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Dream Factory – magic and myth-making in football

A case study of the local football club Malmö FF

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Abstract

This thesis analyzes a local football club Malmö FF in its social context. In the previous research a lot of emphasis has been put into various aspects of football like hooliganism, globalization, financial issues, or tactics and physicality of the players. However, the intriguing question is what a football club actually is. The position and role that the club plays is investigated by using ethnographic methods. This thesis reinterprets the football club as a magical construction where local myths are being created in the context of football on a regular basis. By taking a broad perspective and including the management, players and supporters, this thesis investigates how the football club is constructed and understood by its users. The issues of co-creation, ownership, execution of power and a heterotopic character of the club is studied. Malmö FF is then analyzed through processes of magic and myth-making as a Dream Factory, where all the groups involved co-create the experience of local football and turn the collective phenomenon into individual interpretations.

Keywords: football; Malmö FF; magic; magicians; mythologization; Dream Factory; supporters; footballers; heterotopias; co-creation

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1. Introduction

A lot of players see it as an honour to play for Malmö FF. And they should feel honoured. I am their employer; I am the member of the club. I AM the club. (interview with Martin, a devoted MFF supporter, 2013)

This thesis has as its topic a local football club from Sweden Malmö Fotbollförening, abbreviated as Malmö FF or MFF. It is a strong social institution, recognized and praised, and often said to be one of a very few to represent the entire city of Malmö. MFF exemplifies a 21st century football club that leans towards experience economy, hopes to grow as a brand, and tries to minimize violence and attract wider range of spectators (Andersson, 2011).

In my thesis I analyze MFF and the social processes that construct the club in its local context. The creation of local football involves magic, understood as a rational technique to modify reality presented by a French sociologist Marcel Mauss (1972). I investigate how a football club constantly creates and recreates a dream of local football while simultaneously weaving the canvas of local mythology. Thus, the dream, being constantly out of reach, provokes a perpetual process of creating and recreating the club, done by the management, players and supporters.

While football developed into a global sport during the 20th century, there came tensions concerning commodification and commercialization, and the primary focus often tends to be that on financial aspects of the game. Nevertheless, there are strong feelings, emotions and passion, and as the end of 2012 season in Sweden showed, more than 18 000 people cared enough to watch the last home game (fieldnotes 2012), keenly participating in the production of a football dream.

By presenting some examples from the 2012 season I investigate how magic is employed in creating the social space of local football. When viewed as a spontaneous, creative process, football regains some of its strength that can disappear if it reduces its picture to one painted in economical terms. Further, this research provides an alternative explanation to the popular cliché describing football as a religion. The research presented here supports the point that a club is more a process than the end product. This fairly simple distinction is then supported by the dream of football being constantly chased, and the local mythology in football context

being created simultaneously. This can perhaps help to reshape how a football club is constructed and perceived. The awareness of social importance can help to stimulate some processes or avoid others.

Throughout my thesis I will use parallels from Norse mythology to illustrate concepts like shape-shifting and the shaky reality of running the club. I feel justified in doing so as I want to show that a football club is directly involved in local myth-making on a constant basis. Such parallels provide imaginative illustrations that help to analyze the position of a football club and show how the processes there could be explained in an alternative way.

1.1. Aim

The aim of this thesis is to investigate a football club as a dream factory represented by Malmö FF. There is a certain lack of clarity what football is and what it represents, especially in the context of recent trends that force clubs to partake in the experience economy, cater for brand-conscious customers and thus reshape their relationship with the local communities. A football club needs a team, a management and of course spectators and supporters. Also, it has to be believed in; it has to come to the existence in social terms, as the physical does not guarantee that it will be acknowledged, as one can spend a lifetime without engaging himself or herself in local football.

I set to investigate the creation of local mythology, which is done ad hoc by all the actors involved (i.e. the management, players and supporters). This process is very spontaneous, open to individual interpretations, and difficult to control and shape. It triggers conflicts and high emotions concerning how the dream is created. My aim is to show that as the dream is the final goal to be reached, it provokes the creation of the local mythology. I use the contrast of a very heavy, physical space (factory) and a fragile, ephemeral entity (dream) to investigate how control is being established over hope, longing, passion and possible disappointment.

I will use a set of metaphors to try to capture the position, meaning and importance of Malmö FF. Apart from its economic value, football has been described as religion, but I would argue it is even more than that. It is not a passive worship, but very active creation of dreams that turns them ad hoc into warm and breathing mythology; hence it is magic that we are dealing with in this process of mythologization. In my thesis I analyze the structure of the factory, i.e.

groups involved, and interactions that happen between these groups. I also investigate how mythology takes shape using two concrete examples from 2012 season.

Malmö football club is then, in other words, a specific local do-it-yourself museum. I opt for the term ‘Dream Factory’ as it reflects the importance of a process and energy needed for the creation. I think such approach and description would offer local clubs an opportunity to redefine what they are and what their role is, and it would offer an alternative to the strict business approach, which so often is favoured when it comes to football, although it fails to grasp its meaning and character (after Kuper and Szymanski, 2009).

As a result of my research I shall prove that football is virtually magic. When we discuss passion and sentiments in football we come very close to religion, but it is so because it is created by magic (Mauss, 1972, p.149). In this thesis I shall present that it is magic and not religion as such. Although it might not seem as a big difference, I am convinced that it could have important consequences in further development of football.

1.2. Questions

The main question in this thesis is what a local football club is as a social phenomenon. This main line of enquiry breaks into questions about how it is produced, who is involved in this production and how it is communicated and maintained. Throughout this thesis I will present what role and position a club has in its social context. Knowing where its deepest ramifications are, on the social level, can allow the club to position itself in the ever- unstable world of football. It can also help to understand where the pressure comes from and thus help to deal with it.

In this approach one is faced with an enquiry what a dream is and what a factory is in the presented context. I will analyze how those fossilized dreams are woven into the mythical canvas of the club, and so we must ask how a football club can be understood as a Dream Factory and how dreams become myths.

1.3. Main Theoretical Frame

The techniques used by actors who create local football can be analyzed and understood using Marcel Mauss’ notion of magic (1972). Another important key to understand the construction

of football in its local context is the concept of mythologization which I use in understanding of Roland Barthes (1972). In order to analyze the club I also employ theories of heterotopias by Michel Foucault (1967) and socially constructed space by Henri Lefebvre (1991). This last concept, I believe, shows how the local mythology is created as a by-product of dream-chasing in the Dream Factory. These main theories are further strengthened by concepts of front- and back-stage by Goffman, as well as the concept of kremlinology.

Moreover, to provide context I use sociological and anthropological analysis of different phenomena associated with football and presented, among others, by sociologists Gary Armstrong and Richard Giulianotti, which include hooliganism, globalized fandom, economy, football tactics and the ultras phenomenon. I further strengthen my investigation by the historical development and globalization of European football and historical perspective of Swedish football (Andersson, 2011, Andersson and Radmann, 1997). These are important elements of the dream-making and when put together they reveal the magical processes behind the stadium walls.

1.3.1. Marcel Mauss: rationally produced magic

The use of magic in football, as understood and presented by Marcel Mauss, is quite central in my thesis. As he writes in his book *The General Theory of Magic*: ‘Magic has no genuine kinship with anything apart from religion on the one hand and science and technology on the other’ (Mauss, 1972, p.174). This is how football comes to live. It is a mixture of very scientific approach to physicality and sports, tactics and game theories, technical elements that influence the performance of the team, and the economic discourse, all of which could be taken separately and analyzed in terms of magic (see Peter Pels’ use of statistics as an example of magical rite (2007, p.241-271)). But these are then combined with faith, love, hope and fear of defeat.

As Mauss points out, magic is a social phenomenon and it needs society, a group, to exist. In other words, it requires somebody to perform and somebody to believe in the presented act (Mauss, 1972, p.164). Further, Mauss makes a very clear distinction between magic and religion, and it is a crucial difference. They both share some important characteristics, and Mauss points out that ‘magic, along with religion, has to deal with sentiments’ (1972, p.149). The level of emotions and passion involved perhaps makes it possible to confuse a magical

rite with worship, or shape-shifting with religious ecstasy. Also, Mauss distinguishes magic from religion in that its rites serve technical objectives, unlike religion which carries the notion of the sacred. Thus, magicians use their powers, and each other, to get desired results. Magic employs gods and demons, but these are treated as tools, not sacred beings to be worshipped. These features place magic between technology and religion. Although football has been described in terms of ‘the biggest world religion’ in my opinion it is not a phenomenon that could be classified as such. It shares certain features with it, but it is first and foremost a magical construction.

For example Richard Giulianotti writes: ‘A historical and symbolic relationship is identified between religion and sports, especially football. The modern game is said to have replaced religion as the institution that binds people together, while giving rise to states of emotional ecstasy previously associated with religious ceremony’ (1999, p.17). I am aware of the proximity that magic shares with religion and some of its practices, as described here by Giulianotti, could be easily classified as religions since rites, chants, sacrifice and ceremonial character appear in both. While analyzing MFF I shall present that football is actually closer to magic and the common misconception to describe football as religion perhaps contributed to the confusion of its role and status. A very thorough and detailed study of magic, presented by Mauss, can be a vital alternative to the old cliché of mixing up football and religion.

1.3.2. Roland Barthes: the process of mythologization

The concept of mythologization is essential in my research. Roland Barthes in his collection of essays called *Mythologies* provides a set of examples how mythology comes to life in our modern, scientific and rational world. Further, he offers a semiotic analysis of how a myth is created and how it sustains itself¹. He points out that a myth needs a context, history and a story to be told (Barthes, 1972, p.142). It then grows in the context, allowing itself to create shortcuts in complex human stories and provides purity in actions: ‘it abolishes the complexity of human acts, it gives them the simplicity of essences (...) things appear to mean something by themselves’ (Barthes, 1972, p.143). In Malmö FF there is one hundred years of history, of triumphs and failures, heroes and villains that created the images of the club.

¹ Barthes gives a thorough explanation how sign and signifier work in the context of a myth (Barthes, 1972).

The flexibility of football context means that it can be reshaped according to personal views and needs. This context is both rich and fluid enough to allow individual interpretation and application. Thus, it is a good environment to cultivate mythology as myths prefer ‘to work with poor, incomplete images, where the meaning is already relieved of its fat’ (Barthes, 1972, p.127). Further, its openness to interpretation allows blurred images to be produced and prevents it from final exposure that would mean producing one straightforward meaning. It also gives people stories and figures to gather around, and thus appear in public imagination. At the same time, myths seem to reveal rather than hide, as they are built on a constant play with form and meaning. And so ‘*myth hides nothing*: its function is to distort, not to make disappear’ (Barthes, 1972, p.121).

When pointing out the special features of sport that appeal to masses these days, Barthes recognizes how a personal experience was changed into a spectacle, so a person himself could disappear from the picture, leaving it open for the public to claim a piece of the show. Barthes writes: ‘it is man’s victory over ignorance, fear, necessity. Man has made his victory a spectacle, so that it might become the victory of all those watching him and recognizing themselves in him’ (Barthes, 2007, p.9). In football, this notion is further strengthened by active participation of the spectators. They claim a part of the stage for themselves by singing, chanting and commenting on matches week after week.

A local football club like Malmö FF carries a multitude of meanings for those involved. It also allows them to weave in their own stories based on football. Because of its repetitiveness and already rich history and context, a local football club becomes a Dream Factory, letting big and small myths take shape season after season, embedded in personal stories and experiences. As Barthes explains the temporal yet eternal character of myths: ‘Myths are nothing but this ceaseless, untiring solicitation, this insidious and inflexible demand that all men recognize themselves in this image, eternal yet bearing a date, which was built of them one day as if for all time’ (Barthes, 1972, p.155).

1.4. Methods, empirical material and ethical considerations

For the purpose of this thesis I am using numerous observations, interviews, photo ethnography and internet ethnography collected mostly during a ten week internship at Malmö FF (August – October 2012) towards the end of the 2012 football season in Sweden,

followed by several interviews and observations done in the beginning of 2013 season (March-April). I was fortunate enough to be allowed to observe the backstage of football-making, for example in daily routines at the office, security preparations before a game, and official meetings with the club's management. I also received help to reach different groups of interviewees, but I was always introduced as a student doing a research. I made sure I would not be mistaken for MFF's employee, which could lead to lack of trust or uneasiness as some of the issues discussed were very emotional. Further, sometimes my interviewees would be highly critical and I had to respond to their concerns how anonymous they would be and how much of their opinions I would use. The names were changed and comments presented in the appropriate context.

The variety of my informants allowed me to see the process of creating football from many different perspectives. The variety of the empirical material presented comes from the fact that football relies often on images and linguistic descriptions loaded with emotions; hence photo ethnography and newspaper articles support observations and interviews. The interviews and internet ethnography were collected in Swedish, English and Finnish, and translated to English by the researcher.

a) Interviews

The main method used in my research was interviews, acknowledged widely in the social research. I conducted altogether fourteen interviews, which lasted from forty minutes to one hour. The usual topics circulated around Malmö FF, football in general, Swedish society, hooliganism and supporters. The interviews included casual fans², members of organized supporters' groups, management, and players. With the exception of one female, all of my interviewees were men. Since the gender issue is not brought forward in this thesis, I have decided to refer to all my informants as men so my female informant cannot be easily identified. Further, I am aware that gender perspective gives only a fraction of an explanation, and it needs to be included in an intersectional approach (after Alvesson & Billing, 1997). This thesis was not intended for such investigation, but it definitely would be of interest to pursue this line of research further. Still, a visible gender imbalance is present in the club and I did not realize at first that being a female I would be treated with a certain amount of distance and perhaps disbelief when attempting to talk football.

² There are several possible descriptions of different fan groups, this term comes from an article by Alan Tapp and Jeff Clowes (2002) published in European Journal of Marketing.

Charlotte Davies, an ethnologist, thoroughly analyses interviews as an ethnographic method and stresses many concerns about the validity of it, but acknowledges that interviewing can ‘provide access to the social world beyond the individual’ (2008, p.109). She argues for seeing an interview as a process, where interviewer and interviewee ‘are both involved in developing understanding, that is in constructing their knowledge of the social world’ (2008, p. 108-9). My interviews often became discussions, as my informants were eager to reflect on their football preferences and challenge different opinions (fieldnotes, 2012). Davies also mentions on several occasions that one should learn a language on a good enough level to converse with the natives. By speaking Swedish, which is not my mother tongue, I tried to show that I was close to my interviewees culturally, that I could relate and perhaps make it easier for them to approach me.

However, being a female with a different ethnic background made my position unclear at times. I could relate to what Emma Bell (2002, p.28) writes about uneven gender position: ‘For the female ethnographer doing research in male-dominated setting, actions inevitably take on symbolic consequences. Trivial decisions, about what to wear or who to sit with, are not arbitrary, and they serve to make clear some of the discrepant characteristics that result from the female ethnographer's increased visibility’. While interviewing predominantly male informants I was aware that I might not be taken seriously. My gender, combined with my ethnicity, age and social position, could potentially undermine my credibility in this particular football context.

A good example comes from my standard question, as I asked every informant if they had a favourite football player and why so. The answer often started with a counter-question ‘well do you have a favourite player?’ and followed by ‘are you actually interested in football?’ What I thought was an amusing curiosity, quickly changed into a pattern and it made me reflect on how my cultural capital was assessed by my informants. A short ‘football talk’ from my side served as an ice-breaker that helped me to establish a connection. Nevertheless, my positioning allowed me to start from the scratch and ask very basic questions, as I was not expected to know much about the subject.

b) Observations

An important chunk of my material consists of observations before and during matches. As I was not emotionally involved I found it tricky to understand the crowd and I slowly learned

the routines of cheering, clapping and booing. When time went by I could observe my own reactions and my own growing involvement, coming also from the fact that I spent time and talked to people passionate about the club. I observed altogether seven matches, three from different parts of the stadium and one outside of Malmö, as I attended an away game. The rest of the matches I saw from the 'Media section', which is reserved for journalists.

Observations allowed me to include physical context in my research. As Paddy O'Toole comments on researching physical spaces and material culture: 'the analysis of the physical environment adds richness and depth to the data collected' (2008, p.3). In the context of a football stadium, very restricted yet multifunctional space, observations served well to explore different uses of the place and made me notice multiple connections. As O'Toole writes: 'It is time to recognize that places, like voices, are local and multiple. For each inhabitant, a place has a unique reality, one in which meaning is shared with other people and places' (2008, p.17).

Observations from the media section were especially interesting, as I sat with journalists and some of those working for MFF. As it was a special area with restricted access, it had its own routines and a specific, well-established hierarchy, but I was not familiar with this environment and all the seats looked same to me. However, once an elderly gentleman was annoyed to find me sitting on his place. In a very few words he demanded that I would move 50 centimetres to the left and give him his seat back, although there were many free seats around. In other words, I did not take into consideration all the factors that would differentiate me from the usual mix of people attending matches in the section. Emma Bell effectively argues for intersectional approach that should be present during research:

'The individual's 'personal front' includes items such as sex, age and racial characteristics, which are relatively fixed. Aspects of 'appearance', refer to the individual's social status (e.g. of being a student), as well as their temporary ritual state (e.g. playing the part of a university researcher).' (Bell, 2002, p.26)

In this small episode I realized that I was far too relaxed about my own impact on the environment and the attention I would receive (in both positive and negative sense). I was unaware of the little things that ruled over the ritualized ways of performing a unified professional front stage at the stadium. It was a failure from my part not to recognize all the elements that would be at play. Nevertheless, I triggered some reactions and responses that enabled me to see the complex structure of a football match.

c) Photo-ethnography

In my thesis I use one photo taken by me during the matches, two downloaded from a newspaper website, and a ‘print screen’ from a Facebook account. Many writers raise concerns about using photography as a method, as it is for example technically restricted and selective, and too easily considered ‘objective’ when actually reflecting a particular point of view (Davies, 2008, p.134). The photos included in this thesis show examples of executing power on the pitch and the process of mythologizing players. Denny and Sunderland (2007, p.287) stress the point of unintended production of stereotypes by such trivial actions as cropping photos, in effort to draw reader’s attention to a particular detail. Since I combine photos with interviews and observations, I believe I keep the necessary balance. Further, the particularly emotional image of the death threat towards one of the players was given a lot of media attention which in turn gave me an extra layer of interpretation.

Obviously, being visual and in colour, the photos can be believed to capture some of the spirit and perhaps emotions that are present during matches. However, numerous researchers and writers argue for the need of framing, e.g. giving proper context, and for example Susan Sontag, writer and political activist, while dealing with war photography points out how easy it is to manipulate and misinterpret pictures that appear emotional and she also argues against presupposed objectivity of photos (2003). While using the photos, I believe I stated clearly my own interpretations of captured actions, thus giving the images strong enough context.

d) Newspapers and internet sources

Media play an important role in sustaining the local feel and image of the local football. Further, comments from internet forums provide a rich overview of the local sentiments. The web pages I used include, among others, Sydsvenskan, Helsingborgs Dagblad, and svenskafans.com. I have also followed MFF and Ultras Malmö on Facebook to monitor supporters’ opinions and activities. Davies (2008, p.151-170) regards internet ethnography as a valid method for researching internet communities, and she argues that these can be called communities as they represent features (like hierarchy, power struggle) present in real life situations.

It should be remembered that internet offers a particular kind of safety, allowing its users the feeling of anonymity and protection, which can result in stating opinions without fear of being openly criticized by peers, and thus allow a researcher a sneak-peek into the community (e.g.

Stewart, 2005, p.399). While following the forums and Facebook I have chosen to be a passive observer and I did not manifest my presence to the others. I took into consideration Driscoll and Gregg's distinction of a participant observer vs. member and I decided that being a foreigner and a female could influence too much the flow of conversation at the forums, which members appear to be mostly, if not all, Swedish males (2010, p.15).

This method allowed me to follow the football context before, during and after matches and see how fans respond and how they interpret what happen, what sort of meanings they attach to football and how they react quasi-anonymously to official announcements made by the club. While further digesting the game, internet users also engage creatively by making comments and planning future actions, as well as evaluating the club and players, which could in turn influence how the club is run. Being able to follow the comments allowed me to have a set of mini-interviews with those caring about football.

1.5. Previous studies

Although football is a popular subject of university research, it is still mostly written about in the context of violence and social unrest or the commercial side of the game. Gary Armstrong and Richard Giulianotti are leading sociologists dealing with British football, and their work includes books and articles about hooliganism, commodification of football and new taxonomies of football supporters (2002, 2004, 2005, 2007). Giulianotti has also written and co-edited books about meaning of sport and football from a sociological perspective (Giulianotti, 1999, 2004; Armstrong & Giulianotti, 1999, 2001; Giulianotti & Williams, 1994). Another popular research area is business or rather the business problem in football, explored for example by Kuper and Szymanski (2009), and Kennedy & Kennedy (2010, 2012).

As sport arenas keep growing and religious life keeps shrinking, it has been recognized that sport and football started to serve as a platform to express emotions and passion and as Roland Barthes writes 'all our modern sports are in this spectacle from another age, heir of ancient religious sacrifices' (2007, p.3). As many authors point out, football has become a global game, a sport that appears to unite most of the planet. What follows is the economic reality of globalization and commercialization, which in turn has become a sore in the eye of

the local supporters, who attempt to protect their clubs from emptying themselves from meaning, passion and emotions.³

Sociologist Richard Giulianotti and a sport journalist Jonathan Wilson have thoroughly followed the historical development of football, its tactics, and relation to violence and commercialization. While explaining the popularity of football, Giulianotti points out a combination of factors at the end of the 19th century that helped the game to evolve into globally popular spare time activity. As he writes there was: ‘a huge vacuum in popular leisure (...) as the general populace moved into the towns for work (...). Football’s mass appeal saw it sit neatly within a constellation of popular cultural practices that also included drinking and gambling. The game itself became an architectural extension of the urban industrial archipelago’ (Giulianotti, 1999, p.6).

Many sport researchers recognize the importance of myth-making and when analyzing processes in football they use descriptions of myths and mythologies. Among others, Jonathan Wilson describes how a position of a manager acquired its mythical and magical qualities because of the vivid life story of Bela Guttmann who managed teams all over the world (2008, p.100). Also, a sociologist Gary Robson (2001) describes the mythical violent baggage around Millwall Football Club and its wild and aggressive supporters. In his account, Robson makes a remarkable illustration of a fossilized myth that took over the image of the club and haunts its perception in its social setting. I want to argue further that the processes behind them are more important than just side-effects, and it is magic that triggers and sustains these processes. The result of such approach should explain not only the structure and position of a club, but also the tensions that reappear in football.

Further, in his collection of essays, Roland Barthes presents his analysis of the position sport has in our modern reality. Although heavily loaded with issues of commercialization, sport still provides an important experience for the mass audience. As Barthes writes: ‘In sport, man experiences life’s fatal combat, but this combat is distanced by the spectacle, reduced to its forms, cleared of its effects, of its dangers, and of its shames: it loses its noxiousness, not its brilliance or its meaning’ (Barthes, 2007, p.61). The high level of emotions and passion, but also repetitiveness of the games makes it into an addictive combination.

³ See discussion presented by Giulianotti (2007) about Scottish fans and commodification, or Kennedy & Kennedy (2010) example of Everton football club and moving of the stadium grounds from one part of the city to another.

An important notion in Barthes' analysis is that he recognizes sport as a combat between a man and his physical environment and limitations, not a combat between men as such. As a result, Barthes can remark that competition is not a conflict, and that 'man must conquer not man but the resistance of things' (Barthes, 2007, p.37).

To my knowledge, an ethnographic study of a local football club as an entity consisting of different actors involved, i.e. different factory floors, was not yet attempted. Also, it appears that no analysis in the context of magic has been done yet either. The presented analysis could be a useful framework in defining the club's role and position. Its instability, which can be now seen as a weakness, could be turned into its strength if we take the club as an ongoing creative process rather than an end product.

1.6. Thesis outline

The analysis is presented in three main sections, from chapter two to four.

The second chapter of my thesis presents some special features of the dream factory, its structure and legal position, and also features like the shifting power and control, and the issue of access. It also deals with the position of media in creating local football. **The third chapter** concentrates subsequently on the actors involved in the factory, the management, supporters and players, by giving examples how those three different factory floors work together and how they influence each other.

The fourth chapter presents the creation of a hero and a villain, the necessary characters in any mythology. I have chosen two particular examples because they were the most vivid and memorable, and also they deal with the extra layer of football, and not with football only. **The fifth chapter** presents conclusions and applicability.

2. The Dream Factory – the football club as a socially constructed space

This chapter deals with the structure and use of power and control in the club. After briefly presenting the legal and economical features of MFF, as well as its placing in the globalized football context, I analyze some of the significant characteristics of the club.

I set to answer questions what actors are involved and how the club is presented and interpreted. The key issues here are confusion about the roles and position of the club, inability to determine responsibilities clearly, lack of information and the issue of access. These elements are strongly embedded in a daily life of the football club and they determine to a considerable extent how the club is perceived, run, and evaluated. Further, these features exemplify how magic is used in football and how all the groups involved, namely players, management and supporters, try to execute their power.

I intend to investigate the general perception of the club by those participating in dream-chasing. It is a closed space in permanent trouble, a city under a siege which has to be protected. To explain how the structure of a club is being created and maintained I mainly use here Foucault's concept of heterotopias combined with Lefebvre's understanding of socially constructed space. The club's strength and vulnerability depends to some extent on the flow of information and I employ the concept of kremlinology to show how the media and fans operate on rumours and gossip.

The measures undertaken into creation of the dream of a successful football club appear quite technical; the official, 'professional' approach disguises magical practices behind it. In the core of its product football has an experience, wrapped in architecture, images and souvenirs. It sustains emotions, feelings of belonging, of loyalty, pride, and care. It all needs to be there to sustain the dream. One of the key features here would be participation in the creation of this specific environment. One needs a team, a management and spectators at a stadium to create a football experience. This construction is all about active participation and making the dream of a successful club.

2.1. Factory Floors – tensions in modern football

‘Magic, like religion, is viewed as a totality; either you believe in it all, or you do not.’ (Mauss, 1972, p.113)

I intend to analyze MFF as a Dream Factory. Using the solid structure of a stadium and a strategy, it chases a dream of success in football. While engaged in this perpetual process, it stimulates the local society, enabling it to create their personal stories in the context of football, which is then a local mythology manufactured ad hoc on a regular basis. This analysis starts with an overview of the factory’s structure that has an impact on how it operates.

Historically, football started as an activity for boarding schools, spread by educated British upper classes, and then grew in factory cities of the late 19th century, where the new working class made it into its pass time hobby (Wilson, 2008, p.59; Russell, 1999, p.15-29). Kuper and Szymanski (2009) point out that football became the social bond for people coming from villages to towns and looking for social connections. As the industrial cities, like Manchester or Liverpool, throughout the 20th century steadily lost its industrial character and its working class image, football become the monument and the legacy of those days. It is a kind of a factory, an evolved symbol of social bondage that would bind strangers together. Malmö followed in this pattern as well, and many of MFF’s players in the 1960s and 70s worked in the docks during the weekdays, to become footballers on weekends (Andersson, 2011). Nowadays, with all-professional team and numerous sponsors, a football club is an economic enterprise of its own.

Nevertheless, football is not a big business in commercial terms comparing to ‘normal’ companies of average size, as for example demonstrated by Kuper and Szymanski (2009). Further, it seems far easier for a club to lose millions of euros rather than to earn them. As Kennedy & Kennedy (2012) point out in a text about commercialization of football, the biggest European leagues continue to grow in terms of investment. However, the researchers stress how unreliable of an investment idea football really is:

A more forensic examination of the state of European top-flight football reveals another, very different picture: one of debt, bankruptcy, a loss of competitive balance, and a barely concealed resentment of fan exploitation. (...) In Spain, clubs in La Liga are saddled with enormous levels of debt. Between them, Barcelona and Real Madrid have debts totalling almost €1 billion. (...) The English Premier League generates both the greatest amount of

revenue in European football and its greatest levels of debt. The total debts of its member clubs stood at just under € 4 billion in 2010 (p. 328-330).

This contradiction of simultaneous financial prestige and near-bankruptcy can be further developed by research provided by a journalist Simon Kuper and a sports economist Stefan Szymanski (2009). They provide a model which explains that economic balance, or indeed profit, does not correlate with winning or losing of a club. Whatever investors win by putting their money into football should be perhaps measured in other than economic terms.

The economic report from 2012 shows for example that Malmö FF lost about 14 million Swedish crowns, and that was ‘calculated’ (MFF year report 2012). As a result there were a lot of money talks at the end of 2012 season, not only in the form of official statements, but also in the media and on the internet forums (fieldnotes, 2012). Fans, however, do not have a fixed opinion on what finances mean in their beloved sport. As Kennedy & Kennedy (2010) present in their article, even extremely devoted and territorial fans recognize the necessity of their club to make amends with the business world and work for the best financial solutions, even if that would mean relocating the club.

The local character of Malmö FF is an important feature and many of my informants praised the fact that the club did not have one owner but belonged to the entire community. Some countries like Sweden and Germany have the ‘51% rule’ which means that an investor cannot own more than 49% of the club, leaving the major part in the hands of club’s members and thus not making a club look as a pure business venture (Andersson & Radmann, 1999, p.67-77). This specific structure eliminates possibilities of massive investments, like those in English league for example, but also prevents a club from becoming a rich man’s toy, as one of my interviewees remarked (fieldnotes, 2012).

While conducting my fieldwork in Malmö, it became quite obvious that the purely emotional attachment was often mixed with cold business calculations. One of my informants presented quite contradictory views on economy in football. As he said first:

You said that also, in England or Spain is some rich people buying the clubs, and clubs today are companies, it’s not... You don’t pay for the goals of your team, you pay for a show. It’s like you’re going to a theatre or something, you buy now a one-year ticket, no? (interview with Hugo, 2012).

He was quite bitter about the modern developments of football, but he also applied this rhetoric to diminish Malmö FF. He further deemed Swedish failure to deliver good quality football because of lacking financial resources. He continued by commenting on the 51%

rule: ‘Why would you like to keep local? What do you get from that? More money? Better players? I think they are missing the point there. (...) For me, I’m not a hooligan, I like the sport. So for me it’s not any spectacle to go see football in Sweden. And the national team is superboring also’ (interview with Hugo, 2012). Although critical of the commercialization, he saw that such arrangement could help to build a successful team with high standard of play. He attributed low level of Swedish football to the lack of financial backing. Further, he did not thrive in the local patriotism, so he dismissed the local team as simply not sufficiently good.

It is possible to employ here Goffman’s notion of front and back stage (1959) and apply it to football as a whole. It is an easy game with precise rules easy to follow and very basic requirements, and a long history of tactical development based on logic and rationality. However, success in football requires some unexplainable processes, magical abilities of coaches to lead their teams, managers with a sixth sense for picking players etc. It lives in an aura of uniqueness, it needs extraordinary explanations.

There is a façade created by magic, and one is only left to believe what is behind it and what, if any, financial advantages, can be found. Goffman writes: ‘As countless folk tales and initiation rites show, often the real secret behind the mystery is that there really is no mystery; the real problem is to prevent the audience from learning this too’ (1959, p.70). This remark can explain how football manages to stay afloat in spite of being in constant financial trouble. Kuper and Szymanski (2009), while pointing out that football is not a reliable business, or perhaps not even business at all, also notice that it is incredibly stable and persistent. Clubs rarely disappear, financial disasters seldom put to an end the local love of football. Magicians can always reset their rites and veil a club in new layers of emotions. The process of creating the myths, the immense sense of power that one can participate and influence how it is shaped, makes football virtually indestructible.

One should remember though that the money focus is not that new. The tension between having a sane financial plan and making popular decisions has existed almost as long as football itself, as Giulianotti writes: ‘Football has been a serious business since at least the 1890s; directors have almost always protected their investments rather than pursue the fans’ interests by over-spending on players or ground facilities’ (1999, p.42). One could say that it is the proximity of science and technology that draws business into the magical activities (Mauss, 1972, p.106). Not only it can present itself in very firm, financial terms, but it can

also deliver quite scientific description of football theory and tactics. Writers like Jonathan Wilson (2008), or Alex Fynn and Lynton Guest (1994) provide detailed, historically embedded accounts about development of football and its theoretical elements. However, their narratives are often embroidered with statements of ‘intuition’ when choosing players, a ‘sixth sense’ for assembling a team, and a ‘gut-feeling’ about an outcome of a game. There seems to be always unexplainable elements that make football work.

Here we come to yet another quality of rationally produced magic: ‘Magic is essentially the art of doing things, and magicians have always taken advantage of their know-how, their dexterity, their manual skills. Magic is the domain of pure production, *ex nihilo*’ (Mauss, 1972, p.175). The dream is a very flexible entity and it can vary from a humble wish to stay in the top league to win titles on European arenas, and this can shift during one season. Further, all these involved interpret the dream according to their understanding of a current situation. One should also remember that magicians are on all the floors of our Dream Factory. Players, the management and the supporters are united in their sense of protecting the dream, although they can understand the dream differently. None of them, then, is particularly interested in displaying what is behind the curtain of magic. They all participate by creating their own magic.

For decades football had to be shown as non-commercial and thus rejected professionalism (van Uden, 2005, p.185). Malmö FF was transformed from amateur to fully professional team in late 1970s (Andersson & Radmann, 1999, p.67-77). This was also a symbolic break from the image of industrial-city boys that worked in the docks during weekdays and became footballers on weekends. The club has partly lost the notion of locality provided by players. One of my informants said: ‘if you could dream up your top team most of the fans would say that ultimately they’d like to have 7 players from Malmö that were born here, and then 4 Brazilians, I mean something like that’ (interview with Björn, 2012). Although supporters would love to have the best players possible, they would also like a team made up of local boys. Not surprisingly, many supporters picked a defender Pontus Jansson as their favourite player from 2012 season, and the first reason given was that Pontus came from Malmö (fieldnotes 2012 and 2013)⁴.

⁴ See studies of commodification of supporters by Giulianotti (2002, 2007), or van Uden (2005) and Andersson’s and Radmann’s input about the attitudes of Swedish fans towards players after 1996 (1998, p.149-154).

Sticking to the already mentioned ‘51% rule’ is sometimes seen as a shield protecting the club from losing its character, even if it means worse financial situation. It is easy to notice that when we leave aside all the other businesses who cash on advertising on stadiums, or extra activities included (pubs, shops, and gyms for example) we are left with a curious reluctance towards money expressed by those involved in football. As many of my informants said, it should about something more, not just money⁵ (fieldnotes, 2012).

The legal structure of Swedish football brings immediate consequences. The management is responsible in front of the club’s members as much as its investors. It is the members, ordinary spectators for most part, who technically own the club. However, it is the managing director and the management who make the immediate decisions and those do not always go down well with the supporters. In several interviews there were contradicting evaluations of the existing system, expressing frustration with the ongoing problems:

MFF strengths and weaknesses are more or less the same issues. Because as we are a club owned by members we have a very strong team in that, because we have many people who support what we are doing. But it is also the members that can put away the board and make differences very quickly. (...) And that is a weakness. You can’t see many years forward, you can’t make a structure for five or ten years. (interview with Jan, 2012)

And if there is somebody who can organize people we can take over the club next year, because we are so many, we go to the annual meeting, pick the board we want and run the club. I could organize it today if I wanted. (interview with Stefan, 2012)

My informants realized that club members have an impact and can make a big change literally overnight, and the reality of being on a verge of chaos has become quite visible in those interviews. It all depends how the board and its decisions are evaluated by the club members. However, the cure can quickly turn into poison if the new board makes mistakes or bad decisions, which in turn is almost inevitable, since as mentioned by my informant in the current form the club is incapable of making long-term planning. So it is a double-edged sword that helps to sustain the local character of the club, but creates tension and uncertainty around it, not letting it have a stable position.

The making of the dream is mostly restricted to one closed area, the stadium. It is separated from the rest of the reality, it requires permission to access. It’s physical structure is massive, it accommodates the different groups, different floors who in theory work together, but tend

⁵ The money talk is constantly reappearing in the context of football and it would be possible to widen the investigation by including the fetish character of money, as understood by Karl Marx. Money is used to strengthen and weaken connections, to establish hierarchy and execute power (e.g. in Roy Ellen, 1988).

to add their own ‘ingredients’ and try to modify the dream. Although it appears a controlled experience, and thus it would refer to the meaning of factory, it is a very shaky and unpredictable process. In the next section I shall analyze the social structure of the Dream Factory.

2.2. Valhalla under siege

A football club exists physically on a stadium, a closed, impressive structure that basically has no other function but to house matches. The quality of the pitch, stands, and the general condition of the stadium are all factors that can influence the game. In numerous interviews my informants discussed pros and cons of natural and artificial grass, of roofed or not roofed stadium, of arenas with seats only and those with standing sections (fieldnotes, 2012). The physical appearance of a football space – a stadium – is often impressive. It is closed, finished, with walls around and restricted access. It holds to itself and protects itself, because behind the steel and concrete façade there is a very fragile and vulnerable entity of a dream, a dream of a successful team, club, or season.

Although there are people working at the stadium all the time, e.g. the staff, coaches, maintenance etc. the access to the core area is rather restricted and possible only during matches. Further, the stadium seems alive only when there is a game going on, when all the parties involved, the team, the management and supporters, come together in this one space.

The physical elements shape the game and their specific qualities make a stadium into a unique place where the magic of football can be performed. As Mauss remarks: ‘Magic is not performed just anywhere, but in specially qualified places. Magic as well as religion has genuine sanctuaries’ (1972, p.57). Without a doubt a stadium, like MFF’s Swedbank Stadion, is a sanctuary of football. It allows public gatherings that can crown their heroes and punish their villains. Barthes, referring to mythologizing of sport events, compared it to a rite from the old age: ‘All our modern sports are in this spectacle from another age, heir of ancient religious sacrifices’ (Barthes, 2007, p.3).

When the physical is taken into consideration, many writers tend to turn to Foucault’s idea of panopticon and the control based on visibility and surveillance. Among others, Giulianotti evokes the picture of control over players and supporters who are watched, recorded and analyzed constantly during matches (1999, p.80). Although valid in a context of modern developments like the introduction of camera systems at stadiums and special training

programmes for players when they attend organized camps and thus are observed most of the time (fieldnotes, 2012), panopticon in the context of a football club misses the tensions and emotions involved. Without any doubt there is a clear issue of power and control at play, but it is not executed from one lone tower only, as the club in my understanding needs all three factory floors, the management, supporters and players, who in turn try to execute power over other groups. Thus, I intend to use another of Foucault's concept, namely heterotopias, to investigate how a football club is constructed and maintained.

A sacrifice needs a place to be performed.. However, it is not only the material that makes the space what it is, but first and foremost the social involvement. We could interpret a stadium in terms of Foucault's heterotopias. As he describes the concept:

There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places - places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society (...). Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. (Foucault, 1967, p.5)

Heterotopia is real, unlike utopia, and it has a very special function in a society. Foucault describes the place as a counter-site, 'a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted' (1967, p.9). Heterotopias are for example grave yards, museums, libraries, or fairgrounds. It is a place where time is not as obvious a factor as in the outside world. One can say that football exists physically from time to time, from game to game, and for this short period of two hours it requires its space. Also, a heterotopia locks in history and 'draws us out of ourselves' (1967, p.4). In other words, it offers a possibility to become somebody else. MFF is very proud that its supporters come from all possible social groups, that it attracts women, children, business representatives and manual workers (interview with Lars, 2012). When wearing white-and-blue scarves, they all become football fans.

In order to become a socially meaningful space a stadium needs life: the players, spectators and those who manage it. At times it explodes with passion and sometimes it sinks in grief, but the behaviour of all the groups is codified, most strictly for the players who obey the rules of the game, but who also know how to stage pain, anger etc. while using their body language. The set of rules exist even for the supporters. Their chants are 'directed' by a capo, their use of flags, banners or flares quite conscious. Spontaneity has its boundaries. Such codification of behaviour is also one of Foucault's principles explaining a heterotopia. It serves all the groups

as a platform to stage their devotion, anger, resentment or joy and the setting is very specific. Men are not likely to voluntarily sing, dance and strip publicly to express their happiness in an every-day situation (fieldnotes, 2012).

As mentioned above, a football club presents a need for protection, hiding its vulnerability behind a heavy physical construction and points to the regulated access of a heterotopia:

Heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable. In general, the heterotopic site is not freely accessible like a public place. (Foucault, 1967, p.10)

This ability to shut itself and isolate, for example, the management (not publishing news), or players (closed trainings) allows the club to exercise its power in its social setting, but at the same time isolation can become a act of hostility in the eyes of the supporters. When last autumn the club did not comment on speculations about firing some of its key employees, the management was accused of withholding information and keeping the public in the dark on purpose (fieldnotes, 2012).

Because of the limited access, also during matches, the club virtually regulates everyday routines of its followers. The time schedule for a next season is crucial to people who want to go see their team, and thus participate in the myth-making. Throughout my interviews fairly often participants would say ‘I always try to see home matches’ although it might collide with their daily routines and family life (fieldnotes, 2012). Some even openly state that MFF regulates their yearly schedules (fieldnotes, 2013). Willingly or not, MFF exercises a fair amount of power over its supporters by providing them with fixed days and times of matches. It is then up to the public to find time, will, money and strength to go watch them.

It should be noted that this heterotopia of a club can be opened and closed for very mundane reasons. One of the interviewed player remarked that to his knowledge they play matches on Mondays so that business associates can have a meeting while watching a game (interview with Peter, 2012), so it would serve a very pragmatic and economic purpose. One of the office workers in an informal conversation mentioned that the high-profile matches that can result in violence are scheduled during week days to minimize the risks (fieldnotes, 2012). Surely enough fans complain about the schedule, for example on internet forums, and express their annoyance that matches do not often happen on weekends, which used to be the traditional game time of the working classes (Andersson, 2011; Giulianotti, 1999).

When the game is not performed on a football pitch, it still exists in the mediaspace and it is constantly constructed and reconstructed there. In case of MFF stories about the club, its team or the management frequently make it to the front page of the local newspaper *Sydsvenskan* and they are also widely discussed online. Henri Lefebvre's analysis of social space offers an insight of footballs popularity. It is the process of constant creation.

For it to occur, it is necessary (...) for the society's practical capabilities and sovereign powers to have at their disposal special places: religious and political sites. (...) such sites are needed for symbolic sexual unions and murders, as places where the principle of fertility (the Mother) may undergo renewal and where fathers, chefs, kings, priests and sometimes gods may be put to death (Lefebvre, 1991, p.34).

The club's physical space, a stadium, offers a condensed experience of ecstasy and grief, and it is a social construct, allowing the spectators to hail or execute their heroes. Lefebvre describes here a special social space where the material and spiritual worlds meet. Wishful thinking and faith in the team's abilities is mixed with 'rational', scientific-like approach of statistics, models and analyses that would explain why one team wins and the other loses⁶. Lefebvre points out that the process of creating such a place includes ritual, sacrifice and magic, a repeated and known set of words and gestures. Football is not strictly religion or science, but it has elements from both, and here again we can derive an explanation for this curious mix from magic: 'Magic has no genuine kinship with anything apart from religion on the one hand and science and technology on the other' (Mauss, 1972, p.174).

This space that allows football to be performed is, in other words, a sort of a dynamic exchange between the representation of space (its design), representational space (ideas and visions embedded in football) and practice, which would be the routine of a match, actors performing their parts during the game (after Lefebvre, 1991). As Lefebvre remarks, a social space is always dynamic, its physical elements enabling actors to maintain the core features of football. Chanting fans, whistling referees, scoring a goal – all those elements make the space alive. These are not strictly spontaneous actions, as supporters, players and management are well- aware of the routines present. The sort of 'controlled spontaneity' is well illustrated by the capo – a person with a megaphone, standing on a small platform, directing the standing crowd's reactions, like singing, clapping and booing (fieldnotes, 2012).

⁶ For example see *Bayesian hierarchical model for predicting football results* by G. Baio and M. Blangiardo.

2.3. Whispers in the dark

Fans' eagerness to learn as much as possible about the club is met with a protective approach from the management. One feature that indicates the shakiness and need for protection is the scarcity of information, or perhaps the appearance that information is not complete, that some things are hidden. Although MFF works hard on transparency and communication, supporters and journalists often operate on rumours and gossip. Decisions often come like lightnings from the sky, and both good and bad news tend to appear suddenly. The fans, as well as media, speculate daily about the club. We could employ here a concept of kremlinology, named after the Kremlin, the centre of power in Soviet Russia. The term was developed during the cold war as the western powers tried 'to guess or infer what things people say and do really mean, as opposed to what they seem to mean' as they struggled to interpret what was actually happening behind the Iron Curtain (after www.macmillandictionary.com, retrieved 04.01.2013)

Kremlinology as a concept which refers to uncertain, not exactly reliable information, or information not completely trusted, describes how a football club is forced to deal with media and fans. Rumours and gossip are often a source of news, and get reinterpreted and rewritten, creating a specific image of the club, often not the image the club officials would wish for. The official statements issued on MFF's web page or on Facebook are appreciated and followed by fans. Yet, there is a persistent suspicion that something is hidden. The solidity of a club and its image is often challenged in this process, but it is a creative way in which fans and media can reshape the mythical baggage around MFF.

For instance, on Svenskafans forum circulates an information that a player called Markus Halsti was very expensive when he was transferred to MFF in 2008. Nobody really knew the actual price and as the player suffered numerous injuries and did not get much time on the pitch, he seemed to become a wasted purchase. His price tag has become a sort of an 'insider' joke, as fans refer to the hundreds of millions spent on Halsti⁷. This sort of trivial information can get repeated and reinforced and slowly becomes an urban myth, regardless of its proximity to the actual truth. It appears that unofficial sources of information are considered as important as official ones, as they stimulate imagination, feelings and passion for football.

⁷ For example a discussion from svenskafans.se:
<http://www.svenskafans.com/Fotboll/mff/forumstandalone.aspx?page=1759> retrieved 22.04.2013.

As the flow of rumours and gossip cannot be controlled, it offers a powerful tool for those involved in football to participate in the processes at the Dream Factory.

Like ancient bards, groups involved in myth-making at the Dream Factory of MFF want to have their own version of the story, and they attempt to rewrite the plot, to add or remove some elements, to tinker with the melody or plot. While the dream of a football success is an inspiration for them all, they all have different ideas how it should be executed. As Barthes writes: ‘Myth is a *value*, truth is no guarantee for it; nothing prevents it from being a perpetual alibi: it is enough that its signifier has two sides for it always to have an ‘elsewhere’ at its disposal’ (Barthes, 1972:123). In the next section I shall deal with the impact that media have in helping to produce the local mythology. The newspaper in Malmö, Sydsvenskan, just like all the other groups, has its share in reshaping the image of the club.

2.4. Media: who blows Gjallarhorn

One can never overestimate the impact media have on the perception of sports, and it applies to football as well. Billy Ehn in his article about nationalism in sports (1989) pointed out how heroes, victories and failures are constructed by journalists, how the ‘nationalistic feel’ has to be translated from the event to a text and then shown to the audience, which would recognize its own joys and sorrows in the achievements of sportsmen. Although Ehn concentrated on the national level of competition during the winter Olympic Games, his analysis mirrors the role of media in local football. There are reports not only from matches but also from trainings and often news about MFF is often on the front page of Sydsvenskan.

The attitudes towards media and press are mixed in the club. During an informal conversation one office worker remarked that one of the journalists writing mostly about MFF for Sydsvenskan is not a proper journalist anymore but has become a supporter. In my informant’s opinion it jeopardized the journalist’s objectivity and made him rely too much on his personal views (fieldnotes 2012). This journalist regularly attends the team’s training sessions (fieldnotes 2013), and he can be very critical about MFF on his blog. The blog expresses his opinions and thus it is not under pressure of objectivism. When during an interview I asked one player about Sydsvenskan he replied:

Ah I don’t think I have anything to say about that. Me myself I don’t read Sydsvenskan. The journalists... well as a player you should respect them, and what they do, and of course they do they job. But what I would... (laughs). They’ve made a good job for themselves. I just don’t read it. (...) I know when I play well and when I don’t. My self-

confidence doesn't need a boost from that and when I play badly I don't need to learn that from the papers. But sure, they follow us all the time, every day there is something about us. But I don't... it's not a high moment of my day nor does it ruin my day.
(interview with Peter, 2012)

Peter's understanding of journalists' work was not exactly clear and he tried to distance himself from this recreated, reinterpreted football reality. Being constantly under scrutiny of the press and being aware of their influence can build up pressure and uncertainty. Perhaps the same could be said about the management's attitudes. Because of the journalist's personal involvement the distinction between providing objective analysis of the club and supporting it becomes rather blurry. It is probably not clear to the management and players whether they deal with a friend or foe. Compassion and sympathy can change to harsh critique on daily basis.

Journalists seem to operate on rumours and gossip just as the fans do. For example, immediately after the 2012 season appeared some concerns about the future of MFF's coach and his apparent conflict with MFF's sport director (fieldnotes, 2012). Unable to get any valid information, one journalist wrote in his blog on November 14th 2012 that the coach, Rikard Norling, without much doubt was going to be fired, question being only how⁸. Later the same week Norling was described in the newspaper as 'disillusioned', further strengthening the opinion that these were Norling's last moments in MFF⁹. However, later that week MFF made an official announcement that both the coach and the sport director were staying put¹⁰.

These speculations could also fall into the category of kremlinology. Once there is a bit of trouble or unrest, the mutual cooperation is shut and the division between who belongs and who does not becomes drastically visible. Unable to get proper information, journalists rely on their instincts and any little gossip they can get from inside the thick walls of the club. A journalist, even being a devoted supporter, will not be entrusted confidential information. The club, like the mythical Valhalla¹¹, can close its gates and shut itself, and become an inaccessible heterotopia, living the world outside full of doubt and speculations.

The example from the end of 2012 season presented above shows that media instead of explaining can provoke chaos and misinterpretations. By concentrating on certain people or

⁸ The blog: <http://blogg.sydsvenskan.se/wiman/2012/11/page/2/> - 14.11.2012

⁹ Interview with Rikard Norling at Sydsvenskan online: <http://www.sydsvenskan.se/sport/traning-med-konstigkanska/> (16.11.2012)

¹⁰ <http://www.sydsvenskan.se/sport/jag-har-varit-lite-barnslig/> (17.11.2012)

¹¹ Not surprisingly in the Nordic context, one of the small football grounds used in the early 20th century by a club in Göteborg is called Walhalla Idrottsplats (Andersson, 2001, p.6)

events they stir the focus of the public and blow the Gjallarhorn, the mythical horn that should warn the four corners of the earth against the upcoming Ragnarök, the moment of total annihilation (after Sturluson, 1916). The difference is that Ragnarök in the world of a local football club can happen many times a season, and the horn creates warnings as well as unrest, uncertainty and fear. Obviously, the media report good news as well; successes are analyzed as much as defeats, but the persistence of ‘end of the world’ tone is quite evident.

This ‘seek-and-hide information’ game, as real or imagined it may be, can be investigated in terms of executing power. Foucault’s perspective of analyzing ‘power relations through the antagonism of strategies’ (1994, p.329) applies well to this situation. Simply by withholding knowledge, Malmö FF can create suspicions and resistance. Obviously, the act of withholding information may not be intentional, but as supporters and journalists engage wholeheartedly in the process of creating the local myths together with MFF, the boundaries between an insider and outsider become blurred for them, though it can never be so in reality.

The complexity of a football club means that the power shifts constantly depending on a context and point of view taken. The flow of information can create an illusion of a space open to everybody, but the boundaries are firmly in place and the issue of inclusion and exclusion often re-emerges. It does not mean only the management revealing or hiding information, but also uncontrolled supporters and media creating realities through comments, rumours and gossip. As Foucault notices, in this way power can be executed: ‘Relationships of communication imply goal-directed activities (...) and, by modifying the field of information between partners, produce effects of power’ (Foucault, 1994, p.338).

The unique structure of the Dream Factory is possible because it seems to use the concept of mana, which in Marcel Mauss’ description can be a force, a being, an action, a quality, a state, a verb and a noun (Mauss, 1972, p.133). Mana is a central concept to magic, as it provides an insight into the confusion of roles, actions and responsibilities. Watching football, playing it, talking and writing about it, judging its quality, criticizing it, performing it on the pitch – all these actions create the game, and all the magicians are needed to weld their forces and cast their spells to make the dream come true. In the following chapter I shall look into the complex relationships behind the factory’s walls where the magic, both white and black, is performed.

3. Sleeping with the enemy

In this chapter I present interactions among players, management and supporters in the Dream Factory. First, I want to show the shifting power and roles of villains and ‘good guys’. I use interviews involving members of all the three groups to show that alliances between them can be quite easily constructed or broken depending on situations. All the groups can regard the others as friends or foes. There are no fixed loyalties.

In theory all the groups chase the same dream, the dream of a success in football, but it appears that it means something different to all of them and that the idea of the Dream is very open to interpretations. As all the groups participate actively in the myth-making there is a lot of tension. The examples of social interactions chosen here deal with certain group configurations, but it should be noted that similar processes of myth-making can appear in all possible combinations.

The empirical material used predominantly in the second subsection chapter involves preparations for a high-profile match between MFF and the regional rival Helsingborgs IF, (abbreviated HIF). It provides an example of interaction between the club’s management and supporters, giving an idea of power shifts within the context of football. I employ a metaphor of Loki, a magician and shape-shifter who always brings trouble to Valhalla, to show how the idea of doing ‘good’ or ‘bad’ things for the club can change very quickly.

3.1. Owners, care takers, villains: the wizards of MFF

The management of MFF has a central position in communicating football and creating the image using their own media channels, but the magic wand is sometimes stolen from them and then ‘independent’ media take over, or the fans by using internet forums. The players can also cut into this communication with their own actions or comments, disturbing the making of the dream. Nevertheless, it is the management that is held directly responsible for running the club. The managing director, the head of the board and the sport director have to be able to understand what the club needs, which means catering simultaneously for the fans, players, club members and sponsors. In this section of my thesis I shall investigate the dynamics among the parties involved having the management of the club in the main focus.

The club, as an entity in itself, is mythologized and immortalized in stories and traditions. When explaining popularity of football many of my informants pointed out to the tradition embedded in the club: ‘Football is a traditional sport. (...) You can pass it from generation to generation. All the fathers take their sons to watch games. It is a simple game to understand. (...). It is a world sport’ (interview with Jan, 2012). This notion of re-living history was an ongoing motive in my interviews. Stories would circulate and allow my informants to weave their threads of personal experience into the ever-stretching canvas of local football.

This need for historical context forms the base for mythologizing of the club, as Roland Barthes remarks: ‘What the world supplies to myth is a historical reality, defined, even if this goes back quite a while, by the way in which men have produced or use it; and what myth gives in return is a *natural* image of this reality’ (Barthes, 1972, p.142). In other words, mythologizing of the club makes its story very plastic and apt for reshaping, which allows management, supporters, and also players to fit their bit in, to tell their own anecdotes with the same degree of authority and certainty as old stories known from rumours and gossips (fieldnotes, 2012). And thus, magic gets into action as ‘without tradition there can be no beliefs or rites’ (Mauss, 1972, p.86).

To explain this mythical character of the club we can further employ Barthes’ notion that a myth needs a complete meaning to exist: ‘The meaning is *already* complete, it postulates a kind of knowledge, a past, a memory, a comparative order of facts, ideas, decisions’ (1972, p.117). That is what football can offer, and that is how its self-explanatory character still boils blood of so many fans, players and staff members, who struggle to define its meaning and purpose. It is finished, yet it is open to interpretations.

Also, there is a curious prestige and value attached to those who work in football, and their special position derives often from the fact that they work for a club, be it on the pitch or in the office, or by appearing at the stadium. To quote Mauss: ‘Thus the social status predestines certain individuals to the exercise of magical power and vice versa the practice of magic ordains their social status.’ (1972, p.37) For example, MFF’s managing director is regarded as something more than just a CEO in any office. His media appearances and making crucial decisions for MFF have created a specific aura around him. Further, his powers extend well beyond the walls of the stadium. On a personal note I can state that you are treated with respect and almost disbelief when you mention that you have met the CEO of Malmö FF (fieldnotes, 2012). It seems that by gaining access into this strange, magic institution, the powers of those involved rub a bit on you.

From the historical perspective, MFF has lost the strong men who ruled over the club like Eric Persson or Hans Cavalli-Björkman in the old days (Andersson, 2011). Back then they were the undisputed rulers of MFF who designed its structure in physical and symbolical terms likewise. Nowadays the club is run on a more democratic mode. However, the mythology about those powerful characters survived and they are cherished as something of ‘founding-fathers’ figures, the creators of the actual MFF. As Goffman remarks: ‘When an actor takes on an established social role, usually he finds that a particular front has already been established for it. Whether his acquisition of the role was primarily motivated by a desire to perform the given task or by a desire to maintain the corresponding front, the actor will find that he must do both’ (1959, p.27). One should remember, though, that fulfilling a position loaded with already fossilized mythology is not an easy task. Unlike the players, a managing director normally stays with the club for years, and his position is shaped at a different pace.

The mythical status of a club’s chairman can be easily seen in the figure of the late Eric Persson. The new stadium has been given a statue of him, placed so that ‘he would look over the pitch, protecting the club all the time’ (fieldnotes, 2012). My informant readily acknowledged the symbolic value of having that image at the stadium. By this action my informant revealed himself as a magician: ‘He (a magician) is a kind of official, vested by society with authority (...) He is serious about it because he is taken seriously, and he is taken seriously because people have need of him. Thus, what a magician believes and what the public believes are two sides of the same coin. (...) [Magic] remains mysterious even for the magician’ (Mauss, 1972, p.119).

Further, many (if not most) men employed in the management used to be active supporters, and still want to hold that identity. As one interviewee said: ‘I sometimes have lunch with the chairman of MFF and he would get angry when I say ‘we at MFF support’ like ‘we are the support’ and he says ‘no no no, I’m a supporter as well, although I am established in the society. Many people would like to be included in the supporter definition.’ (interview with Stefan, 2012). There are also former players who work for the club. As a person employed at MFF remarks: ‘Before you would not get people from outside, you would employ an old coach to work at the office for example. (...) Nowadays it is not that unusual, because clubs are much more professional in that sense’ (interview with Jan, 2012).

Kuper and Szymanski (2009) in their book about football stereotypes discuss vividly the issue of employing former players as clubs’ officials or team coaches. They point out the general mistrust towards anybody from outside football circles. It is such a delicate and fragile entity that it needs special knowledge, almost secret abilities. One has to be able to reproduce one’s own success, one’s own understanding of the game. Somehow it is required to be on the pitch first, physically or mentally, to be later able to create a successful team. As Mauss writes: ‘A magician does nothing, or almost nothing, but makes everyone believe that he is doing everything, and all the more so since he puts to work collective forces and ideas to help the individual imagination in its belief’ (1972, p.175).

Mauss’ description explains here this notion of uniqueness concerning those working with football, which applies not only to the management, but also to the players who are often greeted with excitement as those mythical creatures that can kick the ball. For example, at one occasion several players entered a room filled with ‘ordinary’ people, and a nervous whisper circulated: ‘look, players have come’ (fieldnotes, 2012). Also the supporters, especially the organized, more outspoken groups calling themselves ultras, have an aura of uniqueness around them. They are the main creators of the special ambience during matches, as it is recognized by more neutral spectators (interview with Olle and Åke, 2012).

The three groups of magicians claim power over the club on many different levels as layers of their personal involvement in football are peeled away. Every-day, mundane management of the club is necessary, a team that can play is crucial, and a strong support is needed. Moreover, all the groups are strongly involved in football through various activities, as they can all play it, comment on it, support teams etc. Since they all are active on many levels, their roles are not restricted to one task only. All the actions of creating football are important,

and so the question who can actually claim the club is confusing. The management officials call themselves Malmö FF, and so do the players. Further, the majority of interviewed fans would say that they are MFF because they are the most important and the most stable part of the club (e.g. interviews with Stefan, Alex or Mikael, 2012, 2013). Thus, there is another characteristic of magic emerging: ‘The normal condition of magic is one involving almost total confusion of powers and roles’ (Mauss, 1972, p.109).

The assessment of the assigned roles can be confusing as well. For example the image of the management shifts from an absolute ruler who makes sudden and final decisions (buying or selling players, firing coaches, punishing supporters), to a voluntary charity worker who makes sure the beloved club is running smoothly and well. The club is not just an institution, it is the promised Valhalla, the paradise for warriors where they wait for the final battle at the end of time (after Sturluson, 1916), and as such it has to be understood properly and given proper attention. It is, after all, a beloved sanctuary. Further, the management acts also as an owner, which brings us to the business issues and the mundane worry over money and economic balance (fieldnotes, 2012).

3.2. ‘Verily at first Chaos came to be’¹²

Since the processes at the club are rapid and fluid, it can be perhaps seen in terms of what Foucault describes as anarchistic struggles. These are immediate, and they indicate that the search is not for a ‘chief enemy’ but the immediate one (Foucault, 1994, p.330). An unpopular decision, a suspicious remark, or badly played match can turn any of the friends of MFF into enemies. The scapegoat’s role is not fixed, but shifts according to the current troubles. For example, if the coach refuses to put a popular player on the pitch then fans rage on the internet forum, usually blaming him for ‘unreasonable’ decisions (fieldnotes, 2012).

Further, people can get involved in the life of the local club emotionally and also financially. The tension between monetary and emotional/cultural investment appears to be strong. Although not discussed in depth in this thesis, it should be noted that the club has sometimes an image of a serious business with serious investors, and sometimes of a charity organization run on voluntary basis (e.g. supporters are not paid to prepare flags and banners)¹³. The fieldwork also revealed that because of the personal investment, both financial and cultural,

¹² Hesiod, Theogony, line 116: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/hesiod/theogony.htm>

¹³ Kuper and Szymanski (2009) show the mess of contradictory images concerning professional football.

fans are aware of their strong position and one can hear statements that the ordinary spectators come to watch them, and not the game on the pitch (fieldnotes, 2012).

The interesting notion here comes from confusion of who owns whom or who rules over whom, and in this case power cannot be executed using only financial means. The fans, feeling responsible for the club's prosperity, even try to control the players. One of the footballers said it was not at all unusual that the coach or the sport manager would receive emails or text messages about players going out late at night. The fans thus claim some ownership over the team and they try to execute their power that comes from devotion and love of the club (interview with Peter, 2012). Further, some clubs try to control players' behaviour. In some cases they organize personality training whereas some, especially bigger clubs, decide to shadow their footballers (van Uden, 2005). However, just one comment from a player after a match is enough to start a media debate and receive unwanted attention¹⁴.

This can explain the sudden shape-shifting among the parties involved in making of the dream at the factory. It brings to mind Loki from the Norse mythology who could change his form and appear as a falcon, otter, or a giantess, and cause trouble in the life of gods (after Sturluson, 1916)¹⁵. Loki exemplifies all the groups involved in the making of football. There is no fixed 'bad guy'. Management can say that supporters abuse and misunderstand the club, or that it cannot control misbehaving players. Fans say that players only care about money and play lousy football, or that the management hurts the club with its decisions. Finally, players can distance themselves from management's unpopular decisions or complain about unrealistic expectations. Loki can shift then from the office to the pitch and to the stands. A friend would change into an enemy depending how the danger is interpreted and what is viewed as threatening to the club.

The tensions show how different elements can grow in importance according to circumstances, as well as how differently success could be measured according to who you ask. Obviously, all the groups perceive their own interpretation of the dream as the most important one. Jan, a staff member, said: 'MFF is the most successful club in Sweden. But then we can discuss: what is success? Is it how many medals you have, how old you are, how much money you make, how many spectators you have? But even... whatever we discuss,

¹⁴ During the end of 2012 season one player quote outspokenly criticized the club management after a lost game which cost MFF second place on the table. His opinions created a heated discussion on the internet forum for football fans at svenskafans.com (fieldnotes, 2012).

¹⁵ Loki is the catalyst behind most of the myths in the Norse tradition. He creates unrest and thus allows stories to develop. Most of the events appear because of him. See Snorri Sturluson's Prose Edda or The Poetic Edda.

medals, spectators or whatever, MFF is in the top' (2012). As we can see, the dream of a successful team is a complex issue, it is not one monolithic entity, but rather an ideal that perhaps cannot be achieved. Like in Plato's Allegory of the Cave¹⁶, the struggle to win medals and titles is like chasing the ideal team and club that everybody wants to claim. However, the interpretations of the dream, or rather dreams, vary a lot and what for one person are a solid season and a good team for another means a football failure.

This process attracts people, and the ability to co-create and connect to the dream-making many find appealing. Magicians from all the factory floors can claim a piece of magic, as the final creation requires their presence. This complex power relation can bind people together in the chase of the dream, but it can also tear them apart, in times of failure or trouble, as no one can predict for sure the outcomes of matches. Thus, it is possible to employ a concept of *alea* that Giulianotti uses after Mike Gane to explain popularity of certain activities (2004, p.231). *Alea* means 'a chance' in Greek. While Giulianotti uses it to describe various gambling practices, like lotteries, I think it can give an insight into football's popularity. If we consider Giulianotti's statement explaining the concept of *alea*: 'the idea of winning or losing is relatively unimportant compared to the seductive sequence of events' (2004, p.231) in the context of football we can see that the possibility of gambling with one's feelings and emotions during a match can contribute to its popularity.

Those involved are somewhat aware of this feature. As one supporter said: 'Every match is hard, you're not sure if they are going to win, even if it is a good season, so there's excitement, tension every time you go to see them' (interview with Åke, 2012). Further, one player told me: 'In football you have 90 minutes and fans can experience easily ten times like euphoria, and then ten times this sort of feeling that you want to go to your bed and hide' (interview with Peter, 2012). Football, like perhaps any other spectator sport, attracts those willing to gamble their luck and feelings. Obviously, the sort of normal, financial gambling is now a big part of business surrounding football, but this characteristic makes it in itself appealing to the public. As Giulianotti writes: 'Sport's fascination depends upon uncertainty of outcome, the possibility that unlikely results are predestined rather than scientifically impossible. The ecstatic *alea* is at play in gambling, that self-consuming play with the forces of destiny' (Giulianotti, 2004, p.232).

¹⁶ The metaphor of the cave with people chained away from the entrance and thus forced to just watch shadows on the wall, and not the real world outside, is to be found in Plato's dialogue in 'The Republic'.

It should be remembered that even if there are hints of irony or cold sarcasm, for example on internet forums, the football magicians strongly believe in the power of their rites, and in the importance of keeping the Dream Factory operating. Many have no doubt about what a fantastic club MFF has become, as my informant stated with passion:

We are the ones that always been very cocky and too many times also achieved what we were boasting about, winning many times. So we are a threat, someone who dictated several things in Swedish football, we changed the course of the game several times, we've always been a club that tried new things first. (interview with Lars, 2012).

Moreover, fans are convinced their singing helps, and players also state that the atmosphere is important and makes a difference (fieldnotes, 2012). What we see here is general conviction that this magic works and makes an impact. As Mauss states: 'However, along with this 'will to believe', there is plenty of proof of actual belief. The best ethnographers confirm that the magician deeply believes in the success of his sympathetic magic' (1972, p.117). Those involved in creating the magic of football rarely doubt their importance, and especially devoted supporters have a lot to say how the game should be played.

3.3. Loki on the loose

In this part I will take a closer look at the devoted supporters of MFF as the most visible and active actors among spectators. If provoked, they can turn against the club or the team. They want to believe and live the dream, but they also know that behind the curtain of MFF there might be somebody pulling the strings, and they are quick to criticize. There has been a lot of attention given to the football followers in academia¹⁷. In this chapter, I analyze supporters' involvement as a key element in chasing the dream and thus creating the local mythology.

Supporters are not directly involved in the running of the club and not being paid for their input, but they are in a curious situation of being able to engage far more with the organization than for example players who can easily change clubs season after season. One interviewed player estimated that during the last four years 30 to 40 footballers moved in and out of the club (interview with Peter, 2012). With such a rate of change it is the supporters who take an active role in sustaining the image of the local club. One should be aware,

¹⁷ Hooliganism, especially in the British context, has been a popular point of focus for researchers like Gary Armstrong and Richard Giulianotti. Also, the southern European football fandom presented researchers with the phenomenon of ultras and their involvement with the neo-fascism and the far-right has been analyzed, among others, by Alberto Testa (2009, 2010). In the down of the so-called 'new economy' and 'experience economy' there has been studies on commercialization effect on fans and their attitudes towards new face of football. Among others Alan Tapp and Jeff Clowes, as well as Kennedy & Kennedy and Udo Merkel (1999) dealt with segmentation of fans and new forms of club support based on economic variables respectively in England and Germany.

though, about the divisions within the supporters. MFF has its official supporters' organization called MFF Support, but there are also other groups, like hooligan firms or Italian-style active supporters called Supras Malmö¹⁸ (fieldnotes, 2012). That particular group is not big in numbers, but said to have a leading role in some quasi-illegal activities, like using flares during matches. It should be noted though, that in spite of their questionable reputation, people often recognize uniqueness of this secretive organization. One informant stated:

They were all in black, young and strong, and I was a bit afraid but I was invited... and it was a good meeting, we discussed things... But the energy in that room, I envied them that, they have so much power, they want to do something. It was a tiny room, and there were 40 people inside. So the identity thing was very strong. (interview with Stefan, 2012)

Stefan, himself a member of MFF Support, was clearly impressed by a united and solid front stage presented by Supras Malmö. Focused on supporting their team, they represent loyalty, devotion, and also a sense of belonging. As Goffman remarks: 'A certain bureaucratization of the spirit is expected so that we can be relied upon to give a perfectly homogeneous performance at every appointed time' (1959, p.56). Supras Malmö have developed certain appearance and presence not only during matches but also outside the stadium. Nevertheless, they come alive as a group precisely during matches, with drums, an impressive range of songs, and flags.

Supporters use their own bodies to portray their emotions and devotion to the club. When stripped from their shirts, and jumping up and down they appear almost possessed, in a trance, completely absorbed by the mood and emotions of the game (fieldnotes, 2012). This ability to stage this, so to speak, abnormal state of mind, is a crucial ability of magicians: 'one of the magician's professional qualifications, which is not only mythical but practical, is the power of being possessed and it is a skill at which they have long been experts' (Mauss, 1972, p.49). At the same time, it is one of the most popular and captivating mythical behaviours observed in football. The crazed, half-naked fans, wildly screaming and shouting, make up a certain image of their club. They represent their style and interpretation of football madness (fieldnotes, 2012).

3.4. Enemy at the gates – enemy within

The players, the management and fans recognize the need for active and loud support and they all say that songs and chants make a big difference (fieldnotes, 2012). These are their

¹⁸ About the origins and the character of ultras movement in Italy see various articles by Testa and Armstrong (for example 2010) and Antonio Roversi, (1994).

magical rites, the use of words and symbols, songs and colours. These actions, symbolical cursing of opponents and blessing of the home team, turns them into magicians (Mauss, 1972, p.54). But their activities can take a completely different twist and their discontent can be directed towards MFF. During the match against IFK Göteborg on September 27th 2012, MFF supporters brought with them banners with a short poem, presented here in a photo, basically stating that they were the true football fans and criticizing the management's approach to football. It was their way to protest against the decision that players should not thank their supporters after the match against Helsingborgs IF one week earlier, during which a death threat to a player called Simon Thern was displayed and flares were used (fieldnotes, 2012).



Fig.1. A photo retrieved from Sydsvenskan web page, displaying the banner in question.

In this very dramatic way the supporters pointed a finger at the guilty party. Devoted fans changed into adversaries, and the club management mutated from a representative of the beloved institution into an enemy of the people. The ability of shape-shifting and leaving one's body is crucial for magicians, as Mauss writes: 'Then he [magician] often believes, and it seems to the onlookers, that he has been transported out of this world' (Mauss, 1972, p.34). Half naked, loaded with testosterone and frantically singing, the supporters attract unfavourable comments for behaviour not suitable in our civilized society (fieldnotes, 2012). However, their mad sing-and-dance routine is staged and rehearsed. They know the techniques for transporting themselves 'out of this world' and they are aware that such behaviour is on the edge of being explainable and acceptable.

One should not forget that the supporters use magic in its darker meaning, as Mauss explains: 'It is the fact of prohibition itself which gives the spell its magical character' (1972, p.27). The pyrotechnics, abusive songs, organized attacks on other teams' supporters are undesired

and punishable actions. The supporters stretch the limits of their involvement by using what is forbidden or stigmatized. Their position and uniqueness is perhaps fuelled by this balancing act of being in love with the club and acting against accepted social norms. Giulianotti (1999, p.53) also points out the aesthetic side of football hooliganism and the appeal of borderline behaviour, a change from political correctness and the unrestricted, at least to the onlookers, expression of emotions¹⁹.

Media and society further mythologize this behaviour. Rosalind Shaw in her article about primitivizing of one African conflict in Sierra Leone mentions that European press concentrated on magical practices of juju that happened there during the fighting (2007, p.81-102). She goes on to show that such conflicts were then described as juju-inspired, unexplainable to the modern mind because of its primitivism and association with magic. Same, to some degree, can be seen in regard to the borderline football practices. It is the unruly behaviour that makes everybody talk, and it is the crude description of masculinity that makes up the portrait of an average supporter.

Further, it should be noted that the ultras, hard-core, die hard supporters of Malmö FF are small in numbers, but they managed to seize the power from bigger groups and make themselves clearly visible against the background of other official supporters' groups. Again, theory of magic can help us to understand how it can be possible for an organization of 40-50 people, albeit active and engaged, can outperform one with approximately 3000 members. When referring to Dutch colonial rule in Indonesia, Margaret J. Wiener points out that it was after all magic that helped very few to rule over vast numbers, as one needs tricks of illusion and delusion to seize power first and then keep it (Wiener, 2007, p.149).

One way to illustrate this point is to look at the material expression of power. On a photo below we can see the arena for the 'real' supporters, who prefer to stand instead of sitting down. Above them there is text in two parts: 'Supras Malmö' and 'MFF Support'. Here, clearly in display in front of everybody, a small group of unruly fans has claimed the same level of recognition as the big, official supporters' organization of Malmö FF. Because of the visual proximity of both names they blend together and might be even interpreted as the name

¹⁹ Referring to work of Armstrong and Young (1997) Giulianotti, also develops a notion of liminality in the context of football violence: 'Use of these concepts suggests that hooliganism falls into a wider category of voluntary risk-taking leisure pursuits, such as scuba-diving, hang-gliding and bungee-jumping. (...) Concepts like 'flow' and 'edgework' further suggest that social class differences become secondary within hooliganism; risk-taking sports are, for example, renowned for their large middle-class constituency.' (1999: 53)

of just one organization. I should mention that I myself was one victim of this confusion as I assumed Supras Malmö was the official name of all the supporters' organization (fieldnotes, 2012).



Fig.2. A photo of the standing section at Swedbank Stadium. Photo: Katarzyna Herd

Supporters are needed at the stadium, but they cannot be controlled, and in a tense moment they can create mayhem. Last autumn a combination of unfortunate events during one weekend in September prompted supporters' rage at Malmö FF, awoke Loki-mode among the supporters and the hell broke loose²⁰. First, the team managed only a draw, leaving many disappointed spectators. Second, a good and popular player was sold to an Italian club. And to top the bitterness, in fear of unrest MFF announced a compulsory bus trip to an away game against its biggest local rival, Helsingborgs IF. Not being given what they wished for, i.e. success, and further feeling being treated like small children rather than reasonable adults, the supporters openly expressed their fury and disappointment using internet and media channels (fieldnotes, 2012). Their outburst resulted in an emotional discussion during an arranged meeting with the club's management. In the end the compulsory bus trip was cancelled. One of my interviewees expressed feelings of the supporters:

MFF cannot collectively punish all people that are in the stands, instead of picking up those really responsible. And that has happened twice during past 3 weeks. First the

²⁰ Ska vi uttrycka det milt, så har väl Malmö FF inte haft någon lysande helg. Inte på något plan. Först försvann Mathias Ranégie – något man inte kunde göra mycket åt. Men eftersom det inte blev någon blixtvärning in (räknar inte Löken) började det mullra i supporterleden. Sen tappade man poäng mot Mjällby och fick höra samma fans bua ut laget och indirekt förmodligen ledningen. Mullret ökade. (...) Och mitt i allt detta basunerar MFF-ledningen ut att det blivit dags att skjuta mygg med kanon. Man låter meddela på sin hemsida att samtliga MFF-are som köper biljett till den sektion som står under MFF:s ansvar vid derbyt i Helsingborg, måste åka speciella bussar från Swedbank stadion till Olympia. Obligatorisk bussresa, som det heter. (Max Wiman's blog at Sydsvenskan online, 02.09.2012)

Helsingborg bus trip. (...) So during the breaks the two boards decided that players should not thank supporters. And I say 'come on' it is ridiculous. These are the people who come to see you and spend money and they are the reason why it is fun to go watch the game and you punish them because 10 of them could not behave. (interview with Stefan, 2012)

Very open comments in the local media and internet forums showed MFF management that the third actor of this drama, the spectators, could not be forgotten. It also revealed another 'magical' quality of football: 'In magic you use gods, not believe in them' (Mauss, 1972, p.105). Not surprisingly, all groups involved in football view the other groups as means to achieve their goals. Supporters and the management might admire or like players, but still they will be described as 'only tools', an expression I heard numerous times (fieldnotes 2012). Also, they are aware of their strength and importance, and they feel they deliver better spectacle than the team. One of my informants said: 'I think that we keep the European standard; we have a very good support. It's just the team that needs to be of European standard' (interview with Alex, 2013). However, even the hooligans, fans who are ready to draw blood for the club, are somewhat aware that this heterotopic reality exists only when there is a game going on. For example Johan Höglund, a former member of a Stockholm hooligan firm, writes about having a friendly chat with his mortal enemies supporting another team while waiting in an emergency room with a broken jaw after a football-related fight (Höglund, 2005, p. 21-22). Once the rite is done, the magic performed and the ritual completed, the magician retires from his role to the 'normal life'.

In this chapter I refer exclusively to males as those involved in myth-making. Although women are present as supporters and part of the management, they make a minority. One could consider, though, the ideas of femininity and masculinity created in this environment (after Alvesson & Billing, 1997, p. 215-216, also 2002). As male football is restricted to men on the pitch, and quite visibly on the stands and further in the management (fieldnotes, 2012), it can reinforce certain perceptions of masculinity that are associated with men, like competitiveness, stamina, control, strategy, and rationality. On the other hand, football also contains elements that could be ascribed to stereotypical femininity like strong emotions, open expression of feelings and proclaimed love for the club, romanticizing of the relationship between the club and its supporters, and the 'irrational' behaviour as opposed to the logical and rational actions associated with the traditionally male way of thinking²¹.

²¹ Alvesson and Billing (1997, p.82-100) discuss the construction of masculine and feminine elements in a work environment.

In football research women and children are often described as pacifiers, i.e. making arenas safer by just being there. It appears then as a readymade gender stereotype they are expected to fulfil. It should be remembered though that their participation, just like the more casual supporters, expresses the same pattern as the one of organized groups, it is just the degree and form of expression that makes it different. It might be that women are just assessed differently because of their biological features based on body-counting approach.

It should be remembered that the often mentioned ‘unexplainable love’ of the club is based on rather egoistic involvement. There is little space for holiness in the football club. Instead, we have mutual dependency and need for trust which is often stretched to the limit by either of the participants. As they are all magicians they use each other, and create an outburst of fury if the other party misbehaves. Further, the inability to control the management’s decisions in most instances makes the heterotopic character of the club very clear to the supporters:

There are others, on the contrary, that seem to be pure and simple openings, but that generally hide curious exclusions. Everyone can enter into the heterotopic sites, but in fact that is only an illusion- we think we enter where we are, by the very fact that we enter, excluded. (Foucault, 1967, p.10)

Thus, as Giulianotti remarks: ‘Football supporters express intense warmth and affection towards their team, but a categorical and physical distance still separates them’ (Giulianotti, 1999, p.69). As a football club is a specific heterotopia, it allows the players to be separated even more from the other groups, and that in turn allows deeper mythologization of the footballers. While distanced from the others, they are emptied and become symbols, ready to be refilled with meanings and interpretations created by the spectators. In the following chapter I use two Malmö FF players as examples of how these processes create local myths, and how they allow the onlookers to weave their stories into the canvas of the club’s image.

4. How to kill a dragon

*Cattle die, kinsmen die,
the self must also die;
but glory never dies,
for the man who is able to achieve it.*
(The Poetic Edda, 1996, p.24)

In this chapter I investigate two examples from 2012 season and show how myths were forged in the context of football players while an emotional end of the season was approaching, bringing both hope for gold and deep disappointment. Certainly, myths as such appear in any given group, but last autumn these two were very visible in Malmö FF. In this chapter I concentrate on interactions between the supporters and players and I describe and analyze how heroes and villains are created in football, as both characters are needed in mythology.

The need for a hero, somebody that can kill a dragon, as well as naming the villain for an execution provides an insight into the deeper demands of the supporters than just a good match, and hence it illustrates the craving for loyalty and sense of duty that supporters want from the players.

These two examples have football in the background, but the myth-making here did not involve football directly. It is interesting to see that physically the myth-making happens on the pitch, but it comes alive when the broader social context is involved. It allowed people to gather around it and colour their personal stories with those vivid events.

4.1. 'Skjut för fan! Mitt framför mål, herregud!'²²

To investigate the making of myths I have chosen figures of two players from 2012 season, who provided vivid examples of the process. Obviously, in the shadow of their endeavours there were other myths and mythic heroes, as the process is not restricted to those in the front line; it is just easier to recognize.

The two players presented here experienced a lot of public attention during autumn of 2012. These players became myths and features like loyalty, humbleness, sense of duty, but also treachery and betrayal were given their names and faces, and so meaning was transformed into form. Their identities were emptied out and reused by fans, supporters and haters, to create their own identities in the context of Malmö FF (Barthes, 1972, p.13). Their images and public personas were used to create the football-based symbols.

Supporters crave loyalty, compassion, and devotion from the players. However, as mentioned in previous chapters, the position of footballers in the public opinion has changed from local amateurs to well-paid outsiders (e.g. Andersson, 2011). Further, the commercialization processes made it possible to treat them as commodity that can add value to a club, and so a sort of fetishism followed which meant, as Giulianotti notices, that the best paid players 'become known and appreciated for their 'price tag' value rather than their technical qualities or intrinsic worth' (1999, p.108).

These processes distanced football players from their surroundings, as their routines, life style and work requirements differ immensely from the rest of the society. Also, because of football's popularity they constantly attract media interest. Footballers tend to exploit the extra attention, and they are often accused by supporters of behaving like superstars, having attitude problems, or living in a bubble (fieldnotes 2012). It is not exactly a recent phenomenon, as already in 1961 Alan Hardaker, an administrator for Football League in England said that he 'wouldn't hang a dog on the word of a professional football players' (Fynn and Guest 1994, p.31).

Players' special situation strengthens their role as magicians, as their power comes from the society, and they are also aware of their unique position. To quote Marcel Mauss: 'It is not

²² A comment from svenskafans.com written during an ongoing match between MFF and AIK, 17.04.2013: 'Shoot for fuck's sake! Right in front of the goal!!'

only public opinion which considers magicians to be a class apart; they believe it themselves as well' (1972, p.53). Being members of this special class, they also wonder about other exceptional players, admiring their abilities and not being able to explain how magic works. As one player, asked for a footballer he liked, replied: 'You have to say Messi. Because I don't think he is human, I think he is from somewhere else' (interview with Nils, 2013).

Nevertheless, technical skills are not always enough to capture hearts of the audience, and many of my informants would point out good, but not exceptional players, who somehow managed to make it to the local mythology. To create such a myth one needs a shortcut of thought, a simplified version of the human struggle against all odds. Because players enter a rich and established historical context of a football club, it is possible for them to be transformed into colourful threads of this club's heritage.

The longing for some signs of attachment to the club from the players is present, but it is a tricky requirement because only few of the players are local, they generally come from all over the world, and they have embraced commodification with full spirit. Many criticize them for not even pretending to care, as an interviewed Malmö citizen said:

I love football but I hate football players. They don't even try to present an illusion that they represent the team and the country or anything. So obviously they just represent themselves. They should at least try to connect to a team. So no I don't have a favourite player. You cannot trust them, they will disappoint you (interview with Björn, 2012).

It is not that surprising then that club officials would also praise players who stay for long periods in the same club, and those who go back to their home clubs when their careers are ending. In other words, those players are not there just for the money, or at least their front stage behaviour would suggest that. Tokens of devotion and loyalty are much appreciated, and some players, albeit not necessary from the neighbourhood, can make it into the local mythology and thus help to weave the fabric of local identity. Footballers who patiently take part in building the image of the club are as important as the technically brilliant sport wizards who shine bright and provide the spectacles and flavours, and then are swiftly sold to bigger/richer/more prestigious clubs.

Even the staff employed at MFF, when asked about important players, point out not only the 'superstars' that represent themselves, but first and foremost those footballers who do a bit more than just get their salary from the club. They are needed because they help to maintain the continuity in an environment under constant change, where the rotation of players and

workers is enormous. Such players, apart from long-term directors, help to stabilize the image of the club. One of my informants said:

I respect players that play for a long time for the club, that are loyal. And they don't have to be loyal to MFF, because I like players like Henrik Rydström from Kalmar FF that played for like 20 years for Kalmar. I like players that are not involved in this money circus. I understand that everybody wants more money, but I think this is bad (...). I respect people like Maldini, who play for the whole life for one club (interview with Jan, 2012).

The process of commodification of football made players into tools, disposable individuals that should be able to help the club, but not necessary for its existence. This particular term 'tools' appeared to be rather common when referring to footballers (fieldnotes, 2012). In such circumstances it is understandably difficult to work out some sense of loyalty or belonging. It is the other actors then, mainly supporters, who have taken a very active role in maintaining the local spirit. Further, because the players' loyalty is questioned these days, any will to express it is greeted with joy.

There have been cases at MFF when relative outsiders, foreigners in the local team, have openly expressed their sentiment and devotion to the club (fieldnotes, 2012). They became what Billy Ehn, called, in his article about nationalism in sports, cultural symbols of unity that represent not only their skills but also a spirit of a group. It is this curious situation when 'people are brought together via a single person, who stands as a symbol for common values and attributes' (Ehn, 1989, p.59). They represent the team, the club, and the region, just as they would on a national level, playing for their country.

Every mythology needs heroes, and it does not mean just delivering, performing well. It requires a journey, transitional or liminal stages, suffering and injustice, and finally a rebirth and a success (see for example Eliade, 1982; Dumezil, 1973). After the glory there are songs written about the hero and there is a public recognition. And precisely such a character happened at the end of last season in the form of Markus Halsti as he succeeded in entering the club's mythology. This is what Barthes understands as the mythic-like character of sports. For him competition is not a conflict between men, but an effort to conquer the resistance of things (after Barthes, 2007, p.37). In case of Markus Halsti's journey, under the scrutiny of media and fans, he overcame physical difficulties and dealt with psychological pressure to deliver what all craved for: a victory (fieldnotes, 2012).

4.2. Hero's quest: Markus Halsti

‘The great players are heroes not stars.’ (Barthes, 2007, p. 49)

Players spending their whole careers in one club are not very common these days thanks to commodification processes in football, but there are still threads of devotion and loyalty and these are noticed by the supporters and the club's officials. During the 2012 season Markus Halsti, a player from Finland, after a couple of bland seasons marked by various injuries, started not only to play good matches but also stated his emotional connection to the team in an interview for a webpage svenskafans.com (fieldnotes, 2012). The supporters noticed this emerging figure of a patient footballer who cared not only about his career, but also about the club. It was a noticeable change from bitter criticism that Halsti received throughout his stay at MFF (fieldnotes, 2012). There was an outburst of public demand that MFF would renew an expiring contract with Markus Halsti, which eventually happened. A local hero was created and flavoured the end of the league for MFF. The local newspaper picked him after one match as the key figure of the game:

Part 28 of MFF's gold hunt ended with three points and continuing dreams.
Starring: Markus Halsti. He was the giant on the pitch, says Rikard Norling.²³

The player's importance during a match was just a part of the image, as the article promptly stated the journey he underwent during his time in the club:

He started the season as a questionable alternative to a retiring Daniel Andersson. Then Markus Halsti fell down the priority ladder to the fifth pick of a central defender. Had someone said back then that Markus Halsti would be a key inner midfielder in the struggle for gold for MFF, everybody close to the club would just laugh at the very thought.²⁴

It is possible to see here how a myth is taking form in the sport context. It is not just the physical ability and sporting skills that is required to become visible; there is a need for something else. When analyzing the meaning of sports Barthes remarks: ‘It is not muscle that wins. What wins is a certain idea of man and of the world, of man in the world. This idea is that man is fully defined by his action and man's action is not to dominate other men, it is to

²³ Del 28 i MFF:s guldjakt slutade med tre poäng och fortsatta drömmar. I huvudrollen: Markus Halsti. – Han var planens gigant, säger Rikard Norling. (sydsvenskan.se, 26.10.2012)

²⁴ Han började säsongen som ett tveksamt alternativ till en nedtrappande Daniel Andersson. Sen föll Markus Halsti ner för prioritetstrappan till att vara femte innerbacksval. Hade någon sagt då att Markus Halsti skulle vara nyckeln till MFF-guld som innermittfältare hade absolut ingen i klubbens närhet annat än skrattat åt det. (sydsvenskan.se, 27.10.2012)

dominate things' (Barthes, 2007, p.43). Markus Halsti, by performing the hero's quest, managed to enter the domain of the public imagination. Supporters noticed a good athlete, but also a loyal figure that did not complain, stayed patient and ready to act. As with the classic heroic tales, Halsti had his trial period when his presence on the pitch was radically reduced, and after the difficult times came the triumph and recognition. Sydsvenskan described the emotions present among the club's supporters:

The crowd chanted 'We want to keep Halsti' and 'Ågren (sport director) hello, hello - Halsti sign on, sign on'. They have, by the way, named him Halstinho and it sounds pretty nice.²⁵

Noticed by the media and also by supporters, he was eventually offered a new contract from Malmö FF, which he accepted. A remark should be made that this myth-making did not involve an outstanding, genius player. Markus Halsti was never considered a superstar, but a quiet, hard-working footballer, and as such he managed to evoke deep emotions among the supporters. Certainly, any club needs superstars that shine and bring vivid colours to the creation of the football dream, but it is in this sort of situation that the crowd can cherish a player. On an emotional level people are able to recognize this special quality of a person, and to be a hero one has to embrace difficulties and pains and manage to turn them into an advantage.

The process presented here illustrates one of the elements of magic pointed out by Mauss: 'It reveals to us what has seemed to be a fundamental feature of magic – the confusion between actor, rite and object' (Mauss, 1972, p.134). Markus Halsti, as a player, became a symbol of the entire club that fought to get to the top, and for a brief moment reached the top. Further, he personalized the process itself. Thus he became one: an actor, a rite and an object – a footballer creating the magic of football while chasing the dream of a football success. Obviously, one could argue that any player or for that matter, any person involved in football, could be viewed in that way. Nevertheless, it was him that the crowd recognized and cherished, making him a key figure of the season.

Thus, to quote Mauss again: 'A magical judgment is imposed by a kind of convention which establishes, prejudicially, that a symbol will create an object, and a part will create a whole, a word, the event and so on' (Mauss, 1972:154). Magic, in its purest form, oozes from this

²⁵ Klacken skanderade "Vi vill ha, Halsti kvar" och "Ågren hallå, hallå – Halsti skriv på, skriv på". De har förresten döpt honom till Halstinho och det låter ganska vackert. (sydsvenskan.se, 27.10.2012)

small event from the club's history. And so players re-establish the status of the club, they inherit the style of play, its history and traditions, and in turn start to represent and re-live the past through their involvement. Thus, one creates a whole.

Researchers like Richard Giulianotti also notice the pattern of 'hero's quest' in establishing remarkable football personalities, and he refers to intrinsic heroism seen in players like Puskás, Di Stéfano or Blanchflower: 'True heroes are vulnerable to defeat in battle; nature too impacts upon their powers' (1999, p.117-118). Giulianotti makes a distinction between heroes and stars, with the latter group being a 'modern variant of celebrity' (1999, p.118) exemplified by media-friendly images of, for example, David Beckham. In Markus Halsti's case, it was not 'the practicing and honing of an attractive and colourful self' that made him appear in the public imagination, but his character and dealing with the fate that put him in the unfavourable position (after Giulianotti, 1999, p. 118).

The process of mythologization of the Finnish player was taken to another level in the virtual world. The picture presented on the following page is a print screen of a Facebook account called in English 'The pride of Skåne'²⁶, which is devoted to supporting the local Skåne club, Malmö FF. An outsider and a foreigner, he was proudly displayed in a profile picture as the one representing a football club from southern Sweden. Here, the symbolic meaning was stretched and the myth became a tautological reference to itself (Barthes, 1972, p.152-153). The picture was accompanied by comments, which were removed after a week or so²⁷. One of them read 'Finns ingen gud, men Halsti é bra!' which can be translated 'There is no God, but Halsti is good' (fieldnotes, 2012). It is interesting to see a foreigner being chosen to represent a Swedish club, and further associated with the Skåne region where it is situated. Knowingly or not, the creator of this Facebook account used for its name the phrase that serves as the description of Helsingborgs IF, which is also a Skåne club, on its official webpage²⁸. This makes it a clear statement for Malmö FF, and against HIF.

²⁶ The profile was created in 2012 and the picture was added 03.12.2012 and stayed as the profile picture at least until April 2013 (fieldnotes 2012).

²⁷ The profile was still on Facebook in April 2013, but the profile picture was changed just before the start of a new football season in Sweden, on April 23rd

²⁸ www.hif.se



Fig.3. A print screen from a Facebook profile called Skånes Stolthet.

The specific character of Markus Halsti's journey comes also from the fact that during his four-year stay at Malmö FF he was not perceived as a very good or important player. For example, two staff members remarked in a casual conversation that Halsti was not a 'star material' and plainly stated that 'nobody thought he was any good' (fieldnotes, 2012). If those general opinions are put in the context of a modern club as an institution that executes power and subjugates players, Halsti emerges as a winner against the system. First injured, and then competing for the place on the pitch with other players, Markus Halsti experienced a hard lesson of professional football.

Richard Giulianotti analyses the specific power system applied to footballers: 'This interpretation of player-club relations has strong parallels with those of Foucault and Bourdieu on body subjugation and discipline. Though highly rewarded for their labour, leading professionals still experience top clubs as carceral organizations. In these settings, the individual is removed from routine social relations and relocated within a confined space. The body is subjected to new and rigid disciplines, and examined by 'experts' or other figures of scientific authority' (Giulianotti, 1999: 108/109). In this context, one can say that Markus Halsti survived the ordeal and emerged victorious. His image was then associated with the

spirit of the club, as always winning and fighting, the unique element of MFF often described as the ‘winner culture’ (fieldnotes, 2012), and further associated with the Skåne region²⁹.

4.3. Traitors will be hanged: Simon Thern

Markus Halsti’s journey to the depths of local mythology was in the end a positive one, and his identity was incorporated into the canvas of the club’s history as an example of one of a kind hero who completed his quest with MFF crest on his chest. Another player, Simon Thern, has undergone more complex processes. His personal decision of changing from Helsingborgs IF to Malmö FF, so swapping one local rival for another, triggered a lot of attention but also allowed supporters to construct identities while using his story (fieldnotes, 2012).

As mentioned above, more radical supporters’ groups try to claim ownership over a club and control the way in which it is perceived and run. Helsingborg fans expressed their dislike towards Simon Thern, who was transferred to MFF, by displaying a banner during a derby match between MFF and HIF with a death threat and a puppet dangling next to it (fieldnotes, 2012). On the illustration below, taken from the internet version of the newspaper *Sydsvenskan*, we can see a gruesome doll dressed in a shirt with Thern’s name on it.



Fig.4. Photo downloaded from sydsvenskan.se

Simon Thern was then symbolically killed and made to exemplify the compressed rage of the supporters. The unlucky player not only switched to the worst enemy, but apparently he criticized HIF openly before he left. As one informant said, Thern ‘barked’ at the club, and

²⁹ MFF fans often eagerly stress how different Skåne is from Sweden, based on its history (being a part of Denmark until 1658) and how the club is like the region, expressing the ‘us against them’ approach.

complained about his position, so in a way it was a double fault from his side (fieldnotes, 2013). Being a young, promising player, Simon Thern's public image experienced the core reality of magic: 'In magic you use gods, not believe in them' (Mauss, 1972, p.105). When he changed colours and declared himself 'an enemy' of Helsingborgs IF, supporters used his developing story to differentiate themselves from the event and tried to execute symbolic power over the processes they could not control.

The specific, heterotopic character of football reality condensed at a local stadium is also revealed in this episode. As my interviewee pondered over the event, he noticed a sharp distinction between the normal life situation and a football match:

It is just football like... so you can't tell somebody to die because he plays for a different team. It's about the limits... like in the stadium it's OK to do everything. If on the street somebody says 'I will kill you' I call the police and they take him. And then like what they did in Helsingborg, you know they know people who did that, the doll and text... they know who did that but they still do nothing. So... I don't understand. (interview with Nils, 2013)

This extraordinary, constructed social space allows for some actions to appear that would not be tolerated outside of the stadium's walls. Quite a few of my informants mentioned that they would not cry, hug their mates, scream or insult others outside of the football context (fieldnotes, 2012). In the same way the death threat was displayed, and in a way accepted, because strong opinions, and to some extent violence, belong to the image of football. As Lefebvre described the production of such space: 'Itself the outcome of past actions, social space is what permits fresh actions to occur, while suggesting others and prohibiting yet others' (Lefebvre, 1991:73). The justification of accepting such a display of hatred can be explained precisely because first of all it is a magical action (Mauss, 1972, p.66) and also it involved not Simon Thern as a person, but as a myth, an emptied symbol, whose actions were open for public interpretations (Barthes, 1972, p.132).

An interesting twist comes when the pattern of Thern's professional journey in Sweden is revealed. Being a son of a former Malmö FF player, he first signed a contract with Helsingborgs IF, which did not go down well with some history-conscious Malmö supporters, as one interviewee said: 'The Helsingborg fans were very upset when he chose us (MFF) instead, but we were upset first that he went to play for them' (interview with Håkan, 2013).

The ethnologist Fredrik Schoug makes an interesting point about buying and selling players. He notices that it can be seen as destroying a sense of loyalty and of course affection, but above all it can be perceived as selling of 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, p.50).

This becomes even more of an issue if the situation takes place between two local rival clubs, like in the case of Simon Thern. When changing HIF to MFF he abandoned a set of loyalties to the first club and made fans realize that loyalty and commitment could have relative meaning (fieldnotes, 2012).

Curiously enough, the supporters in this instance seemed aware of the specific characteristic of their ‘black magic’. As it happened on the internet discussion after a series of articles about the event by Helsingborgs Dagblad, one person wrote, referring to suggestions just to be cool and hope that the best teams wins:

Don't you support either team or are you just one of those lukewarm interest "supporters"? Bet you still want that passionate mood when you go to the game, but you're not yourself involved in creating it and you do not understand that both love and hate are needed for this electric atmosphere that makes football so magical³⁰.
(fieldnotes, 2013)

This interesting comment reveals the special relationship football has with magic. It is not all positive thinking and conscious fair-play attitude. This sort of black magic is also needed; the dark elements sustain the need for protection. It is a part of the process. What would Valhalla be without Loki? As Simon Thern revealed himself as a ‘traitor’ to the HIF supporters, they in turn showed their darker side to the club and management, also shape-shifting from understanding fans, at peace with modern football reality, to enraged magicians, constructing dolls and props in hope to harm the enemy and help their own team (Mauss, 1972, p.66).

Thus, supporters are able to construct not only heroes, but also enemies.

Obviously, most of the Malmö supporters did not see a traitor to be hanged in Simon Thern, but a tragic hero misused by the HIF crowd. One of my informants pointed out to a heritage link between Thern and MFF, namely that Simon's father Jonas played for Malmö FF during his career. That, in my informant's view, should explain Simon's real sense of belonging:

But he was born in Malmö FF. (...) It is the Helsingborg supporters who are screwed up and don't understand history. Thern is a Malmö name. (...) They are just so narrow-minded in Helsingborg; it's such a small town and a small club. (interview with Martin, 2013)

³⁰ Håller du inte på något av lagen eller är du bara en sådan där ljummet intresserad "supporter"? Slår vad om att du ändå vill ha den där passionerade stämningen när du går på match, men du är inte själv med och skapar den och du förstår inte att både kärlek och hat ligger bakom den där elektriska stämningen som gör fotbollen så magisk. (Comment to an article from hd.se, <http://hd.se/sport/2012/05/09/det-ar-aldrig-roligt-att-fa-hot/>, retrieved 24.01.2013)

Thus, this specific way of thinking refers to biological, genetic-like connections mentioned by this supporter. The abilities and allegiances are explained not through Simon Thern's actions, but through his heritage, both physical and social. The family connections, when applied to players, are not that uncommon and they provide a special feeling of continuation for the supporters.

These interpretations of ancestry take place in other competitive sports, even if the description should deal with animals. The ethnologist Sara Berglund (2006), while analyzing harness-racing, points out the mythical character of horses' heritage. The fact that a father and/or a mother of a particular animal were winners seems to have often a deciding voice on the treatment of this animal. Just like a horse with a proper pedigree should perform well, following the same logic a player, like Simon Thern, is expected to fulfil the expectations grown on the grounds of his family history (after Berglund, 2006, p.164). Thus, just like Mauss remarks: 'the image of the magicians is created outside magic. It is created by an infinity of 'once upon a times', and all the magician has to do is to live up to this portrait' (Mauss, 1972, p.41) One can say that, at least for some fans, by coming to play for MFF Simon Thern reconnected with the magical heritage created for him already.

Like with the case of Markus Halsti, Simon Thern's mythologization took place not only at a stadium during a match, but further his name was used in online communities to create images of condemnation or loyalty. On the internet version of Helsingborgs Dagblad, the main local newspaper in Helsingborg, appeared a comment from one user who called himself 'Hatasimonthern' (hate Simon Thern)³¹. The comment read: 'It's pathetic that you choose to interview that Judas. It is treason, to first stand and sing how one loves HIF, and then leave for the dirty baby brother'.

The vivid image that Simon Thern's transfer created, allowed this supporter to make an image for himself, one of a sense of loyalty and belonging, and at the same time condemns players' choices and modern football realities. At the essence of every myth lies plethora of interpretations. The case of Simon Thern shows how a relatively straightforward, personal decision stirred unrest and quarrels of its actual meaning. As Barthes remarks about the process of myth-making: 'the meaning can always be *interpreted*' (Barthes, 1972:132).

³¹ Retrived from an online version of Helsingborgs Dagblad in January 2013: 'Patetisk att ni väljer att intervju Judas. Förraderi är vad det är, att stå och sjunga om hur man älskar HIF, för att sedan lämna för smutsiga lillebrorsan': <http://hd.se/sport/2012/05/09/det-ar-aldrig-roligt-att-fa-hot/>

The colourful stories of Markus Halsti and Simon Thern made the players' personalities very much alive in the public imagination. The two events prompted endless discussions and analysis. Even their names were used repeatedly on internet forums as nicknames (fieldnotes, 2012). This little extra, the magic touch electrified fans and supporters, inspired strong opinions and influenced actions. In other words the surrounding responded to the magical activity that happened on the pitch and transferred it into action, and just as Mauss remarks: 'It is because of magical belief that society becomes activated' (1972, p.164).

The two figures of MFF players underwent the process of mythologization. As presented by Roland Barthes, they became myths, as they were emptied of meanings and context and used to create other identities. As Barthes says: 'For if we penetrate the object, we liberate it but we destroy it; and if we acknowledge its full weight, we respect it, but we restore it to a state which is still mystified' (1972, p.159).

This process could happen because of magical rites employed by the wizards gathered around Malmö FF. Markus Halsti and Simon Thern were used as means to achieve the goals, and they exemplify the general attitude towards players. They are not gods on the pitch, but mere demons, employed by fans and supporters in casting their own spells. This characteristic of magic was noticed by Mauss: 'Magic is not interested in them as individuals (demons), but as wielders of properties, powers whether generic or specific in nature.' (1972, p.105)

This process of myth-making in football is perhaps the most noticeable on the pitch since the focus is on players, but the same technique, in different scale and shape, happens at the stands among supporters waving flags, in the MFF office, at the internet forums, and in newspaper articles where the events are reinterpreted, given different context and meanings. Football's flexibility allows its participants to freely explore possibilities of creation and weaving their own stories into the canvas of Malmö FF. A myth is, as Barthes describes it, 'neither a lie nor a confession: it is an inflexion' (1972, p.129). During the 2012 the wizards took part in creation of heroes, and they could promptly claim the ownership of those dragon slayers.

5. Conclusions and applicability

The first part of this chapter presents conclusions, the second offers applicability possibilities.

5.1. Dream Factory: a do-it-yourself museum?

The set of metaphors presented here should help to understand the structure and role of the club. I have chosen the term ‘Dream Factory’ to emphasize the importance of creation as I believe the processes involved in the club are the most important feature in its structure. It is the dream of football success that triggers wide range of processes and allows people to participate, create, and get involved in myth-making. The end product of the production line is a dream, thus a very fragile entity, vulnerable and hard to define. It is something to be chased and wished for, and hardly ever fully fulfilled, as even after a successful season the club would move on to concentrate on new games and new challenges. That term also provides a good insight of how football maintains its role and image. The dream can take many different forms. It is open for interpretations, and can mean different things for those involved.

In a normal museum you do not have many chances to have your work displayed, but in football the social connections are fossilized on a regular basis, creating local myths ad hoc, constantly weaving the fabric of the club’s history, and all the groups involved can have impact. Thus, I use a term ‘do-it-yourself museum’ together with ‘dream factory’. The outcome of dream-making is a set of myths, freeze-frames from the just experienced match, or important news, or feverish discussion online. Those emotional shreds of memory make the canvas of local mythology in the context of football. In other words, DIY museum is the Dream Factory operating on daily basis.

The history is supposed to record most facts, but the mythology is only for the chosen ones. Part of the appeal of the local club comes from the fact that everybody can participate without much effort, and everybody can claim a spot in the endless process of creating local football. The regular, weekly gamble of feelings and emotions can make you immortal, and stitch you into the fabric of the club’s mythology.

A local football club like MFF offers its participants an ability to co-create local myths and influence what stays on the canvas, who will be a hero and who will be condemned. This is possible because of the large number of creative activities around it, e.g. singing, shouting,

making banners, but also writing comments, blogs, etc. Further, the very consumption of football allows spectators to produce their own opinions and ideas. Also, the repetitiveness of the event means it is a never-ending, ongoing process with no final destiny to be reached. The ambitions of a club can change from season to season from a modest promise of staying in the top league, to the dream of winning the gold.

Throughout my thesis I stress the distinction between religion and magic, and I argue that football is the latter, contrary to the common cliché statement that it is the world's biggest religion. In subsequent chapters I provided examples how magic is used to create the social space in the context of football. Rather than worship, all the groups involved in the dream-making co-create while performing their different rites. They use each other and treat each other as tools, as means to get to their objectives. Being magicians, those involved believe in their powers and they all try to claim ownership over their creations (after Mauss, 1972). The use of magic also explains the confusion of powers in a club, and 'how a collective phenomenon can assume individual forms' (1972, p.178), as football offers a plethora of possibilities to get engaged, and its perception is also very personal.

Thus, football might not be about belonging, but about a context that allow people to build their own stories, identities in the local mythology based on a local club. When seen from this angle, football does not provide identities, it provides the possibility for creating them, and it supplies the process and allows the identity to be constructed. Malmö FF could be then seen more as a process rather than the end product. The main activity of a given club, involving the management, players and supporters is making of a dream while producing local mythology in the context of football. This notion is supported by the deep analysis of mythologization provided by Roland Barthes and extensively used in my thesis. As he writes: 'it is this constant game of hide-and-seek between the meaning and the form which defines myth' (1972, p.118).

Football provides its participants with long history, wide context and multitude of interpretations. Thus, they can claim exclusive ownership of the club, its status, character and representation. All the groups involved can say, and virtually do, that they constitute the club, they are the club because of their involvement and contributions in singing, hopping, buying an annual pass, making banners, paying for the club membership etc. (fieldnotes, 2012).

It is chasing the dream that makes it so appealing, as it is actually an ongoing process that does not seem to ever finish. By playing, managing, watching, and even commenting, people

can participate in the process of creating local myths. As Barthes writes: ‘There is no fixity in mythical concepts: they can come into being, alter, disintegrate, disappear completely. And it is precisely because they are historical that history can very easily suppress them’ (1972, p.120). The depth of football’s history and context makes it into a perfect battleground for myth-making, as those focused on football skills, financial benefits, making of banners, local patriotism or violence are able to tear a bit of the club for themselves and add their own interpretation of what football really means.

The local football club supplies its spectators with a possibility to create stories and histories, to crown heroes and punish villains. The confusion of roles and responsibilities, unclear structure and constant shifting of the guilty party presented in this thesis show how shaky and vulnerable it can be. However, it also opens up possibilities for creative struggles and interpretations. Spectators promptly use all possible forms to express themselves, show their views and make the emotional side of football visible. Another element presented in my thesis is the concept of *alea*, the addictive quality of gambling one’s luck, and in the context of football it is supporters gambling with one’s feelings and emotions while hoping that the team would win, which puts them in a vulnerable position.

From this perspective the future of football does not seem as grim as predictions of sociologists like Jean Baudrillard. He saw hooliganism as participation taken to its tragic limit. To avoid any possible violence Baudrillard states that ‘the public must be simply eliminated, to ensure that the only event occurring is strictly televisual in nature’ (1990, p.80) which would mean empty stadiums and spectators glued to TV screens at home. Giulianotti follows this line of thought and sees the decline in traditional participation: ‘Football becomes less a process to interact with, and more an event at which to gaze’ (Giulianotti, 1999, p.80). This depressing analysis of the development of spectator sports has valid points and analytical backing, but it lacks the ‘mythological’ perspective.

Certainly, modern audience has changed and uses a plethora of technology, but supporters coming to watch MFF are aware of their value and of their contribution. What they get from the participation is not only collective identity as MFF followers, but also an individual experience, created in terms of magic, that allows them to enter the dreamy grounds of local mythology and reinterpret the past, co-create the present and shape the future. When Barthes asks what men put into sport his answer is: ‘Themselves, their human universe. Sport is made in order to speak the human contract’ (2007, p.65). Football is not only about speed, muscles

and stamina, but also individual experiences embedded in collective involvement. Living football also means creating it over and over again.

5.2. Applicability: embrace the chaos

The analysis presented in this thesis reveals some consequences applicable to football context, but further to other competitive sports that involve spectators. By presenting that it is constructed through magic on a social level, I stress the flexibility and public involvement. It also points out an alternative interpretation of spectators who can be viewed as creators of individual interpretations and experiences, rather than passive participants in a collective phenomenon. The ability to make an event unique and incorporate own thoughts and opinions into it comes from the involvement of magic that breaks a collective experience into an individual one (Mauss, 1972, p.178). Such interpretation of current collective phenomena could help to reshape them and make them more suitable for the public to participate. Co-creation already takes place in my informants' personal views. If allowed creative involvement, they would have more tangible sense of responsibility. These don't have to be big-scale projects, but for example allowing kids to design a t-shirt with MFF's theme would make it fun and put also creative value in the club.

Further, I would claim that such interpretation could help to see beyond business and entertainment interpretations of football that are present in modern approaches to the game. If a given club is reduced to an investible brand then it runs into trouble concerning profit-making, reliability and control (van Uden, 2005). Kennedy and Kennedy state: 'football is 'more than a business', and this implies that the usual rules of producer-consumer relations do not apply so strictly (2010, p.186)' The supporters are aware of the globalized economic realities, and as various studies have shown, they mostly accept the changes. After all, they want their club to be successful and money is necessary for it. However, as presented in this thesis, fans contribute not only by buying tickets, souvenirs, paying for memberships etc., but they also make valid non-economic contributions during games and while digesting it, writing, reading and commenting, and thus positioning themselves in a football event. This cultural involvement cannot be given a price-tag; it can be evaluated by feelings and emotions that supply it.

We tend to concentrate on the most spectacular contributions, like the financial backing of sponsors or huge banners or organized fireworks done by the active supporters. Nevertheless,

small-scale events, tokens of participation happen all around the stadium and outside of it. During the last MFF home match of 2012 season, in the very beginning of the second half an old man took from his back a small plastic trumpet and blew it once. A sharp, high-pitch noise made some people jump, and some laughed (fieldnotes, 2012). This was his contribution, his one second long presence in the football mythology. By being aware of this small-scale creativity, the club like MFF can use different marketing strategies. Fans like a notion of being noticed and appreciated.

As I was told in an interview, supporters ‘don’t want another Chelsea’ (interview with Mikael, 2013). The local, special flavour of the club and its character is more important than impressive budget and big investments. For all the groups involved in football the character of the club swings from being a business venture to a charity organization. This is actually a sharp distinction that requires different approaches and measurements. Again, awareness of this differentiation can help to understand existing tensions. Some of my interviewees were tired of the constant focus on the financial situation: ‘They are starting to understand that they cannot run this club as a company, like it’s all about economy and income statements’ (interview with Stefan, 2012).

Although aware of the economic realities, many fans and supporters devote their time, energy and resources to the club and they understand the importance and value of their actions, even if those don’t make it to the annual economic reports. Yet again, the swinging image of serious business or charity organization can confuse interpretations. The ‘dreamy’ character of constructing a successful club indicates that it cannot really be destroyed. By shifting the focus from the end product (football success) to the process and participation might balance out the two realities present in the Dream Factory.

As mentioned several times in the thesis, power within the club and its local context shift constantly. I used the concept of power in understanding of Foucault, which actually means the execution of power and resistance created. We can see a twist in what Foucault says about successful power struggle: ‘power is tolerable only on condition that it masks a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanism’ (Foucault, 1976, p.86). As the groups involved renegotiate their positions they interpret strength as insider information, but deprived of it they rely on rumours and gossip to learn about ongoing developments at the club. As stated earlier in the thesis, the club can execute power by withholding information, but revealing some news can be interpreted as hiding what is really

going on (fieldnotes, 2012). The creation of the local football club depends largely on information and the issue of knowing or not knowing appears to be very sensitive.

Further, gender issue should be taken into consideration when constructing a social space like a football club. By gender I do not mean biological features, but the understanding suggested by Alvesson and Billing when they refer to femininity and masculinity as different forms of gender construction (2002, p.81). Viewing an organization predominantly through its masculine elements, i.e. inflexible, rational, controlling, and focused on strategy and logical approach (Alvesson & Billing, 1997, p.211) can underestimate its cultural capital. Moreover, as mentioned previously in this thesis, a football club can be seen as a coldly calculated business venture, but at the same time it encompasses qualities associated with femininity like love, devotion, vulnerability, or deep care. Communicating with the fans and supporters can get caught in the confusion of discourses, when highly emotional issues are given cool, economic treatment.

Also, players do not have a stable image within the club. They are described as ‘tools’, accused of living in a ‘bubble’ and not caring enough about the club. Fans have difficulties connecting to the team because most of the players are not ‘local boys’. Further, players are known and recognized for their physical abilities. Based on this very narrow understanding a picture is being built regarding their personality, character etc. and their cultural capital, to use Bourdieu’s concept (1984) is substantially reduced. Cultural capital refers to the resources that every person can use while building one’s image and establishing one’s position in the society. Fans don’t really know the players, and if the latter are reduced to their physical abilities it is difficult for them to have any credibility outside football. Further, the image of the team is often recognized as the one of the club. Thus, if the evaluation of footballers appears rich, deep and multidimensional, so would be the evaluation of the club.

Finally, among those supporting MFF are various groups with better or worse reputations. The organized, active supporters create some of the most visible and spectacular magic. At the same time they keep their distance from the club and the public attitudes towards them are often biased. A sort of ‘de-mystification’ of the devoted supporters would make them appear in a bit more ‘normalized way’. That would allow them to be incorporated into the image of the club and lessen unnecessary and unjustified fear around the ultras groups. Certainly, a big part of their image is unruliness and a sort of radicalism. Nevertheless, softening of the frame around them could help to gain a more unified image of MFF in its local context. One should

not forget a rule of magic: ‘It is public opinion which makes the magician and creates the power he wields. Thanks to public opinion he knows everything and can do anything’ (Mauss, 1972, p.50).

6. References

Ethnographic material:

a) List of Figures

Fig.1. Picture downloaded from sydsvenskan.se.

Fig.2. Picture taken from a match in September 2012. (Katarzyna Herd)

Fig.3. A print screen from a Facebook profile called Skånes Stolthet.

Fig.4. Picture downloaded from sydsvenskan.se.

b) Interviews:

Alex (2013, March). Personal interview (K.Herd, Interviewer)

Björn (2012, September). Personal interview (K.Herd, Interviewer)

Hugo (2012, September). Personal interview (K.Herd, Interviewer)

Håkan (2013, March). Personal interview (K.Herd, Interviewer)

Jan (2012, December). Personal interview (K. Herd, Interviewer)

Lars (2012, September). Personal interview (K. Herd, Interviewer)

Martin (2013, March). Personal interview (K.Herd, Interviewer)

Mikael (2013, March). Personal interview (K.Herd, Interviewer)

Nils (2013, March). Personal interview (K.Herd, Interviewer)

Olle (2012, October). Personal interview (K.Herd, Interviewer)

Peter (2012, October). Personal interview (K.Herd, Interviewer)

Peter (2012, November). Personal interview (K.Herd, Interviewer)

Stefan (2012, November). Personal interview (K.Herd, Interviewer)

Åke (2012, October). Personal interview (K.Herd, Interviewer)

c) Observations:

- **Matches in Allsvenskan 2012 season:**

Malmö FF – Sundsvall FF. Swedbank Stadion. Malmö (08.2012)

Malmö FF – Mjällby AIF. Swedbank Stadion, Malmö. (01.09.2012)

Malmö FF – IFK Göteborg. Swedbank Stadion, Malmö. (27.09.2012)

Malmö FF – Örebro. Swedbank Stadion, Malmö. (01.11.2012)

- **Matches in Allsvenskan 2013 season:**

Malmö FF – Halmstads BK. Swedbank Stadion, Malmö. (01.04.2013)

Åtvidabergs FF – Malmö FF. Kopparvallen, Åtvidaberg. (05.04.2013)

Malmö FF – Östers IF. Swedbank Stadion, Malmö. (22.04.2013)

d) Internet ethnography:

- Forum discussions followed at svenskafans.com
- Forum discussions followed at hd.se
- Forum discussions followed at sydsvenskan.se

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