporters and throwing stones, and my informant remembered running away with his father (football chat 2016). The event took place in the early 1990s, when the dark pages of Black Army’s dealings were written. This personal account of individual memory ties in with an established narrative of bad and dangerous supporters united around a club with questionable morals. Black Army’s mythology did not have to stretch to AIK as such, but that supporter organization is strongly connected to the club on intertextual level, using well-known and established symbols that became associated with both. The myth rejuvenates itself by reproducing the content that fits the collective expectations.





A printscreen from an official commerical video produced by AIK.

Individual narratives and memories connected to clubs went back to childhood, and for many fans they referred to social boundaries and “othering” that had started back then. One supporter explained AIK’s popularity in this way:

Interview:       What brings people to AIK then?

Martin:           Traditions, I think. At school, it was already like that: you were AIK and not AIK. When we played football, it was always AIK vs. not AIK. (interview 25 January 2015)

Martin pointed out to something elusive, difficult to explain. It was about AIK in the context of performed conflict and oppositions. AIK as a club embraced the image of a serious opponent to virtually everybody in Sweden, and in 2014 their commercial campaign was called “AIK vs INTE AIK. VI ÄR INTE NI” (AIK vs NOT AIK. We are not you). Even tickets had only written “not AIK” instead of the names of various clubs. The campaign included a video in both English and Swedish saying that the club did not invent this hatred, and giving examples of how it is despised

because AIK is “everyone’s enemy and everyone’s sleepless night” (quotation from the video).<sup>106</sup> The evidence was there.

Maurice Halbwachs has commented on retrieving memories, that one needs a group as a frame: “To recall them [memories] it is hence sufficient that we place ourselves in the perspective of this group, that we adopt its interests and follow the slant of its reflections” (Halbwachs 1992, 52). You relate to the feelings of the group since the groups helps you to remember them, they are reproduced through collective engagement. The video from the “hatred” campaign merged together diverse past instances when AIK was painted black and shown up as the bad guy. Yet, the club did not have monopoly on being “the hated one”. Stockholm clubs passionately engage in hating IFK Göteborg (field notes 2016–2017). The least liked club changes according to season as well, and variation was possible. AIK, through a special rite, attempted to solidify the image by putting together different elements and amplified the presupposed general hatred, producing a historical interpretation of the past that fed the myth. Preservation needs a collective effort and builds on collective identity (Lowenthal 2015, 27). Carl and David remarked:

Carl: There is a mentality in AIK that we don’t like anybody. Even then... before the ultras groups came it was a total taboo to be friends with other supporters. Now we have some groups that have some sort of friendships with some foreign clubs. But it was like... hmm... “no one likes us we don’t care”. That sort of mentality pervades the entire club. We are rather strong in our identity. AIK has a much harder tone in ... what should I say... how people see AIK. Even the way many AIK supporters perceive themselves. If you take our campaign last year (2014), it was like “you are not us”. We don’t think shit about you. On all the tickets it was written “AIK vs NOT AIK”. Which was the picture AIK has, like “we don’t give a shit who you are, we don’t give a shit which opponent we have”. (inaudible) This

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<sup>106</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7w5AJMC-w8g&t=37s>. The screenshot included here also came from that YouTube video.



is the picture that AIK has built up itself. And of course the media contribute to this. They write about AIK supporters that are horrible and so on. And sometimes they get it right but more often than not it's just...

David: We have a... we have a history that perhaps is not that...

Carl: Flattering.

David: But... but... you could read that the Black Army, that was so dangerous... and they were like that in the 1980s, but they're not like that at all nowadays. If you write about them now, then ...

Carl: Or actually that it is now quite marginalized in our supporter world. (interview with Carl and David 5 March 2015)

Carl and David talked about the AIK vs INTE AIK campaign as a historical display of hate that turned out to be extremely successful. AIK performed memories of this particular feeling and re-established the notion with a reassurance of continuity and tradition. Having a defined target group that already identified itself with the club helped to uphold this idea. Although the advertisement seemed extremely grave and serious in style, there was a hint of irony, and the interview with Carl and David ended in laughter. The phrase "I hate you" is an example of an emotional performance that is bound to mean different things depending on how, when, and where it is uttered (Sheer 2012, 213).

One can identify a "traditional" thread in this narrative, as described by my interviewees. Although hate is not a positive emotion it builds rather than destroys here. AIK affirms its unpopularity among the Swedish population and somewhat proudly so. This "hate rhetoric" and accepting one's unfavourable position is displayed by the club. At Friends Arena, their current home turf, there was a slogan carved above the entrance used by the clubs' officials and players: "Må de hata oss, blott de frukta oss" – Let

them hate us as long as they fear us. It is a variant of a quotation ascribed to the Emperor Caligula in the first century AD.<sup>107</sup> The phrase is also used by different supporter organizations (field notes 2015). Intertextual use of references produces a dense maze of connections.

From the perspective of producing a narrative, one of the most common elements that make popular stories was not the epic as such, but a clearly demonstrated “us-them” dichotomy that can be relevant to listeners (Arvidsson 1999, 32). More typical stories of a mythological character defined “we” as an eternal category in contrast to other categories (Arvidsson 1999, 33). Thus, AIK’s attempt to use commercially an already old story of hate fits snugly in the centuries-old traditions of making “us” not like “them”. However, this narrative has to be fed and cared for and so it is produced and performed regularly by the club its supporters and “the others”. Digging up such stories helps to establish them as “the stories”, those that matter the most. The way Carl and David made sense of their club illustrates levels of textuality (that are dependent on each other) discussed by Susan Stewart: realism, myth, irony, and metafiction (Stewart 1979, 21). Past conflicts, their contextualized realism, were used to strengthen a myth. The exaggerated performance, ritualistic in character, resulted in irony around the hatred. The realism of the past accounts fed and nourished the myth. Still the campaign and attitudes presented by fans suggest that a further level of textuality – irony – was there too. Supporters are aware of the sense-making process that they engage in. A campaign like that was serious to the point of being not serious at all.

Metafiction in this context means story about a story, a commentary on the narrative it is attached to. Since the material here is not in literary form but rather multidimensional emotional processes based on the past, discussing the metafiction layer proposed by Stewart is not without problems. Stewart comments that the each level “stands at an increasing distance from common-sense procedures and thereby decreases in realism” (1979, 21), which indicates that metafiction is the most far removed from common sense. Birgit Neumann & Ansgar Nünning define metafiction and

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<sup>107</sup> In Latin the phrase is “Oderint, dum metuant” and it comes from Suetonius’s biography of the emperor Caligula (*Lives of the Caesars*, vol. 1, pp. 464–465).



The image from a derby match against Djurgårdens IF depicts the Black Army logo and a drawing of a rat that is associated with both the supporter organization and the club. There is a club mascot too, called Gnagis, a fluffy, child-friendly rat. Picture taken in Stockholm 10 August 2015.

metanarration as “umbrella terms designating self-reflexive utterances” (2014, 344). Neumann and Nünning provide a distinction between these terms, even though they appear as synonyms and can be treated interchangeably:

Metanarration refers to the narrator’s reflections on the act or process of narration; metafiction concerns comments on the fictionality and/or constructedness of the narrative. Thus, whereas metafictionality designates the quality of disclosing the fictionality of a narrative, metanarration captures those forms of selfreflexive narration in which aspects of narration are addressed in the narratorial discourse, i.e. narrative utterances about narrative rather than fiction about fiction (2014, 344).

Is the rat an example of metafictional or metanarrational construction? According to local folklore, a drawing of an angry rat appeared on a photo in the local press that accompanied an interview with a player. The photo depicted the players' dressing room at Råsunda stadium and a drawing of the rat was visible there. One interviewee claimed that it was one of the player who made the drawing (interview with Maria, 2015).<sup>108</sup> The rat started to be associated with the club through the supporters, as the Black Army later adopted the rat as its symbol and had the drawing on banners and merchandise. Also the nickname Gnaget, which AIK supporters use frequently, refers to gnawing rodents. During the interview the AIK fan Maria also referred to the olden days in AIK when the club was small and poor but really tough, gnawing its way through. As presented in the third chapter, AIK narrates a story of when they did not have money to replace shading shirts, so the black shirts looked greyish and rat-like.<sup>109</sup> The explanations given sustain the myth of AIK's darker side by feeding it with a frequently reused image. It also makes the myth safe, as it is not stuck with one finished image, making the form flexible for different meanings, chosen from historical reality (Barthes 1972, 110; 117–118). Other clubs like IFK Göteborg and Helsingborgs IF used the image of AIK's rat to mock the Stockholm club.<sup>110</sup> Helsingborg had a poster advertising their match against AIK with a black plush rat in a rat trap (observations 2014).

The rat saga can be seen as a story about the story as it provides a commentary on AIK's past. Further, Black Army's narrative, through the usage of the same images and through its longevity (established in 1981) provides a meta-level of discussion about AIK's past. It reflects AIK's developments but runs its own narrative too, with borrowing and supplementing going back and forth. Neumann and Nünning suggested further that "metanarrative comments are concerned with the act and/or process of narration, and not with

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<sup>108</sup> From an article about the rat's history from the web page <http://17124solna.svartgul.se/2012/09/12/okej-sanningen-om-black-army-rattan/>

<sup>109</sup> Summarized from an entry on the official AIK web page called "Ask AIK": [http://193.0.253.131/aikindex.html?/fragaaiik\\_vanliga.html](http://193.0.253.131/aikindex.html?/fragaaiik_vanliga.html).

<sup>110</sup> For example, there was an image depicting an IFK Göteborg player facing AIK as a rat, a tiny rat that casts a big shadow in 2013; <http://www.fotbolldirekt.se/2013/09/16/blavitts-gnagar-han-mot-aik/>



its fictional nature” and thus metanarration can appear in other non-fictional genres (2014, 345). I interpret Stewart’s use of the term “metafiction” more in tune with the explanation of metanarration, as Stewart focuses on textualities of the real world. “Metanarration” might be more suitable in this context.

As a self-reflexive comment on the nature of narration, the black rat is a metanarrational utterance. It relates to an image that is taken as a vital part of AIK’s history, but it is a reflection providing understanding of that aspect of the past. I propose that the levels of textuality as presented by Stewart appear with the production of history. Hayden White wrote that while presenting a historical narrative one does not only investigate the past, but also composes it (1973, 12). The “artistic” aspect of this process does not mean changing the facts as such, but rather tailoring the story to a specific audience that is the target group for the narrative in question (White 1973, 5). It is placed between “realism” and “fantasy” as well as between “seriousness” and “joke” or “entertainment”. A constant social process develops the story (Arvidsson 1999, 40).

In football, the production of history is regulated by seasons and recurring patterns, which allows deconstruction and reconstruction of the product, with some elements fitting into the myth frame as the myths rejuvenate in the intersection of past-present-future. The ritualistic performance, when slightly off balance or decontextualized – like the embroidered shoe – become ironic, paving the way to metanarration. The apparent seriousness of the hatred and threats can disappear with a reflection. To give an example, during one interview I asked about a meaningful match:

Interviewer: And which is your favourite opponent?

Erik: Like you mean that I hate the most? (he laughs loudly) (interview with Erik, 10 February 2015)

Because Erik laughed at his own response he took part in this serious/play exchange that happens in football. This is a sort of tool that helps to keep it together. It has to be meaningful to function, as it is based on emotional connections and voluntary participation, but it has to have an open door to make it a make-belief environment. The emotions here come with practice, they constitute the performance. Some informants talked about the intensified feelings and “over-the-top” displays that work only in this context. This emotional engagement relies on the interpretational abilities of the actors, as the success of the performance requires skills on the part of the performer, but also it needs to be interpreted correctly by the participants (Sheer 2012, 214). During the same match raging groups of fans could scream abuse at each other from the far sides of the stadium in the mutual exchange between the two most engaged parties, while other supporters of both teams were able to just share the space in between, without police escort, fights or troubles.

The performance of hatred, with the rituals of chants, banners, and stories, follows the textual pattern of realism, myth, irony and metafiction (or metanarration). As Stewart observed, it makes less and less sense in relation to everyday life, but it is kept together by historical production that depends on each on every stage and borrows from it tools and methods. The picture gets more blurry because of the number of narrators in





Standing in the AIK section during a match in Malmö in 2018. Supporters managed to come to the stadium with flares and smoke bombs even though everyone was frisk-searched and all banners and flags were checked, causing frustration and delay. The yellow cloud produced by them obstructed the view for the MFF crowd and made it difficult to breathe. Picture taken on 9 April 2018.

this context. AIK could not write the history all by themselves. A partner in a discussion is needed. It is used to perform group identity, thus amplified. Some groups thrive from being in opposition. Those individuals, although small in numbers, managed to steal the show and they attract the attention of other supporters, clubs and media. They call themselves ultras.

### “Liberta Pergli Ultras” – Freedom for ultras

The match that opened this chapter was one burning and stinky business. It was as much a competition on the pitch as it was a contest of support on the stands. The ultras groups from both clubs took over that particular game. Flares and smoke bombs galore, they made sure nobody could breathe properly for almost the entire ninety minutes. The ultras groups’ influence is now firmly established on the Swedish football scene, but they are quite young organizations, appearing in the early 2000s. Supras

Malmö, for example, celebrated their tenth birthday in 2013 (field notes 2013). Because of the visual character and controversies, these groups can become a centre of attention during matches.

The Swedish ultras are inspired by Italy. They also have names that use Latin, like Sol Invictus (AIK) and Rex Scania (MFF). In Stockholm one could observe shirts saying in Italian *Liberta Pergli Ultras* – freedom for ultras (shadowing 2015). They are not huge in numbers (Supras Malmö was estimated to be 40–50 persons strong in 2013) but fixed on their flares and drums, which makes them visible and audible at stadiums. One could say that they are organized on an idea borrowed from another cultural context and applied to their home ground.<sup>111</sup> The aesthetics of these groups are uniform: flares, big flags, lots of banners, mostly black clothes and masks, drummers keeping the rhythms of the chants, sometimes only male members allowed, and smoke bombs being the latest addition (field notes, 2013–2015). Those groups dominate in the form of support. Breaking the rules about flares inside arenas, challenging their own clubs and official bodies like UEFA, they construct their identity by producing a history of conflict.

Literature dealing with Italian ultras involvement stresses the violent rhetoric and the high degree of organization (e.g. Testa 2009; Testa & Armstrong 2008; Kassimeris 2011). One look at their Swedish counterparts confirms how organized and structured they have to be to perform what they deem necessary during matches. The arrival of the ultras in Sweden was not an easy ride. Carl, my interviewee, expressed a notion that many of my informants

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<sup>111</sup> As Alberto Testa writes, “The word finds its etymology in French political discourse. During the Restoration period (1815–1830) the word *ultra-royaliste* indicated partisan loyalty to the Absolute Monarchy. The *ultra-royaliste* championed the interests of property-owners, the nobility and clericalists” (2009, 54). Testa begins his account in the 1950s when “violence in the stadium was not correlated to notions of a ‘social problem’. Acts of supporter intemperance and aggression were explained as individual predispositions or as a result of the match events” (2009, 55). The political situation in Italy during the 1960s and 1970s also played a role in the development of the ultras’ current character. Disappointment and disillusionment with politics is described as a key feature of Italian youth at that time which would trigger the ultras’ largely apolitical and at the same time confrontational character but also moved the confrontations from streets to sport arenas (Testa 2009; Testa & Armstrong 2008). Thus, the term ultras has come to describe “hard-core fans that manifest behaviours that exceed those considered normal and traditional” (Testa & Armstrong 2008, 476).



talked about, namely the cultural and generational clash of supporters:

And there was a cultural difference between our supporters... the new groups were just popping up and it was a big culture shock between the older clique supporters and the ultras supporters when they started to organize themselves. It took quite a few years actually... also for them to grow up and become a unified group. (interview with Carl, 5 March 2015)

When younger supporters began to draw inspiration from Southern Europe, it meant that tifos, flares and banners entered the arenas. They took the stadiums by storm and sparked a discussion about their quasi-illegal activities. Arvid, an MFF supporter, commented on the ultras organization when asked about the different groups in the standing section in Malmö:

They've done so much for MFF and for the atmosphere and so on. Ahm... so I like them a lot. Having said that I think they take themselves too seriously. I miss the old days when you had much more humour on the terraces. You know the chants and that... they are a bit too ideological at the moment. And they should loosen up and have fun, so to speak. [...] I understand the fascination with ultras culture and all that. Cause I had the same. You know in the nineties we were watching Italian football on telly and you saw that and you thought "oh I wish it could be the same in Malmö". And now it is like that and I like that, I just think that sometimes they are too serious about themselves. (30 October 2014)

This movement came to Sweden around 2000, when the commodification and commercialization of football was already long on its way, but the ideal created through media consumption, as indicated by Arvid, was based on the previous decades. Carl and David contrasted it with the older version:

Carl:               The thing that is so curious is the standing section because that just shifts like crazy. Ten years ago there were no ultras.

Interviewer:    No?

Carl: No... little more... it says o2 right?

David: Yeah, o2. So 2002 like...

Carl: But so ultras culture is rather young here. [...] So it needs just a bit of thinking, because there are some different opinions and strong opinions, organized opinions that differ from the traditional supporter who has been here in Sweden before. So those were more England-inspired: you go to see match and you drink beer, punch some people and go home... (laughs). (5 March 2018)

As Carl remarked, the style of support shifted considerably from British to Italian/southern. English football was the source of inspiration for decades, but it carried a disturbing notion of unruly drunk hooligans, which he also hinted in the quotation above. There was a clash of ideas on the stands. When the English league was becoming “more civilized” and shook off the image of a thug paradise, it somehow lost its appeal for many, as it also became more serious, more business-like and money-oriented. England was once famous for its hooligans and its troubled football (Brabazon 2006). Although ultras behaviour sparked some concerns, one person remarked that these groups did not seek trouble, which means they would not seek other fans to arrange a fight, but they might throw some stones if the possibility arises (football chat 2014). They apply an image from the past, the sense of danger and violence that surrounded football in previous decades.

It is not, though, a unified picture of how football used to be and how the fans would behave. The ethnologist Lars-Eric Jönsson remarked on the “sound of silence” during Helsingborgs IF matches in the 1940s (2006, 125). Spectators in Helsingborg were described as quiet and faithful, which evoked associations with a church service (2006, 124-125). This is an outline of another ideal present in the Swedish football. It suggests an alternative set of qualities, like concentration, patience, persistence, that would describe fans and their engagement.

The ultras aesthetic choices are not left unchallenged. Both HIF and

DIF claim to be more British-inspired. Robin, who was a member of supporter organization Kärnan in Helsingborg, said:

I know that there are many who are inspired by England. We are a club that has the most classic English supporter culture. And we have many that have watched very many matches in England. [...] I thought like... the last to have the simplest... like Djurgården they don't have a drummer either, but we don't have "the claue", we don't have a person with a megaphone. I think there is still this ambition to have it like this, I think Djurgården have this ambition as well. Malmö is different. [...] We are probably closest to the English and Malmö probably to the southern style. (focus group with Kärnan 16 February 2015)

The British inspiration does not mean hooligan-like preferences, but routines during matches. To be fair, both HIF and DIF have factions that come with flares and smoke, but the lack of drummers and "conductors" with megaphones marks the difference. The ethnologist Anette Rosengren commented that when she found herself among Hammarby IF supporters in Stockholm the drum beat sounded "African" (2005, 156). In a somewhat old-fashioned anthropological manner, Rosengren constructed something unfamiliar as "the other" and exotic, without engaging more deeply with the context. These short-cut evaluations simplify an otherwise complex maze of intertextual connections and meanings. Similarly the ethnologist Mats Hellspong, referred to the effect of a drum and the public, making a connection to the African jungle and a famous novel by Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (2013, 183). Both Rosengren and Hellspong made intertextual connections to something traditionally recognized as "the other", representing a distant, alien, or even as Hellspong phrased it "distant and threatening jungle drum" (2013, 183). Such statements strengthen prejudice and a stereotype of a somewhat "savage" football crowd. These remarks are possible through intertext and provide a construction based on old evaluations. It pushes the image of the ultras to the dark corners of collective memory and interprets the recent developments in style as something old, grim and dangerous.

The British nostalgia is visible through materiality. Djurgården decorates the stands with Union Jacks with colours changed to the club's colour scheme.

This Unionist sentimentality comes from the time when the English Premiership was the league to be watched. DIF fans talked about flying to England in the 1980s. As it was time of glory for Liverpool, and it is perhaps not that surprising that I have seen DIF fans with Liverpool tattoos (field notes 2015). The “inspiration” that supporters talk about is a selected set of references which means omitting others, for example the unflattering hooligan image.

The visual effects aside, ultras behaviour triggered some conflicts and condemnation from media and police because of the security concerns. However, the majority of my informants were rather positive towards the young men’s efforts to create a good atmosphere. Like Arvid in the quotation above, most people were complaining about the apparent seriousness and lack of humour among some of the ultras organizations. As Arvid pointed out, “it used to be funnier”. It would appear that the “playful” element in the game are demanded by participants, and the active sense-making on the spot makes it more exciting.

When conducting a focus group with HIF-Vännerna, the oldest supporter organization in Sweden, which has mostly older retired men as its members, their main issue with the new supporters was their stiffness. As one man said the young fans took themselves too seriously (focus group 2015). Although fires and smoke caused considerable disturbance, they were not the main concern but rather the attitudes that the fans expressed. The discussion started with me asking about the younger generations of supporters, and my informants proceeded to discuss it more:

Interviewer:     What do you think about younger supporters, with singing and flags and banners?

Adam:             It’s fine if they keep to certain boundaries.

Olle:                It would be really quiet if it was only us there.

Adam:             But it’s like everything else, you have to... everything can go over the top and become too much. And now they talk about the fires and security, so you always discuss where the boundary is and how far you can go.

And the down side with football now is now that people work each other up. People shout things that they would not shout normally possibly, they would never think of saying such things just by themselves. Because the environment has an effect on you. So you would shout “idiot” but another one answers “double idiot”...

Everybody laughs

Adam: We provoke each other.

Bengt: And then what happens nowadays is that the other team has their own crowd so they stand facing each other and throw shit at each other. So there's an unbelievable engagement. So people will drive to Stockholm, Gävle, Sundsvall to watch football and then go back at night because they have to work the next day. So you understand the interest in football is so huge. And I have to say I think of myself as having a big interest in football but I would never consider doing that.

Adam: But I have doubts... I have to question... Because is it interest in football or is it a group-building or peer-group? Why do they do this? Is it for a match that is 90 minutes only, or is it to live like this and have this whole world around it? And I think it's more about that. To watch that match... well it is the goal of all this but maybe it's not the only one ... it's this life on the road and so on, and friends there and...

Bengt: But some of those who go in the middle of the week know that they have to work the next day. So they are bloody interested in football to consider doing that. So those who come just here then? They come at 15.00 and then home at 19.00 and it does not have any effect on their lives, they are not more interested in football.

## OUR HISTORY – OUR IDENTITY

- Adam: But this is what I am trying to discuss here. Is it really the interest in football that drives them?
- Bengt: No I don't think you would go on those trips if you weren't interested in football.
- Adam: But you understand what I'm saying?
- Bengt: Yes I understand what you're saying...
- Adam: If you were just to fly to Stockholm, see the match, and then fly back, reading a newspaper in peace and quiet, you wouldn't do it because it is not interesting at all, it's not the lifestyle that is interesting.
- Bengt: No...
- Adam: And still it would be the same match.
- Bengt: But I still think it's football that makes people go to Sundsvall. Not to just go by buss.
- Adam: No, but it is the life on that bus that appeals to them.
- Olle: It is maybe the combination, eh? The elements that go together here.
- Adam: I find it hard to...
- Olle: Well when we can go to Bremen to watch football, for example...
- Adam: Yes but that was...
- Olle: It's about the whole picture, the entire picture.
- Adam: But it's what we have said sometimes, that match is so

brief in the end...

Bengt: But when we went to Hanover to watch HIF play. And what if it wasn't HIF?

Adam: Well of course it wasn't Hanover as a goal...but I don't know if it were Ljungby<sup>112</sup> I'm not sure I would go there. But it's the whole thing around it.

Bengt: Yeah, but it's football that makes us want to go there, for example. That's how my interest starts. (focus group with HIF - Vännerna 17 February 2015)

This lengthy exchange between Adam, Bengt and Olle started with the engagement of younger supporters that made them a contrast to the older generations, producing a narrative of us vs them. As the discussion progressed, the issue of identity-building came to the fore, with Adam saying bluntly that it is about the whole thing and the apparent shortness of the game itself that would need more robust packaging, according to Adam's words, if it were to be a successful canvas for producing an identity. Towards the end this group of elderly men contrasted their own travelling, which was more selective, more down-to-earth, but perhaps grounded in the same idea: it was a prolonged experience of doing something together, engaging emotionally and sharing memories as a collective. In short, producing history.

My informants pointed out the bemusement about the unbelievable commitment of the younger fans. Long journeys, time and resources spent on a big canvas display that would be used only once; smuggling in flares that cost a considerable amount of money and put them at risk of legal action. In a sense, these rituals, already well established, are over the top and removed from the common-sense support that my elderly interviewees knew and understood. Making sense of this process would require stepping up the narrative ladder and analysing some of the processes as moving towards irony and metanarration.

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<sup>112</sup> Ljungby is a small town north-east of Helsingborg.

One interviewee, Otto, remarked that a flare costs about 100 Swedish crowns (about 10 euros). The tifo groups live off donations and good will. If people wish to see nice choreography and impressive displays then they have to chip in with some cash. They do not want to be sponsored or financed as that would somehow compromise the engagement (interview with Otto 15 April 2016). Before matches, one can see young guys collecting money. In a way, it is a political stance and it is a commentary on modern football which seems sometimes driven by money alone. It is a metanarration through historical production of identities. These identities require a conflict, just like their mythical predecessors from Italy of the 1960s.

Pyrotechnics of any kind are forbidden in Sweden, and clubs face a fine whenever there is something burning at their home arenas. As a result, there is a specific cat-and-mouse game going on during matches. Lengthy checks and frisk searches are conducted, with dogs brought to sniff for flares. It can take up to 40 minutes to get to the stadium (field notes 2015). And yet, once inside, flares are lit and smoke bombs promptly opened. The constant announcements that this sort of behaviour is forbidden are simply disregarded. Otto commented in the interview that he thought being in those groups was like being a part of “urban disorder” from time to time. He stressed that they did not look for fights, but they were expected to defend the group and its banners if needed. This attitude was described in a book about Stockholm clubs. There the authors remark that the ultras are something “of a grey zone between choreography on the stands and a form of latent hooliganism” (Hagström, Johansson, & Jurell 2010, 146). A policeman in Malmö pondered over the flares:

It is made into a problem in a way. But how you handle it actually matters. Like the Supras in Malmö do it quite well. I can't say it is good because it is illegal, I'm not saying it is good. But at least there is a thought in it. they go to the front, not in the crowd, just burn them and leave them on the ground. So they think about it. (interview with Albin 15 August 2017)

This comment suggests how “sense” required “nonsense” to be established. Collective attitudes can change quickly. The established legal lines demarcate



common sense yet it is not a fixed reality, it needs to be contextualized and negotiated all the time. Some informants remarked that the tone in the media changed from joy that European support finally came to Sweden, to disapproval and harsh criticism in about ten years.<sup>113</sup> Albin's comments point to a conflict and the usual adversary for fans, which is the police. History produced through a prism of creating (or strengthening) collective identity seems to rest on a history of conflict.<sup>114</sup> Pierre Bourdieu referred to fans as a sort of reduction from ordinary people that made them "the extreme caricatural form of the militant, condemned to an imaginary participation which is only an illusory compensation for the dispossession they suffer to the advantage of the experts" (Bourdieu 1978, 830). Yet, it is not a passive group and in the conflict situations sketched here the supporters, although faced with unequal power, stand up to it. The following section engages more with the issue of establishing a conflict in a frame of collective memory.

## Rituals of violence

As mentioned above, the older, or traditional, style of support was based on England (Hellspong 2013, 243). Chanting, beer consumption and violent confrontations associated with English football made their way to Sweden. There are narratives about far right and racists occupying stadiums in many cities. For example, MFF Support was established in the early 1990s to reclaim the standing section from individuals with racist tendencies (interview with Jan 24 October 2012). AIK had similar problems with its spectators (interview with Carl and David 3 May 2015). AIK's supporter organization Black Army, which used to be more like a hooligan

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113 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8QIn5KqBVk4>. This video clip is a compilation of two different matches, AIK–Hammarby from 2001 and Djurgården–AIK from 2011, ten years apart. Both matches were accompanied by a choreography – flares, smokes and tifos. On the first video the commentators praise the international level of support. On the other they are very critical and they condemn the ultras groups.

114 The regional/national developments also play a role in how groups such as ultras are put into context. The mass communication researcher Natalia Mielczarek has presented a perspective on Egyptian ultras groups that are strongly linked to religion (Islam) and violent, deadly riots. Mielczarek associates such instances with ultras movement rather than hooliganism (2016).



In order to interpret the message in “snuten e huligan” – the cop is a hooligan – one needs to have both the reference to hooligans, which in a way is historic, since most would only use it jokingly and allude to historic “battles” with the cops. Yet it is pretty grim. Picture taken in Malmö, 2017.

firm, was established in England when some of the AIK fans went there to see a match and became inspired (Sännås 2005, 7). English football was not only a beautiful sporting event, but carried an aesthetic and performative message that appealed to others.

The popular imagination is obsessed with hooligans, and quick to define them. In informal conversations ultras groups, or even those present in the standing section, were referred to as hooligans, or potential hooligans. It is not easy to delineate hooliganism as an activity, for example in legal terms.<sup>115</sup> There is no offence called “hooliganism” that would be defined by law in Sweden or anywhere else (Green 2009, 29). The term marks a social space of sport events and violent outbursts of the public, but it has been pointed out that the word gained popularity in the media and among authorities when the hooligan-like activities were actually dwindling (Green 2009, Armstrong

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115 The worst decades of area unrest were the 1970s and 1980s, and should be put into a context of social upheavals in Britain. Young hooligans were referred to as “Thatcher’s children” (2009, 34–35). However, a very specific historical and also political reality that fostered hooliganism is forgotten, but media frenzy and moral panic stays (Green 2009, 43–46).

1998). Different classifications of violently inclined and football-interested individuals were offered (Green 2009; Andersson & Radmann 1998).

Violence surrounding football matches<sup>116</sup> has baffled many. Jean Baudrillard analysed the phenomenon in the context of post- or hypermodernity, and contrasted it with a historical reference to what violence used to be like, i.e. more “enthusiastic and more sacrificial than ours” (1990, 75). Simultaneously, there is condemnation and fascination. Groups like ultras thrive using the darker story of direct violence, but stay more within the frame of symbolic struggles. Supporters and policemen do not spar over space only, they spar over narratives. A policeman in Stockholm remarked:

Problems ... well you can say hooligans, but it's decreasing and there are not that many incidents, it is history mostly, it used to be like that in the past... so why this dark picture? (interview with Kristian 28 April 2016)

A *hooligan narrative* as genre already exists in the collective memory, strengthened by media attention and popular culture, as such controversial memoirs are digested by the society (Radmann 2015, 203). This has entered a more public space, leading to a strange expression of attitudes. The slightest use of even symbolic violence is met with swift condemnation, yet marvelled at. Both the interviewed policemen presented a nuanced picture of what is danger and what is good or bad behaviour of supporters.

Police and security are a heavy presence during fixtures with greater tension, when big clubs play against each other. The relationship between the groups was far from peaceful. One of the more popular slogans appearing in the football context internationally was ACAB, or 1312. As mentioned in the second chapter, it is an abbreviation of “all cops are bastards”, also symbolized by the first, third, first and second letters of the alphabet (observations 2015). In the interviews, questions about police usually triggered comments about the lack of understanding and misconceptions on the part of the police. During a focus group I asked directly about it:

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<sup>116</sup> An article in The Guardian presented an idea that American sports also see violent behaviour, but traditionally and historically hooliganism has been associated with European football (<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/blog/2009/jan/21/steven-wells-hooligan-american-sport>).

- Interviewer: What do you think about the police and how they handle matches?
- Robin: Ha! (sneers) It's not good. Most of the time it's the police that is the problem.
- Tom: They have little knowledge and they are not organized.
- Robin: Not organized at all.
- Alex: And they don't know... they just... they often have the wrong picture... often they react... they react on their own recommendations... during matches when nothing is going to happen there are masses of them, and then when 3000 from Djurgården in the premier match come to the city they just can't control it. They seem to be badly organized and badly informed. They have very bad understanding of what is happening in the sport environment (focus group with Kärnan 16 February 2015).

Members of the police and security forces are treated with suspicion. They are not to be trusted. Duality is at play here. "The most simplistic of the dualisms implicit in popular hero stories is the good/evil opposition" (Hourihan 1997, 32). Supporters who need policing, somehow chaotic and unpredictable, are juxtaposed with the uniformed, established, and – presumably – logical police squads. They obey orders. It becomes a classic myth of order against chaos, of civilization against wilderness (Hourihan 1997, 17–21). Police and security enter the scene of the historical drama as the civilizing force. The supporters are an unpredictable mass (although groups of supporters can be well organized). This notion is strengthened by the established evaluations of crowds in the media.

Margery Hourihan mentioned the duality of reason and emotions that was firmly established in the ancient Greek tradition and then became the ideal of Western culture (1997, 18). She commented further that this stretches to the understanding of good and evil (Hourihan 1997, 117). Such a nar-



Security forces, policemen and the heavily guarded entrance during the MFF–HIF match in 2015. They contrast sharply with their heavy equipment, weapons and massive helmets. Supporters have scarves, shirts, and sometimes flares with them.

rative exists in the history of supporters' encounters with the police. Throughout the decades, the press produced more or less apocalyptic visions of the chaotic forces of evil at stadiums, and the warriors of order who tried to control the enraged, fanatic masses upset about a lost match, for example. From a fan perspective the narrative can be flipped. The presupposed forces of good can be tricky to handle and they can become perpetrators.

There is shape-shifting in history and the roles of villains or heroes are fluid, depending on the narration. Benjamin, a security guard who has spent 22 years working for a club, mentioned that when he started work-

ing, instances of fights between fans and police were not all that unusual (interview with Benjamin 29 May 2017). Nowadays, he commented, there were just flares mostly, and that was the biggest difference for him. Yet, the image of trouble and physical violence has remained. Hubert, interviewed in 2015, admitted that he had not attended a live match for many years, due to rumours of unrest. He seemed content with the folklore around it and did not try to check it for himself.

Although bitter about police encounters, fans understand that it is about structures and rules, not individual policemen. Martin, an AIK supporter, said: “Police... well it’s not a walk in a park. If you think that they can be rough here [Malmö] you should go to Stockholm. The problem is the laws and how they are enforced at stadiums” (25 January 2015). This theme came up with interviewed policemen and a security guard. Although firm about what is legal and what is not, they mentioned the joy of away matches, the fun of going with supporters, the chants and laughter, the stamp of approval from fans. One policeman mentioned that physical assault was illegal in Sweden. Yet, he could understand that it was not a black-and-white issue:

Well the hooligan firms fight with each other, and fighting is forbidden in this country, that is clear. It’s a problem that they bring that violence capital with them to a restricted urban area. It will be a problem and we have to address it. But then in a forest (he pauses), it is tragic, but then it is about belonging, and there are positive feelings even there. So we try not to just judge individuals. It is about here and now. What is your agenda here? Look there, he is a hooligan firm guy. He came to a match with his kid. So what are we supposed to think about him? (interview with Kaspar 27 May 2017)

As the interview happened during a match, the policeman pointed out a person walking to the stands. They greeted each other. Problems, conflicts between an officer and a member of a public were contextual. The invisible lines are drawn between them, but they shift. Setting binary opposition of the good and bad character reassures the audience (Hourihan 1997, 145). The story of danger and violence is structured through the characters and how their tale is told. Fans’ encounters with the police forces are seeming-

ly straightforward. The duality is designated and they are even dressed in their respective uniforms – police need to look like police, and “dangerous” supporters should look their part too. The media feed largely on this simple dualism. The intertextual content is understandable, as we are already familiar with the idea of what a hooligan is, and certainly with the armed, mounted policemen wearing large helmets. Supporters’ accounts provide a twist to the hegemonic narrative.

One could refer to this margin of football as the struggle of narratives as much as people. The interviewed policeman, Kaspar, was open about the uneasy communication with supporters. He assessed ultras groups as not being so keen on dialogue, at the same time being aware that the supporters cannot be aware at times what was the mechanism behind the police’s behaviour. He was not explicit about whether that was a desired effect. He was also keen on stressing that the best matches were those with “no hidden agenda” on the part of the supporters. He acknowledged that both groups, police and fans, had a profound effect on each other (interview with Kaspar 27 May 2017). As Fentress and Wickam put it, a society “needs its villains too – if only to keep the heroes busy” (1992, 202).

The swirly patterns of communication were revealed during shadowing which happened in August 2015 in Stockholm. I heard shreds of conversations suggesting that there was a fight. “Things got rough there” one person said. My contact person was asking around and whispering to others while we were walking. Then we stopped and some people joined. Nobody was sure what happened, but there came a comment that police were tipped off. “A good old-fashioned tip” somebody said and people laughed (shadowing 2015).

Throughout the shadowing people were informing each other that something had happened, that supporters had clashed, involving the police too. There was uncertainty in the air, scraps of information were gathered on the way. One person expressed the opinion that since it had happened already the match was going to be calm because that was already done. The will to fight was fulfilled (shadowing 2015). A reference to a tip ended with laughter. This is still a valuable source of information for the police. A tip, a rumour, a shred of information that can spark some action. Policemen talked about the capital of violence attached to football, highly emotional situations and fluidity of categories (interview with Kaspar 27 May 2017).

The make-believe of a situation like this is highlighted when the away supporters (especially from big clubs) enter or leave stadiums. For example in Malmö, the area is blocked and you have to walk an extra hundred metres, watched by a substantial number of policemen. After that, you are free to mingle. The danger zone ends. Transformation needs to happen to justify the behaviour of both sides. Average citizens are potentially dangerous supporters. Police might become oppressors, not protectors. Two narratives run parallel to each other. One brands the fans as dangerous and justifying actions and measures against them. The other one has policemen as dubious characters and justifies behaviour that challenges them. Both are based on the past experiences and collective memories.

Still, violence (or conflict) is not the only form of exchange between security and fans. During a match between MFF and Djurgårdens IF in May 2017 I stood with DIF supporters. When MFF scored a goal a small group of MFF fans sat next to the area separating the two groups, first came some shouts, and then one of them just sat there grinning. A bunch of DIF fans moved in their direction. They could not reach them. A protective net covered many rows of chairs, there were supporter liaison officers, police, secret police, and security personnel. Shouting continued. Upset Djurgården fans pointed out the grinning individual and demanding some action. Then policemen appeared on the other side and asked the smiling person to change his seat. Reluctantly, the group moved. The DIF crowd relaxed (observations 2017).

In the narrative above, the police developed into caretakers, making sure that both groups of supporters had equal stands. They supervised the crowd and were called in when there was a tense situation – a person smiling and annoying the other part of the crowd. The group was upset and called in a supervisor to provide order. One policeman expressed a view that supporters dared to do more once they saw security forces on the premises. In his opinion, it was because they knew there was somebody to stop the mock war from getting completely out of hand (interview with Albin 15 August 2017). One can refer once again to Susan Stewart and the sense-making during everyday activities. As she put it:



Thereby attention is focused initially upon boundary making, on interpreting the frame that marks off the “playground” from the ground of non-play discourse. [...] Once the boundary of the game is established, it is kept intact until closure. (Stewart 1979, 91–92)

When entering a stadium, one travels from one universe of discourse to another (Stewart 1979, 47). The common sense of everyday life is translated and adjusted. The modifications allow the new context to produce its own logic and its own historical reality (Stewart 1979, 47–48). There is a strong connection between a presented incident and the interpretative skills of its participants. What makes sense, like here getting upset and calling on law and order officers to stop one person from grinning, needs to be interpreted and contextualized. Everybody needs to play their parts. I was told in one interview that in the public space the police force needs to evaluate whether different groups can manage on their own, and that the best feeling comes when one sees someone who is in trouble gets better as “together we help individuals” (interview with Kaspar 27 May 2017).

The shifting roles of victims and perpetrators who actually know each other, depend on each other and are able to cooperate, further strengthens the complex procedures of sense-making. The roles are taken through different rituals – when flares are lit, when policemen put their helmets on, when a punch is delivered – and produce a history of unrest. It is a performance of the past “hooligan culture”, decontextualized from its specific time frame and social settings. Arenas were dangerous, people died because of football-related fights. Contemporary football is still evaluated through the prism of unrest that has not been resolved, and adding different social headaches. Violence is not attached to football. It is a manifestation of social struggle in the football context that has become domesticated through the production of history. The collective fixation on it points to expectations of the field and its performers. Unmistakably, football is still regarded as a male activity and the discussion of production of identities through history is strongly connected to how masculinity is perceived (Welford 2011; Pfister, Lenneis & Mintert 2013; Mintert & Pfister 2015).

## Male preserve or gender playground?

The last section of this chapter will briefly engage with constructions and interpretations of masculinities in football. Producing history transfers to producing a version of masculinity that is based on the past. The complicated picture is simplified and filtered in the mass media, and narratives are made to fit a pattern recognizable to the audience. Hourihan identified the process as gradual development into a polished demonstration of the “‘natural’ superiority of Western patriarchy” (1997, 21). The hero, she recognized, is usually a male. The football stands represent to many an old-fashioned version of masculinity, a relic from the past. Although there are women on every level of football engagement, it is the perception of masculinity that captures the popular imagination.

There tends to be an understanding that the display on football stadiums is problematic, connected to violence, described as “masculine” and even dangerous. It is not uncommon to hear comments about “frustrated males”, “aggressive behaviour”, and football stadiums being “an outlet for anger so they don’t beat up their wives at home” (football chat 2016). Often comes a reference to “masculinity”. I have witnessed various audiences trying to count visible women on the stands, complaining that it is so male-dominated, even questioning why I have not felt threatened or misplaced since I am a woman. It all boils down to “it is so masculine”.

Crowd behaviour is culturally and socially framed and reflects society at large. Group identities are produced by engaging with the past and drawing on intertextual connections that stem from folklore and collective memories surrounding a certain club. First, it seems that “masculine” is taken in a limited, macho-like meaning. It is applied to a narrow margin of football culture that tends to get all the attention. Second, for all the accusations of danger and violence, football stands ooze love, friendship and inclusiveness. This results in confusing images and invites polarized opinions about this context and further points to the levels of textuality – reality, myth, irony and metafiction (Stewart 1979). It also shows how the interpretive skills of the audience are dependent on the intertextual connections the audience needs in order to understand a given situation.

An example of that is a comment from a policeman, Albin, who stated that most problems come from police officers who are not familiar with football or matches. They try to react as in the “real world”, and that can escalate problems (interview with Albin 15 August 2017).

A football match can be a tense experience. Emotions are strong and clearly on display. Stands during an important game, at boiling point, have been described as being in crisis, needing attention or discipline. The vocabulary used to depict frustrated supporters includes “senseless”, “irrational”, “out of control”. Perhaps it is particularly scary in the eyes of the onlookers, because it is a bunch of men guided by their emotions, and not their reason. Masculinity has long-established connotations of being logical, while the focus on the body, emotions and lack of self-control has been ascribed to females (Johansson 2011, 95). Connell remarks:

A familiar theme in patriarchal ideology is that men are rational while women are emotional. This is a deep-seated assumption in European philosophy (1995, 164).

The gender construction that happens there is based on male bodies, and, as Connell points out, “True masculinity is almost always thought to proceed from men’s bodies – to be inherent in a male body or to express something about a male body” (1995, 45). Collective expectations, “positive or negative, through the subjective expectations that they impose, tend to inscribe themselves in bodies in the form of permanent dispositions” (Bourdieu 1978, 61). Because football has occupied so much media space and become so popular, it attracts individuals from all strata of society. The immediate, shortcut associations are not always positive. Seeing a large group of shouting men can be intimidating and branded as “masculine” while not taking into consideration the diversity and relations that exist within the masculine discourse (Connell 1995, 37). Football is a heterotopic and a magical place, and the abilities of a handful of individuals are activated because the society believes in their powers (Mauss 1972). This is not to deny that violence appears. Rather, a very narrowly understood concept of masculinity is applied to a wide and diverse group that actually largely breaks the pattern of behaviour ascribed to “manly men”.

Football was described by some scholars as an example of a “malestream”, an environment built by men for men and further still studied by men even in modern research (Welford 2011; Dixon 2015; Richards 2015). As Mintert and Pfister put it:

Up to now, football research has been a predominately male domain. Male scholars conduct research on men’s football and on male fans. [...] Football is a game invented by and for men. Until 1970, the national and international football federations did not support women’s football teams and games (2015: 406).

Welford (2011, 365) even refers to it as “time honoured male preserve”. Descriptions of purely “masculine” or “feminine” behaviour seem to monopolize popular understandings of gender performance. The field puts women outside the core cultural capital on many levels and situates them in the margins. Current football research has acknowledged the presence of female spectators, yet it also acknowledges that access does not mean equality (for example Welford 2011). Women, no matter what position and interest they might have, encounter evaluations based on the established connection between football and masculinity. Female supporters are faced with prejudice not only from their male counterparts but also from other females (Mintert & Pfister 2015). Kevin Dixon (2015) and Carrie Dunn (2014) point out, referring to older categorizations, that women still tend to be branded as “new fans”, not authentic and not traditional, but civilizing, in contrast to aggressive, authentic and norm-making male fans.

Connell (1995, 70) pointed out that the majority of men do not fit with the dominant picture of masculinity in Western societies. It is possible to problematize this further as both women and men experience the “hegemonic” way of being a loud and slightly abusive supporter, but they do not necessarily intend to reproduce it. Because the biological majority consists of men, there is a trap of viewing their behaviour in terms of “masculine” (Connell 1995, 79).

Mintert and Pfister put forward a notion that the idea of femininity within the football context might find a different evaluation outside that context, as the majority of participants are still biological males. Male

performances of the gender can undergo similar processes of evaluation.<sup>117</sup> I would suggest that football offers women and men possibilities to transgress and challenge the one-sided view of femininity and masculinity. Welford called for more attention to “the performative characteristics and the conscious shifting between masculine and feminine norms” (2011, 367).

The issue is that “masculinity” applied to a group of supporters is not neutral, it tends to have a judgement attached to it and it marks a problem. The behaviour pattern is ambivalent. Stands are a place where men are allowed to feel and experience emotions. Certainly, men shout, display their naked torsos; scream abuse, test the police’s patience. They also express empathy, suffer together, cry for joy or frustration, collapse with euphoria, make irrational decisions to take on heavily armed policemen, risk bruises and broken arms for their teams, emphasize the importance of the football family, of help, trust and caring for each other. They spend days preparing beautiful pictures on canvas, engaging creatively with the environment. Although it would be extremely stereotypical to say that such behavioural pattern is feminine only, it is certainly not applied automatically to manly acts of power. Perhaps it is the “hybrid gender” on display that causes so much confusion in treating and evaluating emotionally engaged spectators.

Connell has pointed out that the construction of masculinity, based on the straight middle-class ideal associated with power, is connected to sports like football (1995, 166–167). However, supporters claim power where there are no real resources for power (Connell 1995, 111). Their flares and flags can do little to change the outcome of the match, their shouts of disapproval are easily ignored by clubs’ officials, they undergo panoptical surveillance, they experience economic inequality, their cocky performance in front of the police is met with batons, arrests, pepper spray and even dogs (observations 2014). Do they represent a hegemonic display of masculinity? There is a shift of power and football supporters, mostly men, cannot control the narratives spanned around them. Men become danger-

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<sup>117</sup> Their femininity is judged on a strict model in the broader social context that discriminates against flexible gender performance (Mintert & Pfister 2015: 417; Skeggs 1997, 107–116).

ous, unruly, unpredictable, erratic, a danger to a society. This is a construct based on historical and economic structures that hold football together, which became consolidated over the years.

“Masculinity” here is taken as a group identity that is performed through historical productions. Tara Brabazon commented that “Throughout history, a crowd is viewed with either fear or political aspirations and opportunities. Both readings view the crowd from above” (2006, 31). The popular fear of crowds seems to be deeply rooted, and football means crowds, beer, and unrestricted feelings, which might mean an open confrontation with authorities. Evaluations of crowds are usually positioned within the frame of recent history, meaning that mass gatherings in fascist Italy, communist Russia and Nazi Germany are lurking in the background, allowing for moral statements and concerns about the mental health of the crowd (Oakley 2007, 89).

Those who make the most of the display and noise during matches do not have a real claim to power: their voice is ignored, their wishes not prioritized, their security comes second to that of material property. The alleged “masculinity” is treated as “femininity” by those with real power (like the police or media), because bodies become “symbolic objects” that are “being-perceived” – like physical female bodies in different social contexts. This then “has the effect of keeping them in a permanent state of bodily insecurity, or more precisely of symbolic dependence” (Bourdieu 2001, 66).

There is a paradox here, one that probably prevents many from separating the evaluation of what is “masculinity” in this context. Connected to power, viewed as hegemonic and violent, a certain display of masculinity gained an interpretation that does not go beyond seeing it as something different from not-femininity (Connell 1995, 70). The rituals at stadiums are mythologized through the production of history by onlookers with access to power. A myth of unruly masculine behaviour, most likely understood as working-class, is constructed. Perhaps it is not a “male preserve” but a nostalgic picture of this, painted with the help of shortcut evaluations.

The repertoire of a football crowd, consisting of both men and women, their rationale and agenda, is not limited to violent outbursts of too much

physical energy. The production of historical narratives that appear in the centres of power, like the media, results in easy dichotomies and boundaries that facilitates identification of bad guys and good guys and construct heroes (Hourihan 1997, 103, 126). Sexed bodies, of both men and women,<sup>118</sup> are ascribed qualities based on popular evaluation of football, becoming a reproduced image of power. The picture of a football crowd is the hybrid of images and gender performance. It is a result of cramming together classes, roles and groups.

Football is about a collective, but that collective undergoes a transformation in a match context. There is a liminal character to it that allows for certain performances and rituals that people positioned outside, as onlookers, might find difficult to understand. There is an idea that once a football crowd is gathered, it is already something different from the real world with its common sense. The actual transformation does not have its pre-supposed strength. Caroline Bynum Walker pointed out a difficulty with Victor Turner's idea of liminality once it is applied outside of the usual circle of white males with access to power (1996 (1984), 74). In her work on medieval saints she pointed out that women's liminality is hard to perform because women stand in Turner's system as a contrast and are already "liminal" compared to men (1996 (1984), 75). Bynum Walker suggested, having saint legends as examples, that men could reach a liminal stage by expressing "female" qualities, while women were already with such qualities. A change or another stage was thus difficult for them. I would assume that a similar problem appears in evaluating football fans. Because of the past connotations and history constructed around the field, their "out of the frame" character becomes a mythical reference, contrasted with normality. That, in turn, provides an unsatisfactory explanation of what football is all about.

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<sup>118</sup> This applies to women too, as they have been criticized for conforming to the masculine norm, largely based on the idea of what femininity should be like, thus reaffirming both categories (e.g. Dixon 2015).

## Concluding remarks

Mats Hellspong commented that modern sport spectators resemble the theatre audience of olden days. He remarked that theatrical performances attracted strong reactions with shouting and even a *claque* – organized applause at given moments of a play (2013, 257–258). Audiences in different contexts can engage more, or can withdraw and become passive, depending on cultural framing and time. Hellspong remarked further that one needs to employ a historical perspective if one wants to understand why a crowd behaves as it does. An idea of “theatre” and performative elements was applied to the evaluation of football by some of my informants. A former player said:

So football is about emotions, passion ... commitment. The passion to work with people, develop. Like you almost get goosebumps when you talk about it (laughing). Just talking about football... [...] I think it's so important ... that's emotional sport. One can be very happy and then in despair the next minute. [...] I think ... if you want to be here, you want to experience this and you want to feel like this and not like this. So just the experience of a feeling, crying and laughing or you ... plus that football is simple, it's easy to understand. The ball needs to go into the goal (laughs). [...] and you come every week and sit there on the stands then you live in another way. [...] it's like a theatre, a little bit. (interview with Åke, 2015)

The quotation sums up the discussions presented in this chapter. The quotation encapsulates some elements in the structure of the game that make it an example of producing history on a local level, outside of academia, history that is full of emotions and passion. Åke commented on the theatrical experience of football, the performance of a game, and the constant reoccurrence of the circumstances, as “you come every week”.

In the public eye, and performing for one another, supporters can build identities that are based on collective involvement. These identities depend on evaluations based on the past. Communicative and cultural memories around football provide a background for creativity, and produce the history of those groups and the clubs. The examples presented in this chapter use the “us vs. them” dichotomies to position themselves and to state (and



stage) their identities. History feeds on collective memories bound together by emotions. These emotions are guided through bodies moving on the pitch and passing a ball, and stir historical production. Football players, essential actors in the game, perform important roles of heroes and villains, which are crucial in historical narratives. The following chapter focuses on footballers' place in producing history.



## 6. “We want to see you sacrifice blood, sweat and tears”

The title of this chapter comes from a chant directed at football players. AIK supporters started singing it in 2017.<sup>119</sup> The audience responds to the players during matches, commenting on them, screaming abuse or praise, shouting directions. When I joined two friends for a match between Halmstad BK and Degerfors IF in the second Swedish division, we stood with the away fans (Degerfors). There was only a handful of us. We came a bit late and the security wardens laughed seeing us three rushed to the stands: “Oh here comes DIF support,” one said. Footballers were shouted at, given orders, and commented on during the match. One person, an elderly man, seemed to know every player’s name. He shouted evaluations and comments loudly to the referee, with a strong exaggerated “r” sound: “Red card!! Rrrrrred!” “Good Sebastian! Good Markus!” I was told he was the father of one player. Players were simulating, it was almost embarrassing to watch. The pitch and everything looked weirdly small. We could hear the players screaming to each other, arguing with the referee as well. Someone shouted “Left! Go to the left!” followed by a comment “Are we talking politics now?” The little crowd laughed. Degerfors scored and I almost missed it because I was talking to a guy working for the club. He said it was first time Degerfors won in Halmstad in 69 years. When players came to thank our little group, I had the impression that there were more people on the pitch than on our stands (observations 2016).

Matches in Allsvenskan often have a large and vocal group of away supporters. While being with Djurgårdens IF supporters in Malmö I stood

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<sup>119</sup> The Swedish text is “Vi vill se er offra blod, svett och tårar”.

near an individual who shouted towards the pitch: "I'm going to kill you! Hahahaha! You fucking cunt!" I did not know which of the players deserved that message. Another person became very angry with his own footballers: "What are you paid for?!" They chanted the song "Heaven is the place on earth". In the middle of the singing someone screamed his lungs out: "Take a step!", "Run!" They were not happy with their own team, but applauded small victories throughout. Behind me came another comment: "Danish bastards, hahahaha!" One MFF player was injured, he was lying on the pitch and had to be carried away on a stretcher, prolonging a pause in the game and making DIF fans mad, but once outside the pitch he just ran back the next second. "Faker! Bastard! You fucking cunt!" (observations 2016).

This chapter explores narratives based on players and begins with a general discussion of the evaluations footballers have faced, moving to the figure of Henrik Larsson as a *temporary hero*, and continuing with fluidity of categorization and rapidly changing social roles of players. Next, I analyse a more set category of a villain (based on moral evaluations) and the rapid hero-making that can sometimes occur in football. The focus of this chapter is on history created with the help of players. They are tools for crafting historical references.

Despite being the main protagonists, players do not produce automatically lasting memories in a context of a given club. They have to "happen". Not everyone manages to make enough of an impression to be granted individual characteristics in the stories. Many end up as faint traces of collective memory, blurred across matches, seasons and generations. The main questions for this chapter deal with the idea of contrasting stories and varied need for heroes and villains. With a focus on the cultural performance of physicality, strength, I investigate narratives built around activities on the pitch. Some players manage to achieve firm positions in the ever-changing football pantheon, but the categorization is not set. While writing their personal stories, how do players contribute to creating collective identities based on historical references? How are past heroes present in the modern football? What are the cultural implications of years and seasons of pitch-running of varied quality?

## Footballers as tools for creating history

Generation after generation, players not only compose their personal narratives but weave the “grand history” of the clubs they play in. That is where heroes come into the picture, those players that help to adorn mythologies around clubs. They enact the spirit of their clubs when wearing a shirt in a certain colour.

The idea of contest, winning and losing, is strongly associated with sports. It is performed regularly on a pitch. It builds a picture of physical strength and skill, which in turn affects how we perceive masculine identities in connection with power (Hourihan 1997, 15). Players make football happen and their position is not neutral, but continuously evaluated. Of all the necessary elements of the game, one could drop all but them. The ball has to be played. In the modern, glamorous, profit-oriented football, the general public is cautious about getting attached to players who change every season. During a focus group with members of Kärnan, the supporter group from Helsingborg, the topic was discussed:

- |              |   |
|--------------|---|
| Interviewer: | Do you have a favourite player?   |
| Alex:        | Ehh...  |
| Robin:       | I don't like having any favourite players, because it is so easy to get disappointed.   |
| Tom:         | No....  |
| Alex:        | There are of course many good players...  |
| Robin:       | When they stop playing, then you can like them or have a favourite one.   |
| Alex:        | I think ... I had... I can tell this thing eh, the Lindström anecdote? (looks at the others). Lindström was my favourite player |

when I was like 15, I was in high school. Mattias Lindström, he's from Helsingborg, liked same music as I did. And he was like my total favourite. And then he played a couple of seasons and went away as "Bosman"<sup>120</sup>. And I had never been so disappointed. Since then I have never had a favourite player.

Robin: You can like players because they are good for the team, make a good team. Then you can like them as a person, but not like the favourite player.

Alex: If they play well for the team then you like them. But not like your favourites.

Tom: No.

Robin: You can like them, like how they are, their character.

Alex: And then how they are on the pitch of course. I like the fact that they play for HIF but like that is that. (focus group with Kärnan 16 February 2015)

This is a common attitude expressed by supporters, or even management. One cannot just like a player, because it is impossible to know what they will come up with next. In a few interviews, fans seemed quite disconnected from the idea that the team meant much, considering supporters the main and most important participants. One fan, Markus (interviewed 2013), seemed surprised when I asked about the team:

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<sup>120</sup> "Bosman" refers to a court case when footballer Jean-Marc Bosman won in 1995 the right to change clubs. After the case, players without contracts can move on free transfers (see for example <http://www.bbc.com/sport/football/35097223>)

- Interviewer: Is MFF a good team?
- Markus: Good team? How do you mean? In what way?
- Interviewer: Well... like are they good? You support them... right?
- Markus: Yeah, I guess. They are OK. (interview with Markus March 2013)

He seemed perplexed when I wanted to discuss the players with him, which in turn confused me. To my still untrained student eye, a team was a key part of the structure. Markus thought we would concentrate solely on supporters and the management, which in his mind did not include men on the pitch, as they changed every season. This goes back to the general issue of what a club actually is. The way I phrased my question to Markus suggested that the team was Malmö FF, but could that be claimed? With the fast pace of the employee change, who can represent the club, who can actually become part of the history? Another interviewee, Jonatan, commented:

I never... I like some players, but I'm not such a big fan of any players. It's the club I like. Of course I like Pontus Jansson because he is a supporter himself, and talks well about the club, born and raised in the area. I like the coach too. (interview with Jonatan 21 March 2013)

“They are just tools”. That is how one of my informants, a supporter working for a club in its communication team, described players (interview with Jan 24 October 2012). While field working, it became apparent how little devotion or nostalgia there often was towards footballers. Mistrust, cautiousness, or sometimes just lack of the necessary time to have a bond, resulted in mixed feelings towards them. Players are necessary, but their position is far from strong or straightforward. Few seem to make it to the top in terms of success, but in terms of making a real impact in the club,

becoming memorable and important for supporters for longer than a couple of seasons. Players have limited possibilities to enter the collective memory, not only because they represent a very flexible workforce, but because there are so many and it is not easy to keep track of them. The interviewed referee remarked that former players talk to him about cards he gave them, but he does not remember them:

And another thing... the players sometimes come to you and say “you gave me a yellow card there and then” and I have absolutely no recollection of that. I usually say “Oh really?” I do not remember. Especially like fifteen or twenty years ago, they all blend together. (interview with Wilmar 2 December 2014)

One player commented on changes: “it is of course a big change [rate] in a team. And actually... during the four years here, if I were to guess a number, surely around 30–40 players left and new ones came. So the change, in this work the change is constant. In the... in the football team” (interview with Peter 30 October 2012).

Players are aware of the surveillance under which they are. Fans and clubs watch over them, control them, and school them in good behaviour. Players know there is a strong emotional interaction among the fans that is based on footballers, yet they do not participate in this exchange directly. Their narrative, the history that spins around them, reflects the past, constructing a specific history of the olden days of football, which in turn reflects how the players of the present are viewed. The wheels of football’s time machine turn fast. As remarked earlier, memories need a while to consolidate and to be transmitted. Although history is produced within the 90 minutes of a match, it is not memorable directly. The rituals crucial for this process need an exchange of commitment and engagement. Fans, eager to have heroes, symbols, and more material to work with, rely on what players can produce on the pitch not only in terms of physical abilities, but emotions too.

For all the physical agency granted when on the pitch, players do not own their stories. They are bought and sold, used and discarded. The storytelling happens with them as characters, actants in the narration (Grismer 1987), creating the necessary protagonists as the good, the bad and the



ugly, but they cannot step outside the tale as for example supporters can, even though they do have a life outside football. They are actants, with limited agency. They fulfil roles in producing the history. The ethnologist Fredrik Schoug made a remark about buying and selling players. He noticed that it can be seen as destroying a sense of loyalty and of course affection. Above all it can be perceived as selling off the qualities that should not be converted into money, and this makes it a crime and a betrayal in the eyes of the supporters (1997, 50).

Yet, football is filled with heroes and villains. How do we know this? We are told. For example, a popular Swedish football magazine *Offside* dedicated its first issue of 2015 to folk heroes, and so was the title on the cover (*Offside* 2015). Referring to the national team, the author Jesper Högström tried to decipher what makes a folk hero. He stated: “It is difficult to become beloved of the people” (2015, 44). There is no doubt, though, that over the years Swedish football has produced heroes, different yet similar to each other, characters that reproduce the ideal while adding to, or changing, the established portrayal.

The hero tales, as a genre, “are narrated from the hero’s point of view, and because he occupies the foreground of the story, the reader is invited to share his values and admire his actions, although many heroes do things which most present-day readers would find questionable if they were presented differently” (Hourihan 1997, 39). In such tales, the hero has the central stage from the beginning, as if it was designed like that, as if the place was just made for the hero to show his full potential (Hourihan 1997, 41). The fairy tales of old are already composed so that the hero is the centre of attention. Players have to fight for it, as their stories are rewritten every season. Only some manage to leave a mark, sometimes for good reasons and sometimes for bad. When producing history, different temporalities play a strong part. The stories acquire slightly different meanings. They evolve over time (Grettlein 2014).

Heroes constructed like Henrik Larsson can work well, but the image can quickly lose its value. The following section will engage with the stereotypes of hero constructions through football’s history, which sustains club mythology. Players follow a recognizable pattern that makes it easy for fans to use them effectively in producing history.

## Icons, heroes, legends, Larssons

There are some players people admire and Henrik Larsson is one such example in Swedish club football. He became a star in Helsingborgs IF as a young player, had a successful international career. He was in the national team that won the bronze in the World Cup in 1994. He did more than become an international star. He came back to his mother club. Larsson's position was achieved by his physical abilities, but also personal choices of clubs and career management. Another element was how he was *talked into* his narrative. An important piece of work was done by fans making sense and building sense into the situation while using a historical perspective. My informants from Kärnan stressed that fact during the focus group meeting:

Interviewer: So what do you think about Henrik Larsson, now that he is the coach?

Robin: Extremely good.

Alex: It's good, cool.

Robin: Well we have to look at it from a slightly different perspective. He was a player and is a coach now but he is a symbol for the entire city of Helsingborg. Strong symbol. I don't know how to say it... he represents... well almost the whole of Sweden, I think you can say.

Alex: He's a legend. Sweden's...

Robin: Probably the biggest player in the modern times. Successful and so on. And he is a legend for HIF, he didn't disappoint, he came back and... and now he's back as the coach.

Alex: And he has the heart for the organization and the

team. And we also need to take into consideration what is happening right now. That we are... the club is in a difficult financial situation, and we need somebody that can... how should we put this... be like OK, not fantastic, and still carry it off. Because the expectations... every year the requirement is to be at the top, every year. Anything below top three is worthless. It is just like that. Top three is like OK.

Robin, Tom: Yeah.

Alex: Then people moan about it.

Robin: Some people see it as a weakness but I think this is our absolute strength, like this. Because we can actually compete with Stockholm, Göteborg and Malmö. Not many can do that. Helsingborg can have a longer time perspective. Others can have like short periods of brilliance.

Alex: And this... this is what I mean. If you need this sort of “building up” season, when the economy is really bad, when you renovate the arena and that lowers the attendance figures and so on... so when you need a season like that there is no one else but Henke that people can have so much patience for. He is a legend. He says “We’ll be like sixth or seventh” and people say “Ah it’s gonna to be OK”. He gets the credit... time to build it up for the next year. In a completely different way than any other coach would have. People trust Henke. And I think it’s good, it’s really good. (focus group with Kärnan 16 February 2015)

The narrative presented above happened at a certain point in time – when Henrik Larsson, former star player, embarked on leading his former club as coach. The fans were aware of the difficult financial situation in the club, and the lack of a strong playing troop. Larsson was a glimpse of hope. This

hope was constructed in the narrative, as Larsson as a hero figure was a direct result of a need for such a figure. He might not have the intrinsic qualities to be a hero, but he acquired such characteristics through the narrative being constructed (Smith 1978). This is illustrated by comments from the focus group, for example “there is no one else but Henke,” “he did not disappoint,” “he gets the credit”. The intersection of a character with a successful career and a need for a positive symbol brought Larsson the coach to life.

There are at least three different histories attached to Henrik. His own career, which could be described as a version of a fairy tale, “a narrow road of the hero walking through the world and does not dwell on the figures meeting him” (Lühti 1974, 24). Then there is Helsingborgs IF’s narrative, which makes Henrik more into a legend, as according to the definitions given by Max Lühti, “the legend looks fixedly at the inexplicable which confronts man” (1974, 24). Finally, as mentioned before, his story combined with the long and rich history of the club, and his own family genealogy makes up a local mythology.

The quest is not an option; it seems to be a bare necessity: “The need to struggle for ‘success’ has come to seem equally axiomatic. [...] But it is probably in sport to win is most intense and victory most celebrated” (Hourihan 1997, 14). At the same time sport in various forms, as a recognized and established frame in culture, has the ability to influence values and attitudes, (Hourihan 1997, 14), for example presenting the ethos of fair play, just victories or even the capital of having a long history.

Larsson had a journey, grew in skills and wisdom, and expressed feelings for the club. His journey back home built an extra layer of mythology around him. No one would question Larsson’s character or devotion to the club, none of my informants did, even if not directly HIF fans. It is just believed to be true. This puts Larsson in the realm of mythology. William Bascom defines myths as “prose narratives which, in the society in which they are told, are considered to be truthful accounts of what happened in the remote past” (1984, 9). Myths have authority and represent dogma, as they need to be taken at face value; hence, they are sacred and connected to rituals (Bascom 1984, 9).

Henrik Larsson was a connection between the ideal football hero and a

local boy. He was believed to be the best. The current evaluation of him and his decisions can be seen through a prism of his historic achievements. A big chunk of his life and career has been completed, finished and consolidated; it could serve as a safe foundation for continued admiration.

Even the older generations of fans stressed how much Henrik meant for HIF. HIF-Vännerna had a list of important players throughout the club's history, and Henrik was one of them.

Interviewer: Could you name a person that was very important for HIF?

Adam: A player... would be... the one that has the most meaning attached would be Kalle Svensson. Everybody knows... I think everybody knows him.

Bengt: It is him whose statue is outside the stadium.

Interviewer: Ah yes...

Adam: And then if you go back one generation

Olle: Yes, exactly, Sigge Lindberg.

Adam: Yes, him...

Olle: I think every generation has its idols.

Adam: Knut Kroon.

Bengt: Oh yes. Knut Kroon.

Adam: Exactly. It is the name that you get familiar with, keep reading about it.

Bengt: Yeah, but then Henke Larsson is an icon.

“WE WANT TO SEE YOU SACRIFICE BLOOD, SWEAT AND TEARS”

Olle: Jaaa... he is “number one” for me at least.

Interviewer: So what do you think of him as a coach?

Adam: That he is the coach?

Kasia: Yes...

Adam: Well...

Olle: It's very good.

Adam: Many have expected him to return and act in football still, even after ending his career as a player.

Bengt: But it's not given that he would be successful.

Adam: No no, oh no. (focus group with HIF - Vännerna 17 February 2015)

My informants were able to recall many key players, Larsson's predecessors, who established a line of talented individuals making up HIF's identity. It also enchants the mythology constructed around the club. Larsson sits in a constellation of stars and reaffirms the construction of an HIF hero. In a publication commemorating HIF's hundred years, the journalist Knut Knutsson named many “favourites” over the years. He listed players like Otto Malm, Sigge Lindberg, Albin Dahl, Knut Kroon and Hans Selander among others (2006, 84-103). Henrik Larsson was not on the list, but the former footballers paved the way for Larsson's story.

The narrative provided of Larsson made him suitable for a mould that was already established. His persona allowed for production of history by feeding a myth. As a particular, singular myth is rejuvenated, a certain version of history is produced and strengthened. Since heroes exist in mythical time, the link between them does not have to be direct or linear. The past structures the present. Certain characteristics of a mythical hero are brought forward and sought in different people separated by time,

social positions, or cultural and political context.

Larsson's position as a legendary player fitting the construction of the myth in the club was firmly established. He could take on bold endeavours like coaching his previous team, coaching his own son, without risking much damage. Or rather, the risk has been always there. Larsson's daring devotion to HIF seemingly overcame all the obstacles, even when the final season was a disaster. The two focus groups quoted above were from 2015. The future did not look grim back then, and Larsson was given a lot of emotional credit to lead the team to a better, more stable position. When thinking about the upcoming seasons, my supporters could predict them based on Larsson's mythical status, their devotion and belief that the magic would work.

During the match against Malmö FF, HIF supporters were commenting not only on Larsson, but also on his son Jordan, now a player too, representing Helsingborg in 2015 and 2016. The following extract from field-work exemplifies the reactions towards the Larssons:

MFF fans thought there was a goal, but it was a close miss. Still, some in the Malmö standing section managed to put their flares out. Helsingborg started to laugh. They chanted “did you think there was a goal???” The mockery was loud. They applauded Jordan Larsson. I heard a comment that Jordan was good. People around chatted about him and his father Henrik, comparing them, praising both. I wondered how strange that his father coached the team. (observations 2015)

It is an unusual situation when a father, an acknowledged football star, coaches his son, who is a promising player in a top team. This family connection rarely happens, and talent does not follow automatically with sharing genes. This seemed to soothe fans' expectations and add a point of pride and uniqueness to the club. My interviewees were willing to accept worse results because Henrik would be there, because people trusted him. Also, the Larsson clan grew strong in Helsingborg, and somehow Helsingborg could participate in the family as well. Felix discussed that connection:

Interviewer: If you were to mention an important person or player from HIF?

Felix: I think it's hard not to mention Henrik Larsson. Of course there are other people too, like Rio Kalle Svensson, he got the nickname Rio because he was the goalkeeper for Sweden and he was pulled to play the exhibition games and competition games in Brazil. He saved all the goal... ahm... attempts from the Brazilian team, if I remember correctly. So he was like the national goalie of Sweden. In the 1950s? So he was an important character in HIF history as well. But Henrik Larsson is of course like the main character.

[...]

Interviewer: And his son now plays in HIF right?

Felix: Yes that's right. Nepotism. (laughs) No, no... he was actually there before Henrik arrived. His son Jordan Larsson. Which is interesting because everybody in Helsingborg knows about Jordan since he was born. And now he plays in the team and it is interesting. He was named Jordan after the... the basketball player, Michael Jordan. Yeah, he was Henrik's biggest idol. (6 February 2015)

Felix remarked on small family details that were known to Helsingborg fans. The Larssons became a symbol in Helsingborg. There has also been agreement that they both handle the situation very well. Åke, a former player in HIF, expressed deep respect for “Henke” and his son:

Interviewer: It is special that Henrik Larsson is now the coach and his son plays there too.

Åke: Jordan, yes ... Yes... if there is someone who could handle that situation then it's Henrik. Both of them



stand with both feet on the ground. They have... just like my dad they have those old values (laughs). As my dad also had this “it is how it should be”. No discussion, respect for the elderly ... and the two... Henrik and Jordan are such people that... you have never asked “why is Jordan playing”. So that... it’s handled well. Had I come from outside and not known Henrik... I wouldn’t think they are father and son. They are a coach and a player. Then at home they are dad and son. [...] Then Jordan needs to be a bit stronger, tougher, more selfish. And that’s what Henrik knows. The first year he came here from Division 3 he scored 49 goals and made 30 assists. The first year. He has... “it”. And it is hard to say that Jordan has “it”. But then... you don’t develop the same way. (interview with Åke 3 November 2015)

The sentiments towards Larsson gave him a lot of credit, but the team was relegated from the highest division in 2017, after 24 years there, which was preceded by 24 years of trying to go back to the top division. The last dramatic match was followed by some angry masked fans who tried to get the HIF shirt off Jordan Larsson.<sup>121</sup> Nevertheless, even after losing, and then quitting as a coach, Henrik Larsson gave one more reason for supporters to respect him: he did not want to take a salary for the following year he was entitled to by his contract, as he decided to help the club economically.<sup>122</sup> His coaching skills were not enough to save the club from falling. The (for now) final bit of history written by Larsson for HIF has been painful. Because football is football, there is always a next season, new hope, and a new hero on the horizon.

It would seem that Larsson’s saga was done, ready for wrapping up and consolidating in its specific narrative form. The “golden age” was first the 1990s with Larsson in the club. There was a potential for it to shift to the present, the 2015–2016 season, when the Larsson duo was present, but it

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<sup>121</sup> This incident was analysed in the second chapter.

<sup>122</sup> <http://www.dn.se/sport/fotboll/henrik-larsson-lamnar-helsingborg/>.

did not get a chance. Still, Henrik's own story was strong enough to survive the fall. The evaluation of his professional life as a player and then coach would differ depending on the time frame chosen (see Grethlein 2014). Henrik Larsson has different narratives spun around him. They interact with each other, but they differ depending on whether one looks at his career, his interaction with HIF, or his relationship with his son. David Herman described narratives as a form of “folk psychology,” a way of finding orientation in reality (2009, 20). It is the mundane attempt to understand the world and events that occur. A narrative bridges the gap between the expected and the actual process. It could be claimed that clinging to Henrik Larsson and his own private mythology acted as a balm to soothe the sour present time of HIF, and helped explain why one should embrace a not-so-good future, but could keep one's hopes up. The narrative attached to the event of unsuccessful coaching highlights something more than just a sporting failure. Once again, it holds up a figure of a hero who with one final move shows his devotion to the club.

According to Arthur Asa Berger there are “mythical patterns” in popular culture, making it possible to trace parallels to classical narratives of gods and heroes. Berger selected several strong characters, like Prometheus or Hercules, that have their counterparts throughout the history of western literature, cinema and television productions (2013). When applying Berger's idea one could describe Henrik Larsson as Ulysses. Larsson had his mystical journey outside of Sweden, he was successful, he became famous in many clubs on his way, making an impact and leaving behind him stories. In addition, at the end of this journey, like Ulysses, after staying home for some time he travels again, he leaves his harbour of HIF and sails away. A more striking resemblance is achieved when one takes Jordan into consideration – the mythical son of Ulysses, Telemachus, a loyal and brave heir.

Although Larsson's *Odyssey* fits rather neatly in Berger's frame of copying myths, I would argue that it is not about recreating myths or making “modernized versions”, but creating one's own mythology by producing history. One is not copying the myths, simply recognizing the structure. Does a myth have to be old to be classified as such? Was a myth “myth” in ancient Greece? Berger wrote that the word itself means “a story” and that beneath a surface of a narrative one can find a “myth” as a form of intertextual con-

nections that lets us connect to the narrative (Berger 2013, 11). One can point out connections to different myths and narratives, and certainly many could be described as “mythic cultural dominants” (Berger 2013, 13), as coming from Judeo-Christian or Greco-Roman traditions. I would argue that it is not the main reason why the “new stories” resonate with us, as Berger writes. Rather, one recognizes a good story in the making.

Some authors and artists deliberately base their work on previous narratives, like fans eagerly seeing reminiscences or connections to previous footballers. There is a pattern, a set of ingredients available to make a captivating story out of any life. Some structures, like football, are more prone to produce good characters, because of the environment itself. Players have individual journeys within a broader context; they can become visible or vanish into thin mythical air. Recognizable stories are materialized, for example, by enacting a club’s colours, and performing a ritual on the pitch that can be then used as a narrative. This results in historical productions of emotions, connections and memories that are then assembled into comprehensive narratives that explain to us reality in the intersections of past, present and future.

Larsson’s glory is not there anymore, not completely. HIF needed the ideal leader and Larsson’s story has been adjusted to fit history in the making. As clubs are used to the cyclical character of their time, they prepare every year for new production of history. When interviewing HIF supporters before the season in 2015, I encountered the preparation for the production. Henrik was ascribed a hero role, Jordan fitted in the mythical structure of the family quest. Towards the end of 2016 the picture got shattered. Hope, good will and faith did not manage to hold. The eagerness of fans and the club to produce and perform a certain version of history was halted by the team’s physical inability to deliver and their coach’s struggle to guide them. As both Larssons left the club, their narrative was cut short.

## Heroic pragmatism

Henrik and Jordan Larsson were a recognizable father-son duo in Swedish football, but there have been others. Jonas Thern was a successful

player in Malmö FF and his son, Simon, played in Helsingborgs IF before moving to MFF, for which he was symbolically lynched by the fans (Herd 2013). The Larsson saga had time, space and protagonists necessary to produce a hero, and it took place when Helsingborgs IF could use strong images of devoted players. Larsson was important as a member of the national team, thus his symbolism stretched even further. The career development from player to a coach is not unusual, but it would appear that such figures are rarely granted so much trust as Larsson. Another player, Johan Mjällby, recreated Henrik Larsson's steps, but in a less dramatic way.

Johan Mjällby was an important player in AIK in the 1990s. He also played for Celtic FC in Scotland (like Henrik Larsson) and for Levante in Spain. He was a defender and midfielder, so he did not score many goals, but stood as an important figure for AIK and was a captain of the national team in 2002.<sup>123</sup> Just like Henrik Larsson, Johan Mjällby became a coach. One of my informants named him as “the favourite player”:

My favourite player... Maybe Johan Mjällby, he in a way symbolizes AIK. I have a dog called Milo, but it is a girl dog and her third name is Mjällby. (interview with Martin 25 January 2015)

I do not know why Martin's dog had three names, but he chose to incorporate a player's surname in his family, albeit attached to the canine member. Mjällby was described on the AIK website as a “legend” and a “king” too. He exemplified the qualities of a hero that never gives up. There was a combination of being an important figure in the national team and winning the league title with AIK that made him visible in the media and presented him as a recognizable figure to broader audience, his style of play translated to his persona and further to the character of the club (Mendel-Enk 2004, 14; 21–23). The change of clubs did not damage his status, as he, like Henrik Larsson, played for a long time in respectable teams, showed devotion and loyalty. There is a trace of a hero

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123 From Mjällby's profile on AIK's website: <http://www.aik.se/fotboll/historik/500aikare/johamjal.html>

story that includes an idea either of a solitary quest or with a “band of brothers” (Hourihan 1997, 77). The narrative about Mjällby was nourished by his hard way of playing, his attitude of never giving up. Such elements are crucial in establishing an aura of masculinity with a normalized, naturalized idea of overcoming the enemy and one’s personal weaknesses (Hourihan 1997, 98).

Johan Mjällby “happened” through football. He was an important player for AIK and for the Swedish national team. He performed a certain idea of how football should be played. This fed back to the narrative of the club and of Mjällby himself, moulding him in the shape of a modern warrior, and then making him into a myth – a reference to himself that produces history while performing the ideal. In his case, as with Henrik Larsson, changing clubs became more a merit than a hindrance. It proved his worth that others wanted to hire him. The similarity to Larsson’s story is reflected in the event of Mjällby’s paying a fee to a club in order to become a coach in another.<sup>124</sup> The money was transformed into the will for success, as he took on himself the financial costs of his transfer. In 2018 Johan Mjällby started to compose a new narrative – a coach that should be able to transplant his personal achievements into a team. Should he be successful, would AIK take him back as a coach, as HIF did with Larsson?

In the case of both Larsson and Mjällby, transfers or changes of club did not hinder their developments as local heroes. On the contrary, the process was enchanted by the journeys abroad and then back home.<sup>125</sup> The history produced took a form of “happy returns” and oozed loyalty and attachment. Guillermo Molins was an example of another player who returned to a Swedish club (Malmö FF) after a difficult transfer to Belgium followed by an injury (interview with Gustav 30 October 2014). He became a captain and was pronounced a “king” too, but his injuries forced him out. Still, for some years he was cherished by fans.<sup>126</sup> Similarly Kim Källström’s return to Djurgården was celebrated in 2017. Internationally recognizable

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<sup>124</sup> <https://www.expressen.se/sport/forbolls/superettan/mjallby-betalade-sjalv-for-att-gattill-superettan/>.

<sup>125</sup> Mjällby went back to AIK in 2006.

<sup>126</sup> Molins went back to MFF in 2018.

players with fulfilling career paths performed a specific journey. The idea of a quest – going into the wilderness in search of glory and riches, crowned with a successful return – is a recognizable pattern in heroic tales (Hourihan 1997, 22). All those stories have personalized elements and individual protagonists, but they fit a pattern of taking up the colours, performing the necessary routines, and preparing the foundation for a possible creation of a hero. Their narratives were used to produce history to similar ends – to ensure that emotional engagement was there to secure a feeling of continuity and strengthen the history of a club, influencing its outcomes for the future.

The outcome of transfers is difficult to predict. Not all the comebacks to clubs, like Henrik Larsson's, are smooth and celebrated by fans. Sometimes they are messy and create more distrust than reassurance. One such example was the understanding of Mohamed Bangura's journey, referred to by Maria:

Bangura was sold to Celtic, but that did not turn out well, and then he wanted to come back but wanted too much money and so he signed up with Elfsborg, but then minutes after that he says in an interview that he prefers AIK. So he upset just everybody, now he is back and for free, but we will see how he's going to be. (interview with Maria 5 March 2015)

Maria's account revolved around loyalty and money too. It would appear that IF Elfsborg, another Swedish club, bought a person's muscles to run on the pitch, but not his preferences. In an interview for the newspaper *Aftonbladet* Bangura stated that he would like to go back to AIK, if only the fans did not kill him.<sup>127</sup> The player was well aware of the harsh criticism he was about to face from the fans, and claimed he was caught in a process he could not control, and ended up in IF Elfsborg to his own surprise. He revealed the coded understanding of the context – the transfers are not free from moral evaluations. One makes sense of them accord-

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<sup>127</sup> Article published on 13 January 2013. (<https://www.aftonbladet.se/sportbladet/fotboll/sverige/allsvenskan/elfsborg/articel6126575.ab>)

ing to the accepted patterns.

Bangura fell outside the performative frame of a player who just wants a good salary and a chance to run on the pitch rather than sit on a bench. He claimed another connection, nostalgic and based on emotions, and as Maria pointed out he upset everyone – his new club IF Elfsborg (because right from the start he refused to appreciate the transfer) and his old club AIK (because, according to Maria) his financial demands were too steep to get him back. This story is based on failure, but as Mohamed Bangura found himself off-balance in his understanding of the football world, his attitude questioned the sense-making of the transfer system. In a way, he refused to “happen” in his new club, and he provoked criticism. Although he found his way back to AIK, Maria was not willing to grant him much credit. He needed to prove himself. In 2015, during the derby match against Djurgårdens IF that I observed, Bangura scored the only goal, giving victory to AIK, and he celebrated after the match by going close to the standing section and receiving an ovation (shadowing 2015). His story was not over, though, and he was transferred yet again, to another Swedish club.

Bangura made history by securing an important match victory that would be remembered (at least for some time), but his personal journey was used to produce history for the club and its supporters. AIK appeared in it as a club that one cannot just leave and cannot ignore. The player’s identity was somewhat stolen and his performance became not as much about his career but about reinstating the bond that was in danger of breaking. Although his transfers were not easy, and he was put in another club’s shirt, another identity shone through that was used, as in the interview with Maria, to state the fans’ positions and importance. His narrative became tangible through the change of employers, and although he was not the most successful of players, he managed to enter the realm of AIK’s collective memory.

In spite of the usual media focus on the players who make a positive impact, my informants also talked about players they disliked or were disappointed with. In an interview from 2013, my informant Jonatan named a footballer who did not win his heart:

“WE WANT TO SEE YOU SACRIFICE BLOOD, SWEAT AND TEARS”

And I really didn't like Daniel Larsson. I don't think he should have played as much as he did. He may be the player in Allsvenskan with the top speed, and he works a lot and I admire his mind, always works a lot, but his first touch of the ball – I can do better than him. He can't score, he can't pass. So he is fast and does good work without the ball... but is that a football player?

(We stare at each other and both start laughing)

But now we don't have him, so I'm happy. (He chuckles.)

(interview with Jonatan 21 March 2013)

I have a vague memory of what sort of player Daniel Larsson was; I cannot recall his looks, just a silhouette of a man running with a ball, which could be none or all of the men that played for MFF in the last five seasons. Jonatan had a personal connection with him because he did not like him. His frustration took a humorous turn during the interview as he reflected on the player in question – yet another Larsson but with less positive connotations.

Football supporters pass on their personalized memories to younger peers, famously slipping into nostalgia as the past becomes romanticized before the mundaneness of the present. The subjects of such mythologies meanwhile slide into public obscurity. Often, the announcement of the death of leading former players leads to a fuller reassessment of the collective memory that must immortalize glorious careers. (Giulianotti 1999, 125)

If one has heroes, then one will also have villains in a story. Fentress and Wickam state that every society needs villains, if only to keep the heroes busy (1992, 202). The following example involves a player who underwent harsh criticism for his behaviour off the pitch, but his story was used in order to produce a history of his club that would be shameful and harmful when performed by fans of other clubs. This narrative involving Miiko Albornoz was not based on the lack of sporting merits, but rather on his relationship choices. Being proud of one's hero seems quite obvious, but



what happens if a player steps over a line? How can one use a dark narrative, one that does not speak of glory, but of shame?

## A dark narrative

Towards the end of the 2012 football season, a story appeared in the local press that one of the players from Malmö FF had sex with a girl that was fourteen and a half years old. The girl made contact via Facebook, and according to official sources they met once in November, and then he was reported to the police for sexual abuse of a minor. He was sentenced to community service.<sup>128</sup> The sentence was quite lenient on the player since the judge saw that it was not a repeated offence, and apparently he made sure that she was willing to have sex, which, as the local newspaper reported, was documented.<sup>129</sup> His public profile, young age, and punishment by the club (he was banned from playing for two months and ten days<sup>130</sup>) were also taken into consideration.

This is the brief background, the basics of the story, which resulted in an extraordinary explosion of creativity among supporters. There have been many discussions in the press; the club was criticized for being too lenient, many MFF supporters were unhappy with the whole thing. The legal side of things, if the player was actually guilty or not, was of little concern to many fans from other clubs. The important element was that they got something with which to mock and attack Malmö. They found a protagonist – someone sentenced for sexual abuse of a child. That translates to being a paedophile. This category was expanded by different groups visiting the stadium in Malmö, as the story of sexual abuse was materialized and performed in order to be used to produce the history of Malmö FF.

This story allowed other clubs to position themselves against the player Miiko Albornoz and his conduct. It took a narrative form of “it would have never happened with us”. For example, I raised the issue during a focus group discussion with HIF supporters:

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<sup>128</sup> <http://www.sydsvenskan.se/2013-02-13/albornoz-nojd-med-dom>.

<sup>129</sup> <http://www.sydsvenskan.se/2013-02-13/albornoz-nojd-med-dom>.

<sup>130</sup> <http://www.sydsvenskan.se/2013-04-10/mff-later-albornoz-spela-match>.

“WE WANT TO SEE YOU SACRIFICE BLOOD, SWEAT AND TEARS”

- Interviewer: OK so I should ask maybe about Miiko Albornoz and his case. How do you think Malmö took care of this?
- Alex: (Laughing a lot and loud)
- Robin: Very badly.
- Alex: They didn't do anything at all!
- Tom: Really bad.
- Alex: Well what can you say? A convicted child molester. I think we wouldn't have accepted it. I hope we wouldn't have accepted it.
- Robin: I have an example of a player from last year, Modou Barrow, and we from Kärnan contacted the club directly and discussed it and they said no, they would not buy him.
- Alex: And we were very clear that we don't want this sort of a player in our club. (focus group with Kärnan 16 February 2015)

The player Robin referred to was convicted of domestic violence in the early stages of his career, but he became a professional player in England and was offered a place on the Swedish national team, a rather controversial move, which the Swedish Football Association had to explain to the wider public.<sup>131</sup> It is yet another example of unacceptable behaviour. The interviewed guys were adamant that a player with such a record would have no place in HIF. Both cases, with Albornoz and Barrow, are about representation and categorization. In the quotation above, they become the same

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<sup>131</sup> <http://www.fotbollskanalen.se/sverige/tv-barrow-uttagen-trots-misshandelsdom---svff-forklarar-varfor/>.

character; they become intertextual because they provide a reference, a short-cut example of a “bad player”, someone we do not want to become one of us. Alex and Robin, in the interview quotation above, used that intertextual characteristic when they explained one case with another. They did not have to cite in detail what happened to Barrow, it was already assumed that he was the same category as Alborno. They become contagious as their demeanour permeates to their clubs, supporters and team mates. This puts them in the category of a magical tool. In a magical rite, a part can symbolize a whole: “a symbol will create an object, and a part will create a whole, a word, the event and so on” (Mauss 1972, 154). One person gets to exemplify the entire group, becomes a usable blueprint for interpreting and contextualizing others that might belong to the same category.

The Alborno events took place in late 2012, but it was during the following seasons that the away section at the arena in Malmö was filled with creativity based on that story. In May 2015 I came together with HIF supporters to the away match in Malmö. The game was tense and full of abusive chants and songs from both sides. The following observation happened right at the beginning of the game:

MFF’s standing section started a chant “Framåt Malmö!” (forward Malmö) with the intended result of making the rest of the stadium answer with “Heja di Blåe” (Go the Blues). However, now there were a couple of thousands HIF supporters prepared for the occasion. When “Framåt Malmö” hit the air all the people around me respond loudly: “Paedophiles!!” At first I was startled by the term, trying to search my memory for the reason for that abuse. Then the episode with the player Miiko Alborno, which happened in 2012, came to my mind. Malmö tried several times, but the only thing you could hear was a deafening “paedophiles” filling the space. After that MFF fans did not try it again. (observations 2015)

Alborno was not playing there anymore, and years had passed since the whole affair. The insult had become old, although still making a painful impact and a reminder of a rather uncomfortable reference. The crowd seized an opportunity to produce history based on that particular reference. The understanding of moral evaluations of an actions against a child, a case of abuse, is firmly established in society. A category of a paedophile

carries extremely negative connotations. The shaming ritual has been performed repeatedly at MFF’s home grounds in different forms. A variety of creative materializations based on Albornoz’s case appeared. In May 2013, Helsingborgs IF came to Malmö prepared to take the full advantage of what was then still a fresh situation. They gathered at Malmö’s stadium in impressive numbers, and carrying a banner saying in English “If you tolerate this then your children will be next” (observations 2013). They had smaller banners with the number 14 written on them.

The gravity of the situation weighed heavily on the way that MFF was evaluated and so the insult lasted for several years.<sup>132</sup> It became a recognizable reference that refused to fade away. Richard Burkert, professor of anthropology of religion, remarked that sacrifices may have strong theatrical character, but they also need a serious element that allows the performance to go back and forth from symbolism to reality (Burkert 1996 (1983), 65). Albornoz’s case provided an opportunity for a repeated sacrifice of his persona.

There was even a chant made based on the story. I have seen material with fans of AIK, Hammarby, IFK Göteborg, Djurgårdens IF, and Halmstad using it. For example, there is a video clip showing the AIK crowd in August 2013, screaming loudly at Malmö:<sup>133</sup>

Miiko is a paedophile

He rapes small children in his car

Everybody knows, everybody knows

Everybody knows he is a paedophile

The picture below is the screenshot of that video. While preparing for kick-off and arranging flags and banners, the crowd sang and jumped, attacking Albornoz.

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<sup>132</sup> It was still sung in 2018 at the MFF stadium and the song is used if a similar situation occurs.

<sup>133</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQ7cstu7J3E>; 190,116 views on 13 December 2016.



A screenshot from an uploaded video clip on YouTube. It depicts AIK fans singing a chant about Miiko Alborno. The text under the video said (my translation): “AIK mocks Miiko Alborno who was previously convicted of sexual exploitation of children”. (Published on 12 August 2013, <http://www.17124.se/>).

The melody is the well-known old tune of Scott Joplin’s *The Entertainer*. It is catchy and rather happy in style. The gravity of the subject was in sharp contrast to the chosen singing style. Trevor J. Blank has commented that the internet, as a form of participatory culture, invites interaction because it works well as a psychological outlet with a much wider social circle (2013). I would suggest that an environment such as football works in the same way. When 15,000 people from different backgrounds, ages, classes, meet together in one space, the message spreads across the social boundaries as it could not do in other social circumstances. Blank also writes that in “oral traditions of ‘tasteless’, ‘sick’, or ‘gross’ humour before the digital age, the majority of jokesters were male adolescents” (2013, 5). Although women participate actively in football, there are young males that make the most noise during matches who can be very serious, yet burst out laughing after delivering heavy abuse towards their opponents. Calling an entire club paedophiles might be a case of “reflexive anti-reflexivity”, as Keith Khan Harris explained:

If unreflexivity is “not knowing better” and anti-reflexivity is “not wanting to know”, then reflexive anti-reflexivity is “knowing better but deciding not to know”. Reflexive anti-reflexivity can therefore be defined as anti-reflexivity practised by members who are capable of producing reflexive practice within the reflexive space of the scene. In fact, given the intense reflexivity of the scene and the intense reflexivity required to become involved in it, unreflexivity and anti-reflexivity are relatively rare within the scene. (Khan-Harris 2006, 145)

Khan-Harris was commenting on the extreme metal scene, but there are parallels to how football is constructed. The Alborno case was reported widely in the media, and the gravity of the situation was gradually mitigated by emerging circumstances. He was not portrayed as a sexual predator exploiting little girls. Rather, he was a young, inexperienced player who did not handle well the pressure of being in the public eye. Blank points out that humour is often an expression of clashing opinions, and using humour can help to express more straightforward evaluations of events. In the media, one has to be careful with words and opinions, especially in such cases. Blank remarks:

The jokes were an act of rebellion against the media’s coverage of the event, with sordid punchlines aimed at the “unspeakable” dimensions of the tragedy [...]. Indeed, many forms of humor (including those pertaining to race, ethnicity, or regional/national identity) do not arise out of aggression, conflict or threat, but for playful purposes. (2013, 35–36)

The same traces appear in other instances that were aimed against this footballer. When MFF came to Stockholm to play a match in 2013, Djurgården supporters greeted Miiko waving and shouting rhythmically “Paedophile, hello!”<sup>134</sup> A friendly greeting contrasts with the classification as a child abuser. It could be described as absurd – a nonsensical construction. Alborno’s history was produced through provocation that was aimed at his club as well. Supporters that engaged in those activities understood

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<sup>134</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H51Di6la3nI> (online in January 2017).

the manifold categories that Miiko Albornož could represent. In the media he was created and described as a young male, who happened to be also a player, who happened to be in Malmö. For fans from other teams, he represented players in general, players in the Malmö club, and Malmö at large.

Albornož as a child molester was both complete and empty enough to become an intertextual reference. At least for the time being, he has been the mythical villain of Swedish football. Roland Barthes wrote about the making of a myth as a symbol that empties itself of meaning to crystallize its form:

The meaning is already complete, it postulates a kind of knowledge, a past, a memory, a comparative order of facts, ideas, decisions. [...] When it becomes form, the meaning leaves its contingency behind; it empties itself, it becomes impoverished, historically evaporates, only the letter remains. [...] the meaning loses its value, but keeps its life, from which the form of the myth will draw its nourishment. (Barthes 1972, 117–118)

Supporters’ actions and creative engagement with the case also helped, as Miiko was used almost immediately against his club and his team; he gained another meaning, another category that was independent of himself.

In 2017 the chants about Albornož were reused when another player employed by MFF, Kingsley Saffo, was arrested and convicted for sexual harassment.<sup>135</sup> During a match in Malmö in October, AIK supporters sang the Albornož chant, just changing the name, and displayed many banners with messages about MFF attracting paedophiles and Malmö not being a safe city for young girls (observations 2017). The myth received more nourishment.

The examples of Henrik Larsson and Miiko Albornož were polarized; a hero and a villain in diametric opposition. Through time, however, Henrik Larsson’s position crumbled as HIF experienced serious difficulties. Hope and trust in one man were not enough. Miiko Albornož’s story moved back in time and lost its immediate relevance. Many players, like Larsson and Albornož, are faced with contradictory opinions depending on various

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135 <https://www.sydsvenskan.se/2017-10-03/aklagaren-risk-att-utredningen-skadas-av-att-mff-spelaren-ar-pa-fri-fot>.

factors in their ongoing careers, but seldom are the evaluations so extreme. Alborno's case was not only a dark and sad event of the past, but was used to produce a history of MFF that was anchored in a traditional dualism of characters, Alborno becoming the villain of the story (Hourihan 1997, 46). As supporters were familiar with the pattern through performing football, they had no difficulty composing the narrative with the material that was available to them.

## Get your heroes right – football's greenhouse effect

My informants navigated between two contexts – “real life” with its specific sense-making and boundaries, and football, which has its own logic. These two are not separated but feed each other. Miiko Alborno received the badge for the villain of the year (with help from other clubs) because a reference from the broader society about behavioural patterns was filtered through football and went back to the “reality”, producing a certain history. This need to navigate highlights the construction of sense and non-sense (Stewart 1979). Fulfilling requirements for the hero status on the pitch does not necessarily translate into the “real” world, and vice versa. An intersection of other categories influences the final shaping and evaluation of players' narratives.

Opinions about players are based on cultural memory, i.e. official commemorations and publications, but also on communicative memory, which is based on oral transmission (Assmann 1988). Lindsey Dodd remarked that the way historians use memory evokes parallels to how supporters can use memories to construct history:

The way that memories are narrated, connected to each other and to other events, the way that they struggle against and absorb parts of wholes of collective or public memories, the way that their notions of chronology are bulging with inherent meaning are integral to how historians use them; these slippery aspects of memory are what make it hard to work with, but enormously satisfying, for the insights it can bring to understanding the past are profound. (Dodd 2013, 47)



Commemoration of players is one aspect of the memory exchange that highlights how a story can be materialized and acted upon, performed, to serve as a new story to be remembered and transmitted through different media and oral traditions. Exchanges in football do not follow timeframes established outside the context, but rely, especially nowadays, on rapid communication and newcomers willing to pick up myths and symbols and create them anew. The familiarization of the field also happens as much in real life as online, which comes across in the material presented throughout this dissertation. Memories are preserved online, often starting as individual narratives that are exposed to a mass of people, acquiring a collective quality.

To be remembered is to become meaningful, and that requires time to forge emotional connections. Players often face lack of time to do that. Still, one can observe newcomers who stay in a club for just a short while becoming a canvas for producing sudden and rapid connections that do not fade away immediately. The memory of them is materialized, for example, in the form of T-shirts. Sometimes players are rewarded with shirts made by supporter groups and featuring their names or nicknames. These players do not have to become key elements in the clubs' narratives, quite often they are foreigners and they stay in those clubs for relative short periods of time.

An example of such a pattern came in the form of a footballer called Nyasha Mushekwi, a player from Zimbabwe who spent half a season playing for Djurgårdens IF. In 2015 a specific chant was composed and performed during a match between MFF and Djurgårdens IF in Malmö. On a train to the game, a group of friends came up with a chant including simple words:

He is Super-Mush

He wants to play for Djurgården

For the rest of his life<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> The song and the story around it was captured and presented in a video available on DIF's official website: <https://diftv.solidtango.com/video/pa-taget-ner-till-malmo-sattes-en-ny-ramsa-till-mushekwi>.

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I attended that match and stood in the away crowd with DIF supporters. Together with my friend, we witnessed how Nyasha Mushekwi (Mush) scored a goal for DIF, and the song, starting slowly at one end of our section, spread like fire. Several thousand supporters joined in. The song stuck with us and we were humming it when biking home. A short piece from my field notes contains little of the overwhelming emotions there:

Goal for DIF. A rain of beer comes on us.

Popcorn and beer coming on me, they are so happy now. A guy takes a picture of MFF supporters and his middle finger in front of his camera.

They start singing: Mush. Super Mush

He is super Mush, oh oh oh! He wants to play in Djurgår'n för the rest of his life. [...]

I sort of found a friend – one guy smiles to me and tries to indicate that we are in this “together”.

A sudden fear – a goal was very close, a murmur of fear, “orka nu för fan!” (have strength now, for fuck's sake) [...]

Krossa krossa nu! – crush them now! A bald guy paces around, holding his head in his hands. There are kids wearing MUSH shirts.

They started singing that after the goal, and did not stop at half time, just going back and forward and singing, many take their shirts off, they are weirdly happy, totally excited. [...]

The match finished 1–1 and at the end they are still singing “He is Super Mush”. The arena emptied and they are still there, pacing from side to side and singing about Mush. I have never seen such a happy crowd. (Observations 2015)

“WE WANT TO SEE YOU SACRIFICE BLOOD, SWEAT AND TEARS”



A screenshot from DIF TV showing a totally empty stadium and a group of away fans from Djurgården celebrating in Malmö a player that scored one goal and is about to leave the club. (online 19 September 2018)

Later, it became clear that this chant was very fresh, not known before, and it functioned exclusively for this one event. This was not only because of this one particular match, but also because supporters knew he was planning to move soon and neither the club nor he made it a mystery. Anton, whom I interviewed a month or two later, commented on it:

Interviewer: Is Mush still in the club?

Anton: Yes.

Interviewer: Is he going to play today?

Anton: Yep. He has three matches to go.

Interviewer: OK.

Anton: Including this one today. So we'll see what happens, I

think it will be difficult to have him again. We'll see.  
I think we would like to have him as long as possible.

Interviewer: I was with DIF in Malmö when this Mush song broke out...

Anton: Oh yes... we were singing the entire break as well. That was so exciting actually. It started with like five people, they started singing it on the train, and it just spread... I haven't heard it before that match. More and more people were singing. It has a good tune and so... and so he was told in it that he should play for Djurgården. (interview 10 August 2015)

What comes across here is the prediction inserted in the chant, “he wants to play with Djurgården for the rest of his life”. Certain characteristics of a performed magical spell appear here. The chant is like an incantation. As Marcel Mauss remarked: “Magic is not performed just anywhere, but in specially qualified places. [...] magic, along with sacrifices, has provision for determining the time and place of ritual” (1972, 57–58). The performance described above could happen in very few public spaces. Football has a routine to it. People know how to behave, what to do, and how to explore the boundaries. Time, space, content and a protagonist came together to produce history.

Although many fans express their reluctance to get attached to any players, stating that one just cannot trust them, or that they can disappoint any time, they are necessary to keep the story going and they are key elements that keep the wheels of football history turning. AIK, DIF and MFF had some of their players turned into commercial merchandise, AIK using its Finnish striker Eero Markkanen before he was sold to Real Madrid,<sup>137</sup> DIF supporters displaying the nickname of Nyasha Mushekwi who played half a season in 2015, and MFF commemorating Guillermo Molins, the

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<sup>137</sup> Eero Markkanen's career did not take off in Madrid, and he returned to AIK for the 2016 season, which made supporters happy, so they made yet another shirt with his name on it (field notes 2016).



Mush shirt, Nyasha Mushekwi played for DIF in 2015, <http://www.jarnkaminerna.se/2015/05/24/kop-nya-mush-trojan-pa-en-arena-infor-derbyt/>; Heero shirt, Eero Markkanen played for AIK in 2014, <http://www.radiorasunda.se/2014/06/18/stod-radio-rasunda/>.

former captain who had a serious knee injury in 2014.

It would seem then that supporters concentrate on the fact of wearing the shirt, their shirt, and trying to make as much myth from the players as possible. Those shirts are quite short-lived and a DIF supporter said in an interview that he “needs to wear the Mush shirt as much as possible now, because it will be irrelevant soon” (interview with Anton 10 August 2015). These one-season wonders might be read as rather clumsy attempts to connect to footballers that quite often openly care more about their careers than any particular club. They are used efficiently, even before they have time to act. They become active parts that warm up the clubs’ old bones, helping to rejuvenate the myths with their flesh and blood. Although staying with a club for a short period of time and unable to become significant in the club’s grander narrative, players like Mushekwi are used to create tiny folktales that strengthen the image of the organization.

Applying another metaphor, one could go back to agriculture and see the rapidly developed emotional connections as a specific greenhouse

effect.<sup>138</sup> Everybody knows that players are likely to disappear after just a couple of seasons, nobody expects them to end their lives in the clubs. Yet, there is a longing for affectionate relationships, and those are developed rapidly, grown in greenhouse conditions, harvested quickly but perhaps not having as much taste, as much depth. It is as good as it gets, though, and all parties are willing to harvest the fruit obtained in this way. The ethnologist Fredrik Schoug commented that places of importance, designated as for example "home", come with agricultural metaphors including roots, plants and growing organisms. An old tree is a common symbol of a nation, for example, lending itself to an intertextual reading of genealogical trees that communicate continuity, group identity and belonging (1997, 38–39). Players function as fast-growing seeds that need to root, bloom and (hopefully) produce fruit in a limited period of time.

As Halbwachs commented on preserving a sense of continuity through various figures in religious memory: "Their appearance becomes transformed, but it was necessary to preserve their nature as gods, at least for some time" (1992, 87). Those players are "free to go" in a sense, because the collective force around the club managed to use and freeze their presence in a form that strengthens the club. For a moment, the lens zooms in on them and makes them one-day heroes, but their importance is not limited to those brief encounters, as it can serve as the binding point between the past and presence and most importantly it keeps myths and memories alive. These are small bricks of collective memory that keep being re-shifted and replaced, but they are necessary. Quoting Halbwachs, "even at the moment that it is evolving, society returns to its past. It frames the new elements that it pushes to the forefront in a totality of remembrances, traditions, and familiar ideas" (1992, 86).

The narrative about Mush exemplifies the process of constructing protagonists in the football context in a speeded-up form. The player was on his way out, and fans snatched a possibility to produce a history based on

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<sup>138</sup> The phrase "greenhouse effect" has nowadays negative connotations and it often refers to the changing climate and warming up of the planet. In this context one can also view it in a critical perspective as relationships built in a quick and/or artificial way. Still, a greenhouse is necessary to produce many vegetables that are not native in the cooler climate.

Mush. The task seemed quite impossible to complete, but the fans, as composers and tellers of the tale, did “rather a lot of contextual work to show how the behaviour can read” (Smith 1978, 39). The act of singing the song, celebrating a draw and honouring a player that was meaningful for just a few months stretched the sense-making. The structure held and the club was left with the creation of a myth based on a player, but venerating fans and the club rather than the Zimbabwean player. Anton, the supporter quoted above, was very proud of the chant and the performance. It showed how DIF could organize great support. The performance became their history with help of the digital output.

As presented in this chapter, players respond to the emotional engagement. Bangura or Mushekwi did not stay neutral, they were moved by fans’ actions. In an interview given to DIF TV Mushekwi said that a celebration like the one that happened after the match in Malmö would not happen again. His greatest moment, at least so far, was not the greatest in terms of sporting achievement, but one that allowed for an almost ridiculous emotional performance and re-established a vague, fragile connection between supporters and players. That match was an average match and it ended 1–1, it was not a marker of anything remarkable, but the context of standing up to a strong team (MFF), the creativity and an affected player, allowed that match to be re-establishing as more meaningful than it perhaps should have been. There was an instruction inserted in the situation, as fans knew what support from an away section might look like and what was expected, and that prompted a historical production that was already materialized, for example, in the form of shirts with Mushekwi’s name. Those shirts were enacted and performed during the game, gaining strength and symbolism from the event that could be classified as a historical fact, but it was “talked into” that status (Smith 1978, 35).

Referring to the Olympic Games, Digance and Toohey remarked that the *communitas* between fans and players is about witnessing the achievements and actualizing “by experiencing ultimate reality” (Digance & Toohey 2011, 346). They commented further that in the ancient tradition heroes acquired their power by divine intervention or by trials they underwent (Digance & Toohey 2011, 349). Modern footballers experience both on their way to becoming meaningful. They go through harsh and com-

plicated professional journeys, and the fans – like the Olympic gods watching them from above – sometimes hold the power to decide who is going to be a hero, and who will fall from grace.

## Concluding remarks

Football provides a narrative that allows mythical heroes and villains to happen, and as sport, it might be regarded as popular culture (Brabazon 2005). As presented in this chapter, categorizations of players undergo change and are used pragmatically. Being “cast members” in the football drama means that players can be assigned to different roles according to a currently dominant interpretation of them. Those shifting categories trigger creativity and allow the narrative material (in form of players) to be reused and reapplied.

What might be regarded as “unconsciously connecting to ancient myths” while immersing in popular culture (Berger 2013, 15), I would call creating of myths based on a blueprint that one is able to recognize intertextually. Players provide nourishment to the already established mythology, but they are able to swirl individual narratives around, creating new “gravitation centres” to attach other stories. This process draws from the past while moving forward. Performative engagement on the pitch is often matched with the performance on the stands.

There is resistance against granting players too much trust and affection. They change clubs often, are accused of following the money, of selling their loyalty. Yet, emotional attachments appear. They can be cherished for a short period of time, but they still strengthen the position and character of a club, and fans, through producing miniature historical narratives that can be used pragmatically. Sometimes, like in the case of Miiko Albornoz, the pattern established and songs used were reapplied in later years in order to address a similar case.

The rituals that are established in the football context allow fans to construct connections with the players and turn their presence into useful references and categories. Henrik Larsson’s narrative, for instance, came when HIF needed to establish a positive outlook for the future. His character fit the role because the constructed history was glorious and Larsson’s



position fitted in the myth of a strong, successful HIF player. He worked, in a way, as a beacon marking the past and pointing towards the future.

A hero needs a hero tale to become one, and it needs an opposition, a contrast that would help to establish what a hero is. The processes observed during matches, and the exchange between the stands and the pitch are complex and result in producing the history of a club, of a player, and of a group of fans. Football’s peculiarity allows many to find themselves in the middle of a narrative, voluntarily or not. People invested in football, players or supporters, do not “live mythically” because myths are being re-enacted, but rather because they are creating narratives (myths) that are based on patterns of producing history. Both groups, fans and footballers, recognize the textuality of their engagement. Thus, a codified exchange can happen quickly, as supporters gain new material, and players experience moments of glory or shame. If the narrative is useful enough, any player can make history.



## 7. The final score

Throughout this dissertation, I have analysed how various Swedish football clubs produce and perform history. In order to produce history, one engages in different rituals while playing, hopping, singing, chanting and using stickers, banners, scarves, shirts, flares and flags. These various forms of materiality trigger narratives when employed in performance inside and outside of stadiums. Football facilitates the opportunities for individual engagement and provides expectations of certain behavior, which makes supporters practitioners of rituals (magicians) preparing images and props, singing and hopping to help the team win. Through an ethnological investigation focusing on history and different ways of producing it, I have analysed football and its special socio-cultural context.

By investigating the processes through concepts of ritual, collective memory, narrative, myth, performance and materiality, I have presented possible structures of historical productions with their pragmatic means. Histories problematized in this dissertation are flexible narratives based on the past references and used pragmatically to stir the unstable and unpredictable football future.

### Sustainable history

The clubs revere their histories, building museums around themselves. These constructions work as cocoons, protecting them from outside dangers such as failed seasons, relegations, departing stars. As a certain form of institution, clubs claim and sustain history, using it and reinventing it. Clubs show off their history in order to present a coherent, stable identity. However, football is far from stable and upheavals can come any week, any day, in the form of leaving players and coaches, scandals, destroyed arenas,

lost sponsors, lost matches, titles, relegations, and disputes with the police, journalists etc.

As shown in the second chapter, the awareness of history triggers clubs to construct glass cabinets to display their past, but history becomes present in the urban environment, taking the shape of small stickers that encapsulate various narratives. Those stickers are an example of fans' engagement in producing history. The notion of individual roles is further explored in chapter three, as I present a concept of human museums. People contribute by maintaining, sustaining and producing historical narratives through emotional investment. This guarantees continuity and stability in clubs.

The analysis presented in the third chapter exemplifies the difficult relationship between emotions and money that is visible in producing history. Applying historical references can be a catalyst in showing that a different arrangement of things is possible, and that the economic development is not "unavoidable". There are many stories that can make sense, not only the hegemonic one. Being old, staying in the same city for decades, is already a sort of measurement of success that provides a certain form of cultural capital for clubs to use.

Historical narratives tend to generate economic capital, but also act to counterbalance it, or transform it. Historical productions around football depend on different kinds of capital. I would claim that football is not about money but about exchanging the somewhat neutral and colourless monetary/economic value for something different – changing economic capital to other forms of capital, including historical capital. I would argue that this is visible in the lavish investments in some of the leagues that seek to transform money into social importance and meaning.

The myths are results of producing history and become a kind of steady anchors that provide, in a way, stability and make history spin around them. In football, the speed and intensity result in rapid, historical production, with stories, symbols, songs, references appearing en masse. The history produced serves as an ongoing commentary to the shifting positioning of the past, present and future. The tension between real grass and artificial pitches is a marker of one such discussion, and it focuses on the current developments in football, the global impact, nostalgia and economic issues.

## Emotional materiality of historical narratives

Both emotional and material structures in football's history (for example stadiums) depend on each other, but at the same time, they can work as a sort of substitute for each other in times of need. In certain circumstances, feelings can replace bricks and steel, as when clubs have to demolish their old arenas and move to new grounds. Such instances were discussed in the fourth chapter. Materiality is treated in a processual, performative form. These enormous structures, stadiums built of steel and concrete, are vulnerable to time and change. Their apparently strong materiality does not protect them. Narratives created around materiality can become histories, translating the material into the emotional and sustaining identities when the material reality fails. The process then continues and narratives provide a platform for producing materiality, such as banners, flags, shirts, which then are used in historical productions. Modern football depends on a digital footprint and the sharing of information and digital recollections. That makes memories easier to circulate and be appropriated by more people and new fans who are schooled into the lore of their club.

In order to produce history, one engages in variety of ritualistic performances. Stickers, banners, chants, flags, trips to away games, the use of social media, flares, smoke, thanking players or hating players are just some of the elements of the repetitive engagement that can happen in the context of football, not exclusively during matches. The material culture provokes narratives, story-telling that produces history. Through rituals, objects like football shirts or stadiums are imprinted with instructions for how to use them within the spectrum of a certain performance. One needs to be able to read the instructions in order for ritual to be performed well (Smith 1978, 46).

When it comes to football, it is performed in a special secluded space that allows for certain ritualistic behaviour that would not be acceptable elsewhere. As analysed in the fourth chapter, the ritual needs the physical space of stadiums, but at the same time, the stadiums can be performed and transformed in different ways, and historical production can result in restating a material structure into a symbol or a narrative.

## Historical timeframes and textualities

The discussion presented in the second chapter highlights the different types of time that one can observe in football. There is the linear time, the arrow moving forward, a straight line of development from the birth of the club to the present day. Yet there is cyclical revival, the seasonal character that makes football deconstruct and reconstruct itself year after year, player after player. There is cosmogonic time too. It explains a feature of the past and sanctions an element of the present.

The time flow in this context makes it possible to loop time and create myths. As presented in the sixth chapter, players' stories can exemplify different time flows. Narratives based on footballers represent linear continuation of clubs, special singular moments, as well as cyclical loops when players get to represent a pattern of a hero or of a villain.

The acts of producing history in football can be analysed through their textual qualities, that is, an assembly of rites, images, symbols and protagonists that are borrowed from other contexts, other texts, and allow for interpretation when "reading them" and making connections. It paves the way for intertextuality. Other texts are not only used, but also transformed (Asplund Ingemark 2004, 23). As I have shown, the idea of a textualized universe, employed for example by folklorists and sociolinguists, facilitates an interpretative approach that allows for scrutinizing ritualistic production of history.

Football is an arena for producing a history of conflicts. Old vs. new, stable vs. unstable, local vs. global, serious vs. playful, meaningful vs. meaningless, love vs. hate exist simultaneously in any football club. This provides possibilities to create identities based on contrast. Elements of narratives presented here resemble older sources – the mock work, mock army, battles of slander, and conflicts as spectacles watched by an audience. This makes sense when a special logic is in place, one that allows for performance based on magic and rituals. The conflicts presented in this dissertation are manifold and happen on different layers of the football world. Their appearance triggers historical production and pushes it forward. It is not a total war, but an agreement to build an environment for stories, victories, failures and heroes. It is a space for myth-making.

## Actors in historical drama

As shown in chapter five, the production of history lends itself to narrative analysis with the time line, place, plot and protagonists. It also points towards critique of historical sources as presented by Hayden White (1973). Although based on accurate past events, their assembly, presentation and final usage differ according to pragmatic needs. The ingredients are similar or the same, but histories produced in the football context present many possibilities for providing a club with the narrative that is required.

Fans, players and club officials are well aware of media interest, public opinion, problematic evaluations attached to football. They express a high level of reflexivity, to the point of being anti-reflexive, as presented in the fifth chapter. Supporters are drilled in the rules of the game, they know very well how to navigate the context, and they understand how to be controversial and how to cross the line. They are sensitive to public opinion but not afraid to challenge it. The history of football provided by the media is often coloured by social unrest from previous decades that took a form of behaviour described as hooliganism.

Supporters can adhere to those “expectations” while providing a narrative of what football is and what the hierarchy there is, for example framing success in traditions, or by embracing unflattering evaluations. Together with economic development, local fans lost some of the influence, and economic power moved from the local to the global level, but at the same time, they gained more cultural capital that grants them a strong position. Drawing on a darker past, such as connection to unrest and disorder, allows fans and clubs to perform a certain history. Some of the behaviour at stadiums that could be described as controversial makes sense right there on the spot, but is not provided with instructions outside of it. It does not fit outside of the football frame (Smith 1978, 38). This suggests that the football scene was able to produce its own history parallel to histories of the region, country, or other social institutions.<sup>139</sup> This

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<sup>139</sup> It was pointed out to me that the structure of football leagues resembles medieval monasticism. Local and international levels appear, yet the national can be omitted.

history relies on other parts of society, but it has own rhythm, time flow, protagonists and evaluations.

Producing history requires anchoring in strong protagonists, in this case players, who carry cultural markers of, for example, a hero and a villain, an analysis that is included in the sixth chapter. Throughout the time frame of this dissertation several footballers grabbed collective attention, being used in stories, playing a vital role in the production of them. A player encapsulating a certain symbol or image does not need to be the brightest football star, but he needs to “happen”.

Football stands on the fringes of common social sense. It is the “ordinary extraordinary”, a heterotopia that has its own logic, like many other environments in the modern world. Creating and sustaining its own myths works as in any society, ancient or modern, and justifies its unique existence. Because a myth is taking shape right there on the spot, this galloping, ongoing history-making and hero-making leaves a sticky trace of suggestions, symbols that are both empty enough and fixed enough to be filled with new, fresh meanings and become food for myths created along the way.

Myths in football are not only side-effects for pushing on with the historical production, they also sustain it, providing it with necessary fuel in the form of patterns and structures that can be reused and reapplied. The ritualistic behaviour is strengthened by repetition and it helps to establish connections and emotional engagement in an ongoing process. Through the established aesthetics and patterns of behaviour one learns how to participate and how to produce history.

## Rituals of producing history

The results of producing history are flexible narratives that are used to construct individual and collective identities. Football presents itself as an example of a field where myths are formed. Myths are not only bi-products of weaving history. They work as beacons that mark crucial events, people, places that are reworked as blueprints for the future. The ritualistic character of the engagement makes it easy to establish myths based on the mix of collective memories, emotions, materiality and accepted performances.



I would argue that a ritual can trigger (or amplify) a belief that then stirs a ritual. A ritualistic performance does not have to be only a performative part of a belief, but it can activate it among the participants.

Similar processes could happen in other social contexts and not only in sports. It is the combination of speed, general acceptance, possibilities for emotional engagement and intertextual understanding of football that highlights the crucial elements of producing history. Team sports like hockey, bandy, baseball or basketball are more relevant in specific places where they are used more for producing stories and constructing identities. Simultaneously, elements of historical writings like the history of conflict appear in many narratives, including national histories. Football offers a narrow focus on how conflicts drive history forward and how events from the past can be utilized to serve the present. The process of history-making reveals further a construction of masculinity that is based on the past. The gender performance is filtered through collective memory and labelled as “traditional”. It facilitates an interpretation of current fans through a selective frame of fear and fascination as sense-making in football disrupts the presupposed dichotomy of femininity and masculinity.

Although people are able to produce specific, context-related historical narratives, they are not free from the outside, problems and struggles and broader social histories and evaluations. The class question is glimpsed through the history of football clubs, making the discussion twisted in a specific way, providing new evaluations of what can be codified as working class and what cannot. The history produced in football uses those markers to create an identity and points out how categorization can change depending on a time frame, and how evaluations differ depending on the preferred outcome. Like any other socially constructed context, especially sports, football depends on class structure and meaning is often filtered through a dominant class ideal (Bourdieu 1978, 835).

Pichi Alonso, who opened this investigation, would not be considered important for Malmö FF's historical narrative in any official statistics. Yet, knowledge of the past, creative performance, emotional engagement and a never-ending discussion with IFK Göteborg prompted Pichi Alonso to become a crucial figure in the exchange between those two clubs.

Sense was made out of Alonso, and his history was produced at Malmö Stadium.

The ethnography of history-making provides a glimpse of how individual stories feed on and are fed by collective memories that, through repetitive rites and rituals, produce narratives that push forward, in the never-ending quest for history.

## Svensk sammanfattning

Fotboll, som ett exempel på historieproduktion, innefattar olika processer och känslor som uttrycks i vissa (återkommande) mönster. Historieproduktion i fotbollssammanhang är inte inriktad på rekonstruktion av faktiska historiska skeenden eller sanning, utan tar sikte på framtiden – nästa match, nästa säsong, nästa transferfönster, nästa seger eller misslyckande som då kan bli historia. Processen att producera historia har element som kan observeras i andra sammanhang än fotboll, men fotbollen har vissa speciella egenskaper. För att producera historia engagerar supportrar sig i olika ritualer. Klistermärken, banderoller, sånger, flaggor, resor till bortamatcher, användningen av sociala medier, pyroteknik, tackande av spelare eller hatande av spelare är bara några av inslagen i det repetitiva engagemang runt fotbollen, inte enbart under match. Detta engagemang genererar berättelser, berättande som ger historia. Fotboll underlättar möjligheterna till individuellt engagemang och ger förväntningar på visst beteende och gör supportrar till utövare av ritualer (magiker) som förbereder bilder och dockor, dans och hopp, och som sjunger för att hjälpa laget att vinna. Genom en etnologisk undersökning med fokus på historia och olika sätt att producera sådan, analyserar jag fotboll och dess speciella sociokulturella kontext.

Syftet med avhandlingen är att beskriva och analysera historieproduktionen i fyra svenska fotbollsklubbar. De fyra utvalda klubbarna är AIK, Djurgårdens IF (DIF), Malmö FF (MFF) och Helsingborgs IF (HIF). Avhandlingen har följande huvudfrågor:

- Vilken är historiens roll i fotbollsklubbarna?

- Vilka historiska element och referenser framträder i och omkring klubbarna?
- Hur är olika grupper (tjänstemän, supportrar och spelare) involverade i att producera och gestalta historia?
- Vilka former tar sig historiska berättelser i fotbollssammanhang?

För att svara på dessa frågor använder jag mig av en bred etnologisk, teoretisk palett som innefattar begreppen narrativitet, materialitet, kollektivt minne, myt och performans. Den cykliska karaktären, intensiteten och hastigheten på händelser runt en fotbollsklubb gör fotbollskulturen till ett fängslande område. Analysen problematiserar historia som en specifik sociokulturell konstruktion.

Det etnografiska materialet består av deltagande observationer kring de fyra svenska fotbollsklubbarna och intervjuer med olika företrädare (tjänstemän, supportrar och spelare) för klubbarna (AIK, DIF, MFF och HIF). Fältmaterialet är skapat mellan åren 2014 och 2018.

Avhandlingens första kapitel introducerar avhandlingens metodologiska och teoretiska utgångspunkter. Relevant tidigare forskning presenteras efter vilket det teoretiska ramverket, begreppen narrativitet, materialitet, kollektivt minne, myt och performans presenteras och diskuteras.

Kollektivt minne definieras som ett minne som kopplar individer till en grupp och hjälper till att skapa samhällen. Människor måste dela med sig av att känna sig kopplade, och historien kan omformas så att den kan skapa en känsla av gemenskap.

Materialitet används för att beskriva den processuella, performativa kopplingen till berättande och historisk produktion.

Narrativitet som begrepp används för att beskriva textualitet och intertextualitet som leder analysen mot komplexiteten i fotbollens sociala situation. Berättelser innefattar materiella tecken, diskursen, som förmedlar en viss mening (eller innehåll), berättelsen och uppfyller en viss social funktion (Ryan 2007, 24).

Med performans menas ett kulturellt konstruerat system av symbolisk kommunikation (Tambiah 1996). Begreppet används i analysen av berättelser, eftersom en berättelse får kontextuell mening och funktion samti-

digt som den utförs i en specifik rumslig kontext (Norrick 2007, 128).

Myt som en analytisk term är en form av berättande; "myt är en typ av tal utvalt av historien" (Barthes 1972, 110). Myter ses som ett särskilt sätt att förstå och orientera sig i världen (D'Aquili & Laughlin Jr 1996 (1979), 140). Det gäller också bedömningen av och orienteringen i det förflutna. Begreppet används för att beskriva specifika berättelser som hjälper till att visa hur historien produceras.

Kapitlet avslutas med en presentation och diskussion om avhandlingens etnografiska metoder – deltagande observationer och intervjuer. Jag ser en intervjusituation som en process för att skapa förståelse mellan deltagare, snarare än att få information från en informant (Davies 2008, 108). De berättelser som inträffade under intervjuerna påverkades av sammanhang, ämnen, omgivningar och sociala markörer för både intervjuade och intervjuaren; en "ny typ av relation - en interaktiv" mellan forskaren och intervjuerna (Bromberger 1995, 300).

Deltagande observation spelade en viktig roll i denna undersökning. Mitt deltagande var ibland bevakat eller begränsat, och inte bara av olika gatekeepers, utan av min egen obekvämhets med vissa aspekter av fältet. Observationer erbjuder en unik möjlighet att komplettera intervjuer, att se världen som informanter beskriver, och kanske uppleva, några av de känslomässiga förbindelserna som de hänvisar till i intervjuer.

Det andra kapitlet fokuserar på historiens betydelse och hur klubbarna presenterar den officiella versionen av sitt förflutna. Huvudfokus i detta kapitel är den allmänna medvetenheten om att klubbarna har historia. Detta används i sin tur av klubbar, både officiellt (klubbledning, förening) och av supportrar och supporterorganisationer. Exempelvis behöver en händelse från det förflutna inte vara positiv för att skapa en positiv berättelse. Även nederlag är gångbara. Historieproduktionen resulterar i hållbara berättelser. Berättelser skapas och gestaltas för att upprätthålla identitet, kontinuitet och/eller mytologi. Supportrar och klubbar kan upprätthålla en sammanhängande bild av en klubb eftersom tiden verkar på ett annorlunda sätt än utanför fotbollssammanhanget. I den sammanhängande mytologin finns det hjälteberättelser, det finns förrädare, dåliga säsonger, degradering till en lägre division. Men det finns också berättelser om titlar, ligaguld och legendariska spelare och tränare.

Bevarande av historia och historiska berättelser i fotboll analyseras. Historiska referenser kan hållas i glasskåp och museum, men används samtidigt i aktiv produktion av historia på stadion i matchsituationer av olika supportergrupper. Men produktionen pågår även i stadsmiljön, genom exempelvis klistermärken synliga i stadsbilden. Berättelser materialiseras. Varierade ritualer ger dem relevans och mening. Att klistra klistermärken förmedlar små meddelanden innan matcher som i sin tur genererar historiska berättelser, genom hänvisningar till det förflutna som framträder i nuet.

Berättelser framställs i tryckta böcker, visas med tifos under matcher och är limmade på lampstolpar som klistermärken. Människor införlivar sina egna, personliga berättelser med den pågående fotbollsutvecklingen, vilket gör det möjligt för vissa element, myter och legender att överleva tidens tand.

För att hålla en sådan miljö levande en längre tid, måste man kunna upprätta starka länkar och ankare bakåt som gör det möjligt att väva en kontinuitet. Fotboll är flytande. Historiska referenser hjälper till att skapa en bild av en stabil institution utsmyckad med arv och traditioner. Denna process kan ta sig uttryck som den gyllene eran, eller fokusera på problem, och med det i åtanke används olika referenser från det förflutna. Historia under konstruktion kräver kreativ återvinning, alltså produktion av en hållbar berättelse. Klubbar och deras fans är inramade i ett specifikt sammanhang som bildar en fast, återvinningsbar bas och möjliggör spontana och rika historiska produktioner.

Det tredje kapitlet undersöker förbindelsen till historia genom enskilda deltagare inom fotbollskontexten (supportrar, spelare och funktionärer). Analysen grundar sig på en diskussion om hur historiska referenser används som kulturellt kapital. Ett exempel på en sådan referens, som är ganska stark i det svenska sammanhanget, är arbetarklassens/medelklassens berättelse. I kapitlet analyseras även frågan om 'historia kontra pengar', eftersom det kulturella/historiska kapitalet 'att vara gammal' utgör en motvikt till monetärt kapital, och/eller internationell framgång. I detta kapitel undersöks också hur "mänskliga museer" bildas med berättelser som cirkulerar och bidrar till att bygga bilder av klubbar och individer. Människor som investerar emotionellt i fotboll, bär historiska referenser, så som tatueringar och klubbfärger och bidrar till att uttrycka en viss historia med

dess. Kontinuitet och stabilitet analyseras i detta kapitel i samband med kulturellt kapital. Att vara sekelgammal innebär att det finns en betydande kapital i form av traditioner, berättelser, figurer och kollektiva minnen.

Den synliga dikotomin av pengar mot historia används för att framhäva skillnader i förhållningssätt mellan fotboll baserad på ekonomiska fördelar och fotboll baserad på traditioner och känslor. Tonvikten läggs på värdet av historien som är inramad i ett bredare socialt sammanhang och det kulturella kapitalet som historien representerar (Bourdieu, 1984). Den starka närvaron av ekonomiska faktorer i modern fotboll, från rika investerare till lukrativa sponsorer och höga priser för de bästa spelarna, har skapat ett behov av en motberättelse som kan betona andra fördelar och kapital som klubbar kan använda sig av, om de saknar ekonomiska resurser. En halsduk, ett enkelt tygstycke, kan användas som en stark historisk kanvas som kan rymma hundratals unga atletiska kroppar som materialiserar historiska berättelser och kulturellt kapital. Fotbollströjor och färger är starka markörer för stabilitet och kulturellt kapital och är en del av processen av mytkonstruktionen kring fotbollsklubbarna.

Följande kapitel fokuserar på geografiska områden, arenor och gräs, i berättelserna om klubbarna. Den första delen består av en diskussion av historiska och geografiska element. Den andra delen behandlar arenor och gräs som materiella manifestationer som är konkreta, men kan genomgå (eller underlätta) en omvandling genom olika ritualer. Dimensionerna i detta kapitel – regioner / städer, arenor och gräs – används som historiska referenser för att bygga upp framtida traditioner (Glassie 1995).

Berättelser baserade på platser påverkar klubbarnas karaktär, attityder och utvärderingar. Plats- och hemmaplaner är viktiga inslag i fotbollsvärlden. Men som framgår av detta kapitel, är det ganska flexibelt trots deras materiella och statiska karaktär. Berättelser om ort är inbäddade i det kollektiva minnet och mytologierna som har vuxit kring fotbolls-matchens fysiska placering. De fysiska elementen ramar in och påverkar historieproduktion men de ger inte den slutliga berättelsen. Förändringar och omvälvningar kopplas till platsen och gör människor till aktiva deltagare i historieproduktion genom materialiteten i exempelvis arenor.

Tegel och byggnader skapar känslor och minnen, och deras roll försvinner inte med fysisk förstörelse. Snarare kan de återplaceras som symboler

och intertextuella referenser, få nya former som texter, banderoller, sånger eller till och med tatueringar. Man får en glimt av hur historier kan omarbetas för att stärka eller skada. När en plats gestaltas och tas i anspråk blir den en aktör. Stadion måste "hända" i historien för att kunna producera historia.

Femte kapitlet undersöker gruppidentitet som produceras genom användningen av historia (och vice versa). Exempel som nämns är en klubbidentitet (AIK) och den organisatoriska identiteten hos så kallade ultras, en grupp som konstruerar sin bild med hjälp av historiska berättelser tillgängliga i fotbollssammanhang. Denna produktion har en historisk effekt eftersom de spelas in, distribueras, kommenteras och reproduceras, vilket också blir ett digitalt fotavtryck. Grupper i olika sammanhang kan engagera sig mer eller kan dra sig tillbaka och bli passiva beroende på kulturell inramning och tid.

Kommunikativa och kulturella minnen om fotboll ger en bakgrund till kreativitet och producerar gruppernas och klubbarnas historia. Exemplet som presenteras i kapitlet använder "oss mot dem"-dikotomierna för att positionera sig själva (oss) och att ange (och performera) deras identiteter (dem). Historia föder kollektiva minnen bundna av känslor. Dessa känslor styrs genom kroppar som rör sig på planen och passar en boll. Fotbollsspelare, väsentliga aktörer i spelet, utför viktiga roller av hjältar och skurkar, vilket är avgörande för historiska berättelser.

Nästa kapitel analyserar spelare som används för att producera historia. Undersökta exempel av spelare inkluderar en hjälte, en skurk och huvudpersoner som rör sig mellan dessa kategorier. Man kan lista flera exempel på spelares roll, som kan pendla från hjältar till skurkar och tillbaka. Placeringen av hjälte/skurken är inte stabil och påverkar hur historien i fotboll produceras och vilken typ av föreställningar som kan äga rum. Fotbollen utformas som berättelser som tillåter mytiska hjältar och skurkar att existera. Kategoriseringar av spelare förändras och används pragmatiskt. Att vara "cast members" i ett fotbolls-drama innebär att spelare kan tilldelas olika roller enligt en för närvarande dominerande tolkning av dem.

Spelare ger näring till den redan etablerade mytologin, men de kan rotera runt enskilda berättelser, skapa nya "gravitation centres" för att bifoga andra historier. En hjälte behöver en berättelse för att bli en hjälte, och den be-



höver en opposition, en kontrast som kan bidra till att fastställa vad en hjälte är. Processerna som observeras under matcher och utbytet mellan läktaren och planen är komplexa och resulterar i att man producerar berättelse om en klubb och dess supportrar. Fotbollens särdrag gör att många kan finna sig själva i mitten av en berättelse, frivilligt eller inte.

Resultatet av att producera historia, som sammanfattats i det sista kapitel, är rik mytologi, nästan för rik för att tas på allvar. För hur kan man få dussintals hjältar som bara dyker upp och försvinner som fallande stjärnor? Varför skulle ett socialt sammanhang som fotboll vara benäget att skapa myter? Bronislaw Malinowski menar: "Myten kommer till spel när rit, ceremoni eller en social eller moralisk regel kräver rättfärdigande, äktenskapsrätt, verklighet och helighet" (1984, 203). Onda exempel är därför lika nödvändiga som goda. Man behöver en form som ger plats för en konstruktion av beteende och betydelse. Fotboll konstruerar gemensam social mening. Det är den "vanliga extraordinära", en heterotopi som har sin egen logik, som många andra miljöer i den moderna världen. Att skapa och upprätthålla sina egna myter fungerar på liknande sätt som i alla samhällen, historiska eller moderna, och motiverar sin unika existens. Myter i fotboll är inte bara bieffekter för att driva på historieproduktionen, de upprätthåller också fotbollen och ger den nödvändigt bränsle i form av mönster och strukturer som kan återanvändas och återvinnas. Det ritualistiska beteendet stärks av upprepning, vilket bidrar till att skapa kontakt och känslomässigt engagemang i en pågående (historieproduktions-)process. Genom den etablerade estetiken och beteendemönstret lär supportrar sig hur man deltar och hur man producerar historia.

Händelser, materiella föremål och människor blir snabba berättelser som utlöser kreativt engagemang med performativa uttryck, en performans som kan ritualiseras och stärka en klubbs position, deltagande och identitet. Således kan man påpeka att en ritual kan utlösa (eller förstärka) en tro genom performans i en ritual. En ritualistisk performans behöver inte vara en fungerande del av en tro, men den kan aktiveras bland deltagarna.

I denna avhandling har jag analyserat hur olika svenska fotbollsklubbar producerar och uttrycker historia. Genom att undersöka de komplexa processerna genom begreppen ritual, kollektivt minne, berättande, myt, per-

formans och materialitet, har jag presenterat möjliga strukturer av historieproduktion. De berättelser som är problematiserade i denna avhandling är flexibla berättelser baserade på historiska referenser och används pragmatiskt för att röra om i och rama in den instabila och oförutsägbara fotbollsframtiden. Klubbarna i undersökningen hedrar sin historia och bygger museer runt sig själva. Dessa konstruktioner fungerar som kokonger, skyddar dem från ”yttre faror” som sportsliga misslyckanden, nedläggningar och stjärnor som slutar eller flyttar. Som institutioner hävdar klubbarna historiska kopplingar, använder historia och återuppfinner historia. Klubbar visar sin historia för att presentera en sammanhängande, stabil identitet. De känslomässiga och materiella strukturerna i fotbollshistoria är beroende av varandra, men samtidigt kan de fungera som ett slags ersättning för varandra i tider av svårigheter. Under vissa omständigheter kan känslor ersätta tegel och stål, som när klubbarna måste riva sina gamla arenor och flytta till nya platser. Berättelser som skapas kring materialitet kan bli historiska berättelser, som översätter materialiteten till emotioner och upprätthåller identiteter. Processen fortsätter med att berättelser ger en plattform för att producera materialitet, såsom banderoller, flaggor, skjortor, som sedan används att producera historia.

Avhandlingen ger en inblick i hur historieproduktionen inom fotboll går till. Avhandlingen visar på komplexiteten i konstruktionen av historia. Berättelser uppstår, matas och matas av kollektiva minnen, mytologiseras och gestaltas genom repetitiva ritualer som konstruerar en historia som sträcker sig framåt, i det oändliga.

## Appendix 1 – Matches attended

MFF – Helsingborgs IF	21 September 2014
MFF – Mjällby	27 September 2014
Helsingborgs IF – IFK Göteborg	27 October 2014
MFF – AIK	9 April 2015
MFF – Hammarby IF	20 April 2015
MFF – Halmstad BK	29 April 2015
Djurgårdens IF – IFK Norrköping	5 March 2015
MFF – Helsingborgs IF	3 May 2015
MFF – Djurgårdens IF	7 June 2015
Helsingborgs IF – AIK	19 July 2015
AIK – Djurgårdens IF	10 August 2015
MFF – IK Sirius FK	20 February 2016
MFF – IFK Norrköping	2 April 2016
AIK – IFK Göteborg	11 April 2016
MFF – Djurgårdens IF	24 April 2016
Halmstad BK – Degerfors IF	7 May 2016
MFF – Gefle IF	14 May 2016
AIK – Helsingborgs IF	13 August 2016
Helsingborgs IF – Trelleborgs FF	1 April 2017
MFF – Djurgårdens IF	24 April 2017
Djurgårdens IF – AFC Eskilstuna	27 May 2017
Gefle IF – Brommapojkarna	28 May 2017
AIK – MFF	29 May 2017
Trelleborgs FF – Degerfors FF	4 August 2017
MFF – AIK	23 October 2017
MFF – AIK	9 April 2018

The material acquired through observing the matches has been referred to as observations, shadowing, and field notes. It dependend on my own interpretation of how I would classify the obtained information. “Field notes” refer to a piece of information that came from different sources than

observations of a specific match (e.g. taking random notes while reading newspapers, browsing the news or social media, researching further a reference obtained during fieldwork), or an information from multiple sources (i.e. the same information appeared several times or in different media). All the matched resulted in a written field report. For the purpose of this project I also used some of the fieldwork conducted previously for my MA thesis in 2011 and 2012. This includes observations and five interviews with Jonatan, Jan, Marta, Markus and Linus.

## Appendix 2 – Interviews

### Supporters:

Jonatan	(21 March 2013 Malmö)
Markus	(March 2013 Malmö)
Marta	(21 April 2013 Malmö)
Arvid	(30 October 2014 Lund)
Martin	(25 January 2015 Malmö)
Theo	(2 February 2015 Malmö)
Felix	(6 February 2015, Lund)
Erik	(10 February 2015 Malmö)
Alex, Tom, Robin – Kärnan	(16 February 2015 Malmö)
Adam, Bengt, Leif, Olle – HIF-Vännerna	(17 February 2015 Helsingborg)
Hubert	(5 March 2015 Stockholm)
Maria	(5 March 2015 Stockholm)
Anton	(10 August 2015 Stockholm)
Arne	(29 September 2015 Lund)
Otto	(15 April 2016 Lund)
Kristian	(28 April 2016 – phone interview)
Oskar	(21 June 2017 – Facebook conversation)

### Players:

Peter	(30 October 2012 Malmö)
Gustav	(30 October 2014 Malmö)
Kristoffer	(6 March 2015 Stockholm)
Sixten	(3 November 2015 Helsingborg)
Jacob	(21 April 2016 – phone interview)

### Former players:

Sune	(12 November 2014 Malmö)
Jesper	(25 November 2014 Malmö)
Åke	(3 November 2015 Helsingborg)

## APPENDIX 2 – INTERVIEWS

### Working for clubs:

Linus	(15 August 2012 Malmö)
Jan	(24 October 2012 Malmö)
Filip	(November 2014, Helsingborg)
Carl and David	(5 March 2015 Stockholm)
Alma and Joel	(5 March 2015 Stockholm)

### Security and police:

Kaspar	(27 May 2017 Stockholm)
Benjamin	(29 May 2017 Stockholm)
Albin	(15 August 2017 Malmö)

### Tattoo artists:

Henrik	(May 2016 – phone interview)
Håkan	(May 2016 – phone interview)

### Referee:

Wilmar	(2 December 2014 Copenhagen)
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## Doktorsavhandling från Forskarskolan i historia/historiska studier

Denna avhandling är tillkommen inom ramen för Forskarskolan i historiska studier, tidigare Forskarskolan i historia. Forskarskolan i historia är en av de nationella forskarskolor som tillkom på regeringens initiativ hösten 2000. Forskarskolan genomfördes i samarbete mellan Lunds universitet, Linnéuniversitetet samt Malmö och Södertörns högskolor med Lunds universitet som världhögskola. Från och med hösten 2011 ingår även Göteborgs universitet i samarbetet. 2014 breddades forskarskolan till ämnena idé- och lärdomshistoria, etnologi och historisk arkeologi samt från 2016 antikens kultur och samhällsliv. Forskarskolan i historia bytte namn 2016 till Forskarskolan i historiska studier.

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This dissertation investigates how history is produced, what roles it plays, and what forms it takes in four Swedish football clubs – AIK, Djurgårdens IF, Helsingborgs IF and Malmö FF. These clubs all have long rich histories. They were established more than one hundred years ago and represent some of the processes and ways of handling the past that happen in many other contexts.

Katarzyna Herd studies these processes through concepts of ritual, collective memory, narrative, myth, magic, performance and materiality, and discusses possible structures of historical productions. The focus is on how history is produced and performed, played with in a non-academic setting, for example on the stadium stands, a place where everything can be employed to help one's club, where nothing is sacred, but much is accepted. It is place where people can make history and become history on a weekly basis.

Katarzyna Herd is an ethnologist at Lund University. This is her PhD dissertation.