



CONFLICT AND COOPERATION

– Dialogue-based work in Swedish football: challenges and working methods

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 $\ensuremath{\mathbb{C}}$ The authors 2018

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FOREWORD

ENABLE is a project funded by the Gålö Foundation in Stockholm, made up of participants from Sweden, Denmark and the UK. Its operations are based on partnership and cooperation between Swedish football's key actors – the clubs, the national football organisations, the supporters and the police – together with academic expertise and professionals from football in the above mentioned countries.

The aim is to support Swedish football and its partners' development in relation to safety and security, with an evidence-based method founded on the Swedish football environment and internationally recognised research. ENABLE's ambition is to work together with its stakeholders to identify and disseminate good practice and knowledge in connection with crowd management. This can involve policing tactics, clubs' service and safety work in and around arenas, or using training initiatives to share deeper knowledge about Swedish supporter culture.

A theoretical understanding of social identities is fundamental to ENABLE's work, as is the degree of perceived legitimacy between different actors. We will describe this in more detail in chapter one. Perceived legitimacy also arises in the encounters between different groups of actors, and the theme of this anthology is therefore inter-group interaction.

The aim of this book is to illustrate the importance of interaction between different actors in relation to the development of norms and collective behaviour patterns from a supporter perspective. We have therefore asked writers linked to supporter culture to write their chapters with a focus on this, from their own perspective. Recurring themes include the supporter environment's sense of being exposed to external pressure and the reasons behind this, as well as thoughts about ways of working together with supporters to unravel the knots.

Using this book to give supporters a voice does not mean that we at ENABLE see this as being the only perspective that is important. On the contrary, effective work for a positive football environment must be based on a balanced dialogue between *all* the stakeholders involved in football. However, the supporter environment is probably the actor that finds it hardest to reach out and be taken seriously in the public debate on orderliness in connection with Swedish football, despite including many constructive forces. This book aims to contribute towards greater balance.

Finally, we would like to convey our sincere thanks to those who have contributed to the work involved in this book: The writers, without whose narratives and perspectives this entire project would have been meaningless. Thank you all – your involvement is very much appreciated.

CONTEXT: SOCIAL IDENTITY, LEGITIMACY AND SUPPORTER VOICES ON COOPERATION AND INTERACTION

Supportership and football supporters are the subject of constant debate in various forums – everything from media news reports and water cooler chat at Swedish workplaces to the meeting rooms of Swedish authorities where regulations are devised and working strategies are drawn up. The topic is often controversial, and the discussions tend to be characterised by heated emotions and dedicated passion.

However, Swedish supportership and its forms of expression are not disconnected from other things that happen in connection with Swedish football. On the contrary, according to the research on which ENABLE's operations are based, collective behaviours are always the result of interaction between multiple actors within a given context. Small signals emerge from the various parties in an encounter, interacting to propel a situation forwards. Examples include when police officers and supporters, or supporters from different teams, meet outside an arena. How well the situation has been prepared – in terms of preparatory dialogue, environmental design, and the position and training of staff, for example – will be decisive in determining whether the encounter is positive or negative, relaxed or charged. The theoretical term we use for this is *inter-group dynamics*. The point of this perspective of 'risk' is that it emphasises the importance of cross-party cooperation, planning

and preparations ahead of an event. This potentially means a sharper focus on possible consensus solutions in connection with football, for example, and less of a need for coercive actions to maintain order.

For this reason, it is important to include all perspectives in Swedish football operations. These operations require the participation and involvement of many different parties: clubs and various national football organisations, the police and emergency services, arena owners, municipal authorities, various local actors, and tens of thousands of Swedish football supporters. Everyone's perspectives must be taken into account in order for safety and security work to be realistic.

Due to the fact that supporters and supportership are often subject to debate and their involvement in the decision-making processes is sometimes called into question, we have chosen to focus on them here. Some may question this, but the reasoning is simple: On the one hand, supporter expressions are absolutely central to creating the positive arena atmosphere that we know is an important factor in order to attract spectators to football arenas. On the other hand, elements of the supporter body are usually involved when public order disturbances arise. From a perspective based on the idea of collective behaviours as a product of intergroup dynamics, it is interesting to ask whether an encounter between supporters and other parties can be designed in such a way that it reinforces the positive expressions while at the same time reducing the likelihood of negative expressions. Supporters' voices are absolutely essential to finding the answer to this question.

The aim of this book is to contribute towards highlighting this aspect – allowing individuals from a supporter background to cast some light on the interaction between some of football's most prominent actors. For this purpose, we have asked a number of writers with links to the Swedish supporter environment to contribute a chapter each on the theme of 'cross-party interaction'. We have helped to guide the choice of subject matter, but have

striven to ensure that the contributions are the authors' own narratives. We have especially asked for concrete examples.

The remainder of this chapter will place the supporter narratives in a context, and will briefly summarise the subjects of the themed chapters. We hope this book will be both interesting and informative.

Svensk Elitfotboll (SEF), an organisation made up of the 32 clubs in the Allsvenskan and Superettan leagues, has formulated an objective which states that their events should be seen as welcoming, safe, secure and atmospheric – for everyone. Naturally, this presents a significant challenge as arena visitors perceive security and atmosphere, for example, in different ways. However, it is important to remember the focus: football is for everyone.

The fact is that an equivalent universal objective also exists for public spaces, such as town centres. According to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), to which Sweden is a signatory, everyone has the right to freedom of thought (Article 9), the right to express what they want in a responsible manner in speech or writing (Article 10), and the right to arrange or participate in peaceful gatherings or meetings (Article 11). There is thus farreaching freedom of thought, freedom to express these thoughts and freedom to move within society. These freedoms are usually seen in relation to political rights - the right to form opinions, demonstrate or join political parties or trade unions. However, they are not directed specifically towards politics - they also apply to cultural expression. They must therefore also be applied to football: football audiences have the right to express their involvement. But at the same time, we have a responsibility to make sure that such forms of expression do not infringe upon other people's corresponding rights. Ensuring that this is respected from the point of view of security authorities or event organisers may seem impossible. How can such a task be approached?

There are no methods that guarantee disturbances will never arise. However, decades of studies show that if certain favourable basic values are achieved in the interaction – the inter-group dynamics – surrounding football, then the likelihood of problems arising will be reduced. One central basic value is to strive for a feeling of *legitimacy* between all those involved. This applies to everything from the design of the event, via staff training, equipment and working methods, to how various incidents are subsequently dealt with.

The way in which another theoretical quantity – *power* – is dealt with is also central to achieving legitimacy. As in legislative processes, for example, legitimacy requires that all actors have the chance to participate in and influence different courses of events. Legitimacy is benefited by all actors being given the chance to achieve their goals, so long as they do not exceed the frameworks stipulated by the event or the legislation. However, it should be emphasised that legitimacy is not the same thing as always being in agreement. Sometimes, for example, certain supporters will break the rules and organisers or security authorities will respond. But when this happens, one can at least strive to achieve a sense that the counteractions are being carried out in accordance with the regulations: that they are *professional*, *proportional*, *fair* and so on.

When, then, is legitimacy important? This can be illustrated using the social-psychological *Elaborated Social Identity Model* (*ESIM*), a model that is central to ENABLE's operations. According to this model, crowds and social groups can, in certain contexts and under certain conditions, be seen as a gathering of individuals with one or more common *social identity*. In crowds, there are always many social identities – supporters may, for example, identify with different types of supportership or subcultural alignments – and even individuals can be subject to different types of social identities, for example depending on the company in which they find themselves. One characteristic of a collective identity is that a sense of group solidarity develops and that common norms, values and

perceptions about the working of the surrounding world emerge within the group. These norms and values can facilitate or limit different types of behaviours. Examples from the supporter environment include club loyalty, voluntary work for one's team and active support from the stands being valued. In parts of the social group, however, more potentially problematic values can also develop. For example, certain expressions of supportership are deemed to be legitimate (e.g. pyrotechnics), or there may be perceptions that certain actors are, by definition, opponents (e.g. the police or associations).

However, two things should be borne in mind in connection with social identity and ESIM. Firstly, social identities and their norms and values develop in relation to surrounding actors. This is one connotation of inter-group dynamics. Common experiences and collective memories within a group (which are often based on subjective perceptions of different courses of events) can thereby reinforce these norms – or change them. It is the latter that makes relationship-building interaction so important – with good cooperation and planning, it is possible to counter the development of destructive norms.

Secondly, it should be remembered that the theory of social identities is not limited to football supporters or other subcultural phenomena. For example, police forces can be analysed according to the ESIM theory, and there is nothing to say that those norms that develop in parts of police forces are more balanced than those that emerge in parts of the supporter environment. This raises the question: What happens if two groups who so often come together at Swedish football events start to cultivate negative perceptions about each other? After all, the concept of legitimacy is about this very circumstance. The aim is not necessarily that all parties should agree on everything. Legitimacy is more a case of each party having a fundamental, mutual understanding and acceptance of the other party's views and wishes.

In order to address this, the research – and thus also ENABLE – recommends an approach to Swedish football based on cooperation between, knowledge about and respect for all the actors involved. It is with this in mind that we have formulated the themes for this anthology. We want to emphasise the importance of interaction between all the actors involved in football. By giving a voice to writers who are also supporters, we hope to contribute towards spreading knowledge about this group of stakeholders.

So, what can readers expect to find in this anthology?

In **chapter 2**, Malmö FF supporter and former Chairman of the Swedish Football Supporters' Union (SFSU) **Tony Ernst** describes his involvement in developing cooperation between SFSU and SEF. The chapter takes the format of an e-mail exchange between him and SEF's Chairman **Lars-Christer Olsson**. As well as describing a remarkable change in the relationship between supporter representatives and SEF, it also exemplifies aspects that are important when rectifying a previous lack of trust: that informal contacts between individuals in central positions are effective, that trust is maintained, that promises are kept and, not least, that those involved have the courage to test – as Ernst puts it – whether "the ice will hold".

In **chapter 3**, **Pierre Nordberg**, SLO for Malmö FF, describes the challenges that exist within the dialogue between the police and supporters, and how – in the role of SLO – he is able to help bridge the distrust. The text presents the role of SLO, describes his contact with the police, and provides concrete examples of how cross-party dialogue-based work can be organised.

In **chapter 4**, Hammarby supporter, former board member of Bajen Fans and current Secretary of SFSU **Maria Lemberg** describes how she perceived the implementation of Supporter Dialogue

Police¹ in Stockholm. The text takes as its starting point the antagonism between police and supporters that Nordberg refers to, and then provides perspectives on how Supporter Dialogue Police – one of the Swedish Police's tools for better contact with supporters – can work in practice. The text also addresses the challenges that can arise when new units and working methods are developed and introduced.

In **chapter 5**, **Anders Almgren** – a supporter of IFK Göteborg and former SLO for the club, now a project manager for ENABLE and one of the editors of this book – describes how broad cooperation can take place between clubs, the police and local society, in this case in Gothenburg. The chapter gives examples of successful cooperation, but also describes how broad work at municipal level can suffer from skewed knowledge of the supportership phenomenon, to the detriment of effectiveness and objective achievement.

In **chapter 6**, former Chairman of Guliganerna and current SLO for IF Elfsborg **Eric Sjölin** shares his perspectives on how crossteam interaction between supporters has developed and been formalised over the last twenty years. The chapter takes as its

¹ The Swedish term for this unit is "Evenemangspolis", which could be translated into "event police". However, as the articles in this anthology show, there is already another police initiative which is called "event police". Therefore, to avoid confusion, the editors have decided to use "Supporter Dialogue Police" for the Swedish "evenemangspolis". The reason being, that the unit consists of police officers with a defined dialogue-based role and a focus on the supporter environment. They aim to build a relationship with supporters which is sustainable in the long term, based on trust and responsibility rather than regulatory sanctions or criminal proceedings. As yet, the Supporter Dialogue Police concept only exists in Stockholm, but is currently being transferred to other police regions. The police officers in the Supporter Dialogue Police unit are all educated dialogue police officers.

starting point the informal exchange of fanzines² and recorded footage from the stands on VHS tape in the 1990s, progressing to how more organised cooperation emerged in connection with specific issues, to the founding of today's national supporter organisation SFSU.

In **chapter 7**, **John Pettersson** – an IFK Göteborg supporter, former writer for the *Bara ben på Glenn Hysén* supporter blog and coauthor of Supporterklubben Änglarna's anniversary book *Vi som är från Göteborg åker aldrig hem med sorg* shares his views on how supporters are depicted in the media. He describes how the "old media" of the 1990s and the early 2000s were dominated by often moralising "columnists", how a new generation of blogging journalists encountered competition from web-based supporter journalism, and how today's sports journalists have created a more balanced image of football supporters. There is still overexposure of negative images, but the situation is no longer as one-sided as it once was – and it can be influenced.

Finally, in **chapter 8**, **Mathias Henriksson**, a fellow IFK Göteborg supporter and former board member of the Supporterklubben Änglarna supporters' association, provides an account of how public reports have portrayed football supporters through descriptions and proposed actions. His analysis leads on from Pettersson's chapter on the media, beginning with a century-old media description of supporters. From there, the chapter traces a line to the tone of the public reports during the last thirty years.

² Fanzines were printed magazines or leaflets that supporters produced themselves and sold in the stands. They were one of the main forums for supporter subculture before online blogs and social media took over.

"WILL THE ICE HOLD?" – HOW SFSU AND SEF WENT FROM BEING OPPONENTS TO PARTNERS

By Tony Ernst, co-author Lars-Christer Olsson

Below is an e-mail conversation between me, Tony Ernst, and Lars-Christer Olsson. We have been tasked with discussing the relationship between the Swedish Professional Football League (SEF) and the Swedish Football Supporters' Union (SFSU), and the benefits to be gained from the two organisations approaching each other. First, however, we need to take a brief look back.

Lars-Christer Olsson was elected Chairman of SEF in 2012, the same year that I was elected chairman of SFSU. Lars-Christer and I had met some time previously when, in consultancy roles, we had attempted to draw up a plan for building closer relations between SEF and SFSU. When we were both elected as the chairmen of our respective organisations, the pieces fell into place.

It is important to understand that relations between SEF and supporters had been rather frosty since SFSU was founded in 2008. There were difficulties agreeing on virtually every issue. During my time as Chairman, which ran until 2015, a remarkable transformation occurred as evidenced by SFSU and SEF signing a manifesto in spring 2014, declaring themselves to be official partners.

Tony to Lars-Christer, e-mail 1:

When people ask how relations between SFSU and SEF could go from something partway between non-existent and strained to our position today as official partners, I usually reply that the main reason was you, Lars Christer. If you hadn't taken that first step of meeting SFSU half way and really daring to see if "the ice would hold", I can't help wondering if we would be where we are today. I wonder how much of a gamble it was for you, and how much opposition you encountered. I suspect that there were people quite high up in the football hierarchy who didn't think there was actually any need to engage with those "flare-wielding hooligans".

Another thing that strikes me as I sit and think about how SFSU and SEF approached each other is just how much Swedish football changed over the course of those five or six years. Firstly, the supporter movement has become democratised and formalised – today, there is a unifying body (SFSU) to rely on, and to which the debate can be handed over. Secondly, SEF has changed and, in particular, become more professional. I see an enormous difference in how SEF and Swedish professional-level football are run now compared with in 2010-2011. Everything is governed differently when it comes to meetings, agreements and decisions. There's a much clearer, much more secure structure. In addition, the media gained a better understanding of how Swedish football is structured. And last but not least, this was also the era when the role of SLO was implemented, which I believe helped to bridge the divide between supporters and the powers that be within football.

I also learnt today that the Allsvenskan league's turnover – excluding sales of players – has risen by 50 percent in six years. I remember sitting and banging on about this four or five years ago: that involving supporters would bring financial benefits – that everyone would gain from supporters feeling involved. Today, most clubs have skilled sales and PR departments, but in actual fact supporters' passion and interest sells even more tickets. Things are

going well for Swedish football right now. I remember one of the first times we met, before either of us had been elected chairman of our organisations. The wheels were in motion, but nothing had been finalised yet. It must have been the winter of 2011? In any case, I remember that you had a vision for "the Nordic region's best league", to which I added "with the world's best supporters". We weren't really there yet, but we had made a fair bit of progress, hadn't we?

Lars-Christer to Tony, e-mail 2:

Yes, looking back a few years it's clear that a lot of positive things have happened in terms of relations between SEF, the clubs and our fans. When you're focused on operations and problems seem to keep springing up left, right and centre, it can be hard to see all the positive things that have actually happened. And these things haven't happened by themselves. But for me, trying to involve SFSU more in our operations was never a case of taking a chance. I had already taken the same initiative at European level by making approaches to Supporters Direct and the supporters' initiative to try to become organised across the Continent. For the first time, football's most important support group – the clubs' fans – were included in European football discussions. And the reactions were overwhelmingly positive, even though this was a trend that some weren't keen to see.

It was in the autumn of 2010 that SEF seriously started with its change process. I was tasked with trying to convert a forward-looking investigation from theory to practice, and that's when you came along with a very interesting concept that fans and clubs could work on together. It involved creating better arrangements at our arenas, which we called "the arena circulation". We started with a brainstorming session at a restaurant in Malmö's new harbour area, where you and a couple of other lads with lots of ideas met Tommy Theorin [editor's note: the then Secretary General of SEF] and me to

see if we could come up with something together that both the clubs and the fans could get behind.

One of the problems we had back then was that SFSU was a slightly fragile organisation, and the vast majority of contact took place directly between the relevant clubs and their own groups of fans. Relations weren't always particularly positive, and at several clubs there were groups of fans pulling in different directions. SEF was also fragile in the sense that several cubs were opposed to SEF getting involved in issues relating to supporters. And throughout football there were people who took a negative view of fans, as so many people only linked them to public order disturbances and didn't see or understand all the positive opportunities.

Dealing with relations was a bit of an uphill struggle, both for SEF and for SFSU. It was only when you decided to accept the position of Chairman of SFSU that we sorted out our relationships and were able to start trusting each other again. I think that's what enabled us to get things started, the fact that there were a couple of people who dared to trust each other and thereby take the necessary steps to turn the trend into something positive. Of course, it was a bit risky to start with, but it soon proved to be worth the risk.

Tony to Lars-Christer, e-mail 3:

You mentioned Supporters Direct, which is interesting. I remember coming into contact with them fairly early on. I've now gotten to know several of the active members. They were very impressed by the step you took, and they encouraged me to dare to trust you. That's how things are when you're a supporter: you're hardened, and you think you've heard it all before – the club management who say one thing at a members' meeting, but then something completely different happens, and so on. So I wasn't entirely certain about what we were starting. But I'm very glad that we did have the courage. I remember those first times we met up for dinner with

the Solér twins [editor's note: former board members of MFF Support], as is usually the case when something good is about to happen within the supporter movement. And "the arena circulation" was Per Solér's idea. He wrote it down and I remember that you used it during a speech to the Swedish Government. That made me proud!

Someone else who I'd like to bring in here is Mats Enquist, SEF's Secretary General. He came in with an incredible energy, and he was the first one to launch the idea of "the football family". The idea that we, SEF and SFSU, could be responsible for things together. I remember that lots of people thought it was a bit strange to begin with, including the media and politicians, that we were of the same opinion on various issues. I recall one senior politician saying "What, you share the same view?" to me and Mats during a meeting one time. As if that shouldn't be possible. It was your idea from the outset that we simply shouldn't worry about the issues where we didn't agree, and instead focus on what we could agree on. That was very smart. And over the years, it turned out that there was only actually one issue that we couldn't agree on: pyrotechnics. But even on that issue we were able to steer in the same direction, taking the opportunities for legal pyrotechnics as our starting point.

I think we will look back on the period of around 2010 to 2015 as important years for Swedish football. When I allow myself to think about it, I'm extremely proud about what we achieved. Lots of things seemed completely unachievable when we started out. I know how I had to keep nagging people: "I promise, they'll listen to us". There was a real sense of distrust from the supporters, just as you've described from many people within SEF. I remember so many victories, large and small. Everything we were able to implement together, as well as issues where we fought for something and you backed us up. You always kept your promises, which I'll never forget. Take the battle over the 51% rule, for example – the disagreement on whether the Swedish Sports Confederation would continue to insist that sport should be

democratically organised. There, football had more or less decided to vote yes to a change in regulations at the National Sport Meeting in Luleå in 2013, but when the supporter movement turned the tide via motions to the clubs' annual meetings in spring 2013 and SEF adopted our line of approach, you didn't have any problems clearly pushing that line instead. It's important to have ideals and the courage to follow them, but the ability to be pragmatic is also important.

Lars-Christer to Tony, e-mail 4:

This business about looking for the things we share in common tends not to be a bad approach. I'm now trying to use the same method in my new international assignments as Chairman of the professional football leagues in Europe. Just think how powerful the combined leagues would be if they were to concentrate their efforts on what they have in common instead of bickering about their differences. We'll have to see if this approach works.

There's one question that I've thought about a bit from time to time. Why did you accept the position of Chairman of SFSU? What persuaded you to take the step? Because, if my memory serves me correctly, things were quite turbulent at your own club between the fans and the management. It wasn't certain that the board would discuss things with you, and things were also a little fraught at the annual meetings.

I'm glad that you accepted the role, as SFSU was a very disconnected, loose organisation before you came on board. Where discussions took place between SEF and SFSU, these almost always related to problems in the stands which meant that the Stockholm clubs dominated completely, resulting in many "provincial" clubs dissociating themselves from SFSU. It was also extremely hard to hold a sensible dialogue, as we never knew who would be representing SFSU and sometimes they didn't turn up at all.

Wasn't it also the case that before 2012 you had very little contact with the Swedish Football Association (SvFF)? In any case, I felt that it was after we had achieved a reasonable degree of order that the Association also became involved in a meaningful way, and Karl-Erik [editor's note: Karl-Erik Nilsson, Chairman of SvFF] has also shared our view that it is discussions, not primarily sanctions, that result in things moving forwards. You should be aware that he has had to fight hard for this view within the Association. There was a widespread view that the only solution was to punish people into obedience, and lots of club managers shared this view. However, very few people could provide evidence of successful results using this method in the past.

Two of the biggest results we achieved through this cooperation were changing views on the system of punishment against clubs and individuals, and completely doing away with the counterproductive policing cost system. Looking back on these, it's hard to understand why they were ever put in place. Not only did they have obvious shortcomings, they actually went against general legal opinion in Sweden – that one should try to lead developments forward through "correction" rather than with "force".

Tony to Lars-Christer, e-mail 5:

Yes, why did I accept the position of Chairman of SFSU? That's a good question. Everything went fairly quickly. I'd joined the board just the previous year, when suddenly Victor Capel [editor's note: Tony's predecessor as Chairman of SFSU] felt that he had reached the end of the line. I'd previously been Chairman of MFF Support from 2005 to 2009, and there wasn't actually anyone else who was suitable. It's proven to be good for the Chairman of SFSU to come from a big club, but not from one of the three Stockholm clubs. That way, you avoid the topic of loyalties. To be honest, that only leaves two clubs where the supporter parties are used to working in really big contexts: IFK Göteborg and Malmö FF. So when the nomination

committee asked me in autumn 2012, I accepted without giving it much thought. I'd already established a relationship with you, and that felt like the most important thing for the role. And then, if I might be allowed to blow my own trumpet, I think I was very suitable for the position, especially in terms of the media. I don't have any difficulties expressing myself in front of the camera. This turned out to be important, especially during the first few years. But this hasn't been a one man show by any means. Lots of people have worked hard in the wings. One person in particular who deserves a mention is Lena Gustafson Wiberg, who was my ally on the board through those years. Alongside that, she did (and continues to do) a sterling job as SLO for Djurgården.

As you say, our contact with SvFF was extremely sporadic and, unfortunately, strained. Without casting aspersions on others, you could say that things improved when Karl-Erik Nilsson became Chairman of SvFF. Just like you, he was willing to turn over a new page, and he advocated discussions instead of closed doors.

My main memory from my time as Chairman is all our informal meetings at Café Mäster Hans in Malmö, where we untangled many knots and were able to ensure that relations between SFSU and SEF flowed smoothly. On one occasion we were also joined by Karl-Erik, and I remember that I took a selfie and uploaded it to social media. Half an hour later, all the big newspapers had called to ask what was happening. I remember telling them: "We had coffee together." They weren't used to supporters, clubs and the league association having that type of relationship. Another thing that comes to mind when I think back is when we were jointly invited by Småland Football Association to a meeting in Jönköping. We gave a talk together, after which everyone was flabbergasted that the football family might still be able to resolve our problems together, instead of shutting each other out. There were bigwigs in the room from Jönköping Södra and Husqvarna FF, as well as "ordinary" supporters and ultras from both clubs. Even Lars-Åke Lagrell [editor's note: Chairman of SvFF from 1991 to 2012] was there and listened to us. When we took the train back home that evening, things felt hopeful in some way. I think memories like these make all the hours we put in worth it.

As you say, some of our greatest achievements were how we dealt with the policing bills and the system of punishment together. I also remember how it sounded when we discussed matters such as the fines system with the decision-makers in Swedish football before you appeared on the scene. "This can't be changed. It's been agreed and decided on." And if you then pointed out that it was a bad, unfair system, the response was: "Yes, you're right about that, but it's the system we have." I'm glad that you and your colleagues came and took a grip on this with your pragmatism and your overall idea about what Swedish football should be.

During these years, when SFSU and SEF approached each other and became official partners, we experienced some terrible events. The death in Helsingborg during the 2014 season première was, of course, the worst of these. I think we would have seen considerably worse repressive measures and preposterous statements from the authorities if we hadn't been united on this matter. The same goes for abandoned matches, whether these were due to objects being thrown, or pyrotechnics, or whatever else. It feels as if the media has understood this, too. They haven't started with: "Should we put an end to football now?" as their first question, and have instead requested some slightly more insightful comments. I'm of the firm opinion that this cooperation between SFSU and SEF has been important in terms of leading Swedish football forwards. Today, we average almost 10,000 spectators for Allsvenskan matches, and for the second year running more than two million people have attended Allsvenskan games. We've certainly laid a sound foundation.

One last closing thought: SFSU has been to quite a lot of different supporter meetings in Europe, organised by either Supporters Direct or Football Supporters Europe. I would like to assert that we are an active part of European supporter cooperation.

And when we describe how things work in Sweden, and what the relationship between SFSU and the league association is like, we always encounter looks of surprise. I remember a meeting in Hamburg where I explained that you and I used to meet up for a coffee once every other month, to update each other in an informal setting on what was happening, and that I also used to call Karl-Erik at regular intervals to keep him in the loop. Supporter representatives from all the big European leagues sat and stared open-mouthed. I would say that the cooperation we enjoy in Sweden is unique.

Lars-Christer to Tony, e-mail 6:

Yes, you certainly were "media-friendly" when you came to SFSU and your hat quickly became a classic. I'm thinking about starting to wear a hat, too, when I grow old.

You're quite right in your summary of what we, SEF and SFSU, achieved together in a relatively short time. We've come a fair way, but there's still a lot left to do. Sofia Bohlin has now succeeded you as Chairman of SFSU, and our cooperation has started off well. Mats Enquist, Sofia and I met after the match in Gothenburg between IFK Göteborg and AIK in autumn 2016. That must have been one of the better matches in that year's Allsvenskan season, and the atmosphere was good at the arena with a spectacular tifo display and plenty of humorous comments on the banners, as is fitting for Gothenburgers. We sat up late into the evening at a hotel bar in the city centre, discussing how the year had gone and what lay ahead of us.

We finally have a structure for working with security issues and match arrangements. Both these factors will be decisive to the future development of professional-level football. When it comes to security, we have established a brand new "national representative" role. The role involves ensuring that security issues

are prioritised by institutions such as SvFF and SEF, and by clubs. They take part in joint preparations with match delegates, and ensure that events are followed up on after a match so that the knowledge gained can be used at the next match. Just as with the other issues we tackled, things were a little slow to get started, but the work has now been accepted by all those involved. We have the full support of SFSU and the clubs in these efforts. It feels good, and is worth continuing to build on.

The arena circulation concept is also very much a current topic. The whole of our major IT project, EFIT, is based on our arrangements. It is here that we must build trust, excitement, entertainment and the foundation for the financial development of our clubs. Research tells us that the link between financial strength and long-term sporting success is very strong. We are well on the way towards establishing Allsvenskan as the Nordic region's best league, and we have ramped up our ambitions so that we are not only comparing ourselves with our footballing neighbours.

Full arenas, safe events, good media production and a fantastic atmosphere results in even better football, exciting matches, international success and a stronger position within Swedish society.

In this sense, what we do involves much of both the journey and the destination. It is pleasing to note that supporters, the clubs and SEF are in full agreement on how we should move on, and that all our cooperation is based on respect for each other. This does not mean that we always have to think the same way on all issues. Perhaps it is when opinions clash that we can make the best progress? If so, it is good to have mutual respect to hold on to.

See you at the arenas!

"BRIDGING DISTRUST" – COOPERATION BETWEEN SLOs AND THE POLICE

By Pierre Nordberg

Thousands of people can come together for an Allsvenskan football match, becoming part of Sweden's top football league. From an organiser's perspective, we have a responsibility to ensure that they can do so in a positive, safe and secure manner – in accordance with the wishes of a football audience, and within the framework of the applicable safety regulations. Many parties are involved in this work. These include the clubs, arena staff, the police and emergency services, and of course supporters, all of whom affect the outcome to some degree – whether the atmosphere is positive or negative.

It may seem obvious to an outsider that there will be effective communication between these parties. But this is not necessarily the case. On the contrary, there is sometimes such deep distrust between the parties that it undermines all opportunities for effective dialogue.

This is where I come in as an SLO.

The SLO role

The SLO system was introduced in Sweden ahead of the 2012 season. Today, there are SLOs at all Allsvenskan league clubs and at several Superettan league clubs, ranging from permanent employees to volunteers. The aim is that they should be able to provide knowledge about supporter culture within club

organisations and surrounding authorities, as well as disseminating knowledge about conditions for the work carried out by the clubs or, for example, the police among supporters. They also work to establish and maintain effective, ongoing dialogue between representatives from the various parties.

Most SLOs are recruited by their respective clubs directly from the stands, often from one of the organised supporter groups. The reason for this is that the SLO role requires both in-depth knowledge of supporter culture and a broad network within the supporter environment. These are needed in order to maintain the necessary contact with supporter parties and to stay updated on supporter wishes and moods.

But what is there to know about supporter culture that is so special? And why is a dedicated role needed in order to maintain communication between the various actors involved in football?

Distrust between the police and supporters – a supporter perspective

As mentioned, the relationship between the supporter environment and the police is often extremely charged. As an outsider, it may be tempting to explain any distrust between supporters and the police as a problem that has been created by supporters alone. Many people have the impression that supporters regularly misbehave and that the police are forced to intervene. So you might think it obvious that supporters and the police do not get along.

However, this would be an oversimplification. We should remember that most Swedish football matches are relatively calm events, and it is a fact that even when incidents do occur, it is only a small fraction of the supporters who are involved. Generalisations about supporters or their "behaviour" thus risk quickly crossing over into sheer prejudice. A more reasonable starting point is that it takes two to quarrel. The question is where does this distrust come from? I will describe this from a supporter perspective.

We can start with the public image of supporters. Many supporters feel that they are consistently portrayed unfairly in the media and in the public debate. The negative is overemphasised, while the positive is not sufficiently interesting to comment or report on. This can have its concrete expression in the individual's everyday life. For example:

A member of the Malmö association MT96 explained a while ago how he spent almost every waking hour for a week preparing a tifo. In this context, I should perhaps explain that a tifo refers to the stand displays that sometimes contribute to the atmospheric setting at Malmö FF matches (or, of course, those of other clubs), and the value of which is hard to overestimate. They often require hundreds of hours of preparation work, carried out by a member of the supporter group – as was the case in this example. At work the day after the match, he was asked by a colleague if he had been involved in a scuffle that broke out on the day of the match. The tifo, however, was not mentioned - only the negative aspects were reported on by the media, and were remembered by media consumers. Many supporters probably recognise the situation: how they are confronted in their everyday lives with the assumption that they are, or that they associate with, troublemakers because they regularly attend football matches. For many well-behaved supporters, this is a source of strong feelings of irritation and injustice.

This has a direct link to relations with the police. The negative tone in the debate about supportership means that, within certain elements of the supporter environment, suspicion develops towards others – it is easy to assume that other actors look down on supporters. For example, one common perception is that many police officers view football supporters in general as a problem and that they should be dealt with harshly – the police are often referred to as being hostile towards supporters. As a result, those cases where individual police officers appear to confirm the image of hostility towards supporters through their actions are extremely

sensitive. We saw this at the beginning of 2017, for example, when a police officer used his personal Twitter account to upload an image of himself and a colleague in uniform and balaclavas. The caption read: "The football season starts soon... and we wanted to try out the obligatory supporter uniform... as everyone knows, it's about 'the love of sport'... #yeahright #adultdaycare gothatway". The image was widely circulated and was severely criticised by several supporter parties, as well as by police management. The effect on the general tone between the supporter environment and the police was catastrophic.

The problem with this is that when a mood of distrust and negative prejudice escalates, this affects both how individuals behave and how the other party perceives this behaviour. It thus has a direct effect on orderliness in connection with Swedish football. If a supporter sees the police as an enemy, there is an increased risk of acting aggressively towards officers. The same applies in reverse. If individual police officers or groups of officers have a negative view of supporters, there is a heightened risk that in stressed situations they will act in a manner that is disproportionate or biased, which can result in minor incidents escalating. I have personally seen examples of both.

Among supporters, every case of disproportionate police intervention is countered by a marked drop in confidence in the police and how the authorities' actions are perceived. The result can simply be that many react with suspicion, even in those cases where the police have acted entirely correctly. Why trust the intervention to be correct on this occasion when they believe that previous cases have not been correct?

The point is that these experiences – experiences of injustice from the other party against one's own group – on both sides can create an inability to see one's own responsibility when something goes wrong. Instead, the spontaneous reaction is to see those aspects that confirm the image of "the other" as an opponent. This can lead to overreactions in the heat of the moment, to distrust and the risk

of future misunderstandings and incidents increasing in the long term, and to not questioning one's own actions.

The SLO's tools: support and trust, not rules and demands

One of the SLO's tasks is to try to bridge this distrust. It is therefore absolutely essential for the SLO to maintain relations with both sides and to strive to be a "neutral party" and a communication link between the actors involved. The SLO's most important tool for doing this is winning support – both from the supporters themselves and within the respective organisations of the club and the police – as well as trust capital from both sides which means that they will listen, even in sensitive contexts. If this is successful, the SLO can contribute towards opening up communication channels, which in turn can create better opportunities for planning events effectively and enable the parties to make choices that improve safety or prevent incidents. Since the introduction of the SLO system in 2012, we have seen many such examples in Sweden, as confirmed not least by the police and clubs.

One condition in order for this to work over time is that everyone understands and respects the specific duties and requirements of the role of an SLO. Since the main tool for dealing with the task in hand is maintaining the trust of all actors in connection with football, the SLO can never be used as part of the clubs' repressive work, such as identifying individuals who have broken the rules. The SLO cannot at one moment enter into dialogue with members of the supporter environment who, in certain cases, have the potential to break the rules, such as using pyrotechnics, and at the next moment help to get them banned. Conversely, however, the SLO must represent the club's rules and values, even in tricky conversations with radical elements of the supporter environment. He or she can never encourage or contribute towards

breaking rules, and must instead work with a high degree of integrity. If integrity is not maintained or if trust is not preserved, the necessary degree of legitimacy will be undermined with all parties.

The SLOs must therefore *complement* the clubs' work to achieve welcoming, safe, secure and atmospheric events, but they must *not* be part of their safety work. The clubs have other functions to deal with the latter – and both are needed in order to maximise safety and security.

Cooperation with the police – informal level

As an SLO, I have almost daily contact with representatives from the supporter environment. My contact with the police is less frequent, but is still close. It takes place on two levels: informal contact and contact in more formal contexts. In both cases, it is important that this contact is dealt with in a correct and consistent manner, partly because some members of the supporter environment may be suspicious of the SLO's cooperation with the police and partly because some members of the police force may be suspicious of the SLO's role, loyalties or personal agenda.

My main contact with the police is informal, and takes place with supporter police officers Imran Elahi and Gorgin Shoai. We are in fairly regular contact during the season, usually by telephone. I should point out that the role of the supporter police officer can be problematic, as it actually involves doing exactly what I just said the SLO shouldn't do – it combines a repressive policing duty with a dialogue function. This sometimes leads to certain supporters being suspicious of supporter police officers, or of my cooperation with them in certain areas. Despite this, I would say that our contact works well and that we know and respect each other's roles. We have built up a fairly relaxed relationship based on mutual, personal trust – above all, they respect the fact that I must maintain confidentiality and sometimes cannot answer certain questions. We

are open with each other and do not always need to be in agreement. In view of the potential for suspicion between us, this kind of personal confidence is extremely important.

Together, we deal with many of the everyday situations that can crop up in connection with an away match, for example. I believe that most people who think about my cooperation with the police think it involves working with destructive things like threats, lawbreaking and public disorder. And it sometimes does, but the police mainly enable and facilitate a great deal, both for me and for supporters – they often provide a service for supporters. They escort coaches, for example, which mainly involves directing them. Sometimes they help to arrange a pub gathering by reassuring pub owners who might be worried about hosting football supporters, or they help to liaise with train companies so that supporters can travel by train.

Cooperation with the police – formal level

Alongside this, there are however more formal contexts, both those that directly affect match days and those that involve more long-term contact that often affects the transfer of knowledge: advising how the police can work to facilitate dialogue with supporters, participating in training new police officers who will work with football or evaluating order incidents to ensure that the supporter perspective is taken into account in the follow-up work.

In connection with match day, the football-related work includes a routine that involves cooperation with all parties in relation to the match event. As a general rule, the two teams' SLOs make initial contact between two weeks and a month before the match, depending on the circumstances. If the match will be played at a weekend or if there are specific transport plans for away supporters, such as a chartered train, this contact will often be made particularly early on. The away team's SLO obtains practical

information to make things easier for the travelling supporters – how to buy tickets, how much they cost, how they can travel to the match, which sections are available for away supports, where to enter the arena, where any pub gathering will take place before the match, how to get from there to the arena, where they can park, etc. If there are no readily available answers, the SLO will hold discussions with local pub owners, the police, coach companies, and so on. A week or so before the match, this information will often be summarised on the club's website.

Before a big match – what SvFF (Swedish Football Association) categorises as a class 3 match (with a large audience or heightened risk) - at least two formal meetings will also be held with representatives from the main actors involved. One week before, a telephone meeting will be held with the involvement of parties including SvFF delegates, club representatives (including the SLO), the police and the arena management. The event is reviewed, along with any anticipated challenges. On the match day a similar meeting will be held (in person) at the arena, three hours before kick-off. Here, any details are smoothed out. In both contexts, the role of the SLO is to ensure that the supporter perspective is included in the process, to give other actors a picture of supporters' plans, needs and wishes, and to obtain the information that supporters will ask for. A great deal relates to maximising the degree of predictability for all those involved, thereby increasing the chances of a positive atmosphere and reducing the risk of problems.

Alongside the practical preparations at the arena, the SLO may also have the role of helping supporter parties with preparations. One common example is to assist tifo groups in their preparations. A tifo can take several hours to prepare in the stands, as materials need to be positioned, overhead flags need to be affixed, and so on. The SLO may need to ensure that they have access to the arena and everything they need.

As kick-off approaches, the SLO usually moves among the supporters – either at supporter gatherings in town, or at the arena. At this stage it is a matter of being there as a service resource, as well as gauging the atmosphere and actively looking for situations where there is a need for support from the SLO. For example, the latter could involve a potentially aggravated situation between supporters and arena staff at the gates, where an SLO can use his or her backing from supporters to help calm down the atmosphere. During the match, the SLO continues with the same type of work but inside the arena. Afterwards, the SLO assists with emptying the arena and logistics from the arena. If something has occurred – such as a problem with admission, a public order incident or anything else – the SLO contributes towards the follow-up work, in which the incident is reviewed and attempts are made to prevent this being repeated.

The point is that throughout the entire process there is at least one person with the direct task of focusing on the supporter perspective, often also with the environmental knowledge that their own supporter background brings. Before the SLOs were introduced, this perspective was not represented in the process.

The benefits of direct communication between the police and supporters

In the long term, the most important communication role is when the SLO can contribute towards effective direct communication between supporters and other parties, such as the police. Positive direct contact between the different parties is worth much more than the SLO acting as an intermediary. By creating the right conditions for positive experiences, we can help to reduce distrust.

One form of such contact is, of course, when the parties meet in a positive way around arenas and in town centres. In this context, for example, the more dialogue-focused police units, Delta85 or Event Police (they have different names in different regions), have led to an improvement. They have contributed towards a more toned-down profile from the police.

Another form is regular meeting contexts. Historically, this has been a problem in the world of supporters. Not so long ago, the parties did not even want to meet, which from time to time is still the case with certain elements of Swedish supporters. However, I personally feel that here in Malmö the parties have actually made an effort. For example, in recent years we have had meeting in Malmö between the police, supporters and representatives from the club before the start of the season, before the derby and sometimes even before other major matches such as when there have been large numbers of away supporters.

We saw an example of the benefits of this joint planning before the IFK Göteborg away game at last year's season première. MFF Support had chartered the biggest Öresundståg train ever to have used the Swedish railways, with around a thousand Malmö fans. In addition to those travelling by train, there were around four thousand more Malmö fans who planned to travel to Gothenburg, and many of them were expected to meet the train on the platform before marching to the Ullevi stadium. Outside the arena, the organisers IFK Göteborg, following discussions with Malmö FF, had set up a large fan hosting area, with bars and food. After discussions between supporters, the police and Malmö FF, it was agreed that the train would stop at Liseberg station so that supporters would have less of an effect on traffic and ordinary Gothenburgers on the way to the arena. It would also be easy to lead the crowd directly to the Malmö supporters' fan hosting area and the arena entrance, without us coming close to the entrances to IFK's curva section. If the supporters had not been included in the planning, they might have chosen to gather at Gothenburg Central Station in the heart of the city instead. Without involving them, it cannot be assumed that they will see or agree with the benefit of a suggestion. It also turned out that the platforms at Liseberg, the intended alighting station, are not long enough to accommodate such a long train – the Swedish Transport Administration's regulations would not permit this. The fact that the problem of the platform length had been noted at the meeting – in which Malmö FF and MFF Support both participated, as well as parties including the police and the Öresundståg and Transdev rail operators – meant, however, that the parties had enough time to open a dialogue with the Swedish Transport Administration to find a solution. Here, the involvement of both the police and the rail operators was essential in order to reach an agreement. Looking back, it can be noted that the coordinated planning, in which all parties had the opportunity to take part, was crucial to everything going as well as it did.

However, it is not always the case that careful planning prevents problems. Providing the opportunity for joint evaluation and feedback after an event is therefore another important aspect of these meetings. It is worth emphasising that this is always important, not only when something has gone wrong. When the parties are able to evaluate a successful situation and note that they were able to ensure its success together, this reinforces mutual confidence. If, on the other hand, something has gone wrong, feedback can help to calm heated emotions and prevent repeat situations.

The lack of an opportunity for direct feedback to and from supporters was one shortcoming that we identified at that year's pre-season meeting. It is simply too late to carry out an evaluation of the previous year during a pre-season meeting, as a new season approaches and almost half a year has passed since the end of the previous season. This year, we have therefore also planned a post-season meeting once the 2017 season has drawn to a close.

One of the reasons for this was the events during the Skåne derby in Helsingborg in 2016. Before this match, we held a meeting in Helsingborg that was attended by the police, Malmö FF, Helsingborgs IF and representatives from the groups from Malmö. The topics discussed at this meeting included train departures,

arrival times, pub gatherings and a marching route. The discussions were productive, and everyone seemed to be in agreement. Despite this, there were a couple of incidents on the day of the match.

To cut a long story short, the first incident can be said to have been triggered by a group of Malmö supporters, despite the joint plans, deciding to travel to Helsingborg by car without giving advance notice of this. When they arrived close to where the Helsingborg fans had gathered, a large scuffle broke out. During the march to the arena later that day, when everything was calm and with completely different supporters involved, an individual police officer carried out an intervention that was perceived by those Malmö supporters present to be unjustified and aggressive. I myself was in the midst of the situation, and I have to agree with that assessment. The intervention led to an unpleasant atmosphere and furious protests from supporters.

These situations led to a great deal of irritation on both sides. There were certainly some police officers who questioned the benefit of dialogue, when some groups still disregarded the joint plans. And suspicion towards the police was reinforced among the supporters: those who were involved in the latter incident had not anything wrong, but they were still treated like troublemakers. In the short term, this made dialogue harder between the parties, but we have since had the chance to investigate everything. What we were able to learn from the Helsingborg example was that good dialogue and planning will not always prevent trouble. However, it can subsequently help to calm emotions and to prevent new, similar incidents if we continue to engage in dialogue after undesired events. This was one of the conclusions at this year's meeting ahead of the Allsvenskan 2017 season, along with the fact that we need to be quicker to evaluate the season. Hence the plans for a concluding meeting in the autumn.

In any case, there is no doubt at all that the communication between the supporter environment and the police involves many challenges. There will probably always be a certain degree of distrust and conflict between elements of the supporter movement and elements of the police. However, there is no doubt that the SLO work, combined with a constructive and systematic dialogue-based approach from the parties involved, can help to bridge the conflicts. If we look at what the Swedish SLO system has already contributed, there has been an enormous improvement. And we've only just begun!

"REBUILDING CONFIDENCE" – THE INTRODUCTION OF SUPPORTER DIALOGUE POLICE IN STOCKHOLM

By Maria Lemberg

Allow me to say this right away: Unfortunately, the police and Bajen Fans have never got along together particularly well. Mutual distrust and bad experiences of previous contact have always made it hard for the parties to talk about various events and incidents in a constructive manner. We have been so far apart.

This was the case back in 2013, when I was elected as a deputy member of the board of Bajen Fans. At that time, there was no sign of light at the end of the tunnel. Contact with the police was sporadic and generally charged with conflict – and sometimes completely abandoned from Bajen Fans' side. In the best cases, it was a necessary evil that we were sometimes forced to accept. But in 2012, the police introduced a new initiative that slowly but surely actually started to change things: Supporter Dialogue Police¹, which used dialogue and trust to build a relationship with us supporters that would be sustainable in the long term. I would like to describe my experiences of this. This is a story about how an incredibly bad relationship was slowly able to be improved – but also about how

¹ The Swedish term for this unit is "evenemangspolis", which could be translated into "event police". However, as the articles in this anthology show, there is already another police initiative which is called "event police". Therefore, to avoid confusion, the editors have decided to use "Supporter Dialogue Police" for the Swedish "evenemangspolis".

fragile this process was and will continue to be. For unfortunately, not everything went as we would have hoped.

In order to give the reader a true idea of how long the road to achieving effective dialogue between the police and Hammarby's supporters was – and, to some extent, still is – I will start by describing the traditional situation.

One common opinion among Hammarby's organised supporters has been that the police are not there for us. The police have always been an opponent – and, in particular, have been perceived as viewing us as opponents. Many people have said that all too often the police group active supporters together with hooligans and have never really differentiated between the two. This has affected not only those who have actively broken the rules but also ordinary supporters who have happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Tellingly, this has been described as the police viewing us "like cattle that they can treat however they want". They do not see us as "ordinary" people in society.

These types of emotions have been reinforced over time as a result of individual incidents that confirm the image and give it new life. One example that has been spoken about for several years was when the police took action against the curva section at Söder Stadium. I believe it was 2012. The background to this was some kind of scuffle breaking out in part of the stand. One of the responses by the police was to use pepper spray. The problem was that the spray spread through the air and affected many supporters who had not been involved in the scuffle, and which only made the situation worse. It should be added that on this occasion the police were not in the stand but below it, behind the goal – they should have been able to work out that the spray could spread and also affect innocent fans.

Another example that caused great irritation among supporters was when Hammarby was drawn against Malmö in the 2014 Swedish Cup. Many of us were looking forward to the match and the trip down to Malmö, after four years in the Superettan

league. We were keen for a big match after having travelled around various sports grounds and small towns where the audiences consisted mainly of the players' families. As expected, the mood was heated during the match, but no worse than it should have been from a supporter's point of view. However, the police thought the mood was threatening, so they decided to position officers in riot gear with dogs below the stands where we were. This created an uneasy feeling among many of us in the stands, and lots of fans were upset that the police deemed the situation to be so serious that they had to position police dogs in front of the stand. In this case, too, the result was one of anger and disorder rather than a better situation - one unfortunate example is that a number of pyrotechnics were thrown towards the police and the dogs. Once the match was over, the situation escalated even further when the police were perceived as meeting us fairly indiscriminately outside the arena, pumped full of adrenalin and with batons drawn. The feeling was that they saw us all as hooligans and criminals, instead of focusing on those who may have crossed the line.

This type of specific incident remains in the supporters' consciousness for a long time and creates a sense of opposition and conflict between us and the police. This is reinforced by more general experiences, such as the fact that there are always very large numbers of police officers around supporter gatherings at the Stockholm derby, often with riot gear, shields raised and even their batons drawn. Of course, it is true that the police need to be present and that certain supporters behave badly, but overall this has contributed towards the attitude that the police see us all as criminals and tend to intervene more than is necessary.

Supporter Dialogue Police – an opportunity for dialogue?

A few years ago, however, we at Bajen Fans began to notice that the police were at least willing to try to break the deadlock we had found ourselves in when it came to relations between supporters and the police. This was confirmed by the introduction of two new police functions. They introduced so-called Event Police² – whom they maintained were there to improve relations with supporters – and they also introduced Supporter Dialogue Police.

To begin with, Event Police were seen by supporters as a negative thing rather than a positive thing, and they were often seen to disappear or stand in groups instead of engaging in dialogue with supporters. At the same time, the police themselves said that they would improve the dialogue. When the Supporter Dialogue Police concept was fully rolled out, there were no major differences to begin with. We found out that the idea was for a specific person within the Supporter Dialogue Police unit to have long-term dialogue with us Hammarby supporters – that he would be our main point of contact with the police. However, we were unsure about the aim of this: was this someone who would actually be used to improve contact, or was the aim only that they would be able to identify fans who lit flares, for example, and report this to police management?

Essentially, this suspicion was nothing unusual. Relations between us and the police had been so bad for so long that it required us and the Supporter Dialogue Police to slowly be able to build up a relationship based on confidence and respect. After a while, once our Supporter Dialogue Police officer had shown that

² Event Police are drafted-in police officers who have been trained in accordance with the Swedish Police's special police tactics, or SPT. One fundamental aspect is a *graded* approach according to the prevailing situation and needs: a "soft" approach is taken as a starting point, but they can take constraining or repressive action if the situation so requires. [Editor's note]

he was only there to maintain a dialogue between us and the Event Police, for example, and that he also realised that he could rely on what we said, things became better and our mutual respect grew. One thing that helped to break the ice and establish contact that both parties found useful was that the various Stockholm teams had their "own" Supporter Dialogue Police officers – in other words, we had someone who focused on us, and the other teams also had their own Supporter Dialogue Police officers. If the same people had been responsible for all contact, this would probably have created more suspicion.

And so, a few years down the line, I believe that both supporters and the police are satisfied with the result. The Supporter Dialogue Police have helped in situations where we as supporters need to talk to the police, but where we previously felt that they refused to listen to us. Regardless of whether the communication difficulties were due to them, us or a combination of the two, our Supporter Dialogue Police officer was able to step in and mediate. By him getting to know us, he came to understand us. At the same time, he came from the police and also understood their way of thinking. I felt that this meant he was able to help both parties to avoid ending up in deadlock, and to really focus on finding solutions to the issues that created tension.

During the events in Malmö, our Supporter Dialogue Police officer was there. Once everything had calmed down and most of the supporters were on their coaches, it was down to him to turn to us to get some kind of clarity about how it all could have happened. Unfortunately, he was also perplexed and unable to do anything there and then, but he brought it up at their follow-up meetings. This meant that they at least had a supporter perspective when they evaluated the incident.

Another important issue is information about when and why someone is taken into custody. If people are taken away by the police at an away match, for example because they are drunk or for some other reason, this creates anxiety amongst their friends. They

are unable to go home without knowing where the person in question has gone. It is therefore common for the coach that they travelled in to wait for the person to be released, which neither supporters nor the police actually think is a good solution because it can take several hours. For this reason, the Supporter Dialogue Police officer has often helped us with information about whether anyone has been arrested and if so where they have been taken, so that we can collect them on the way home. This has also been made easier by personal contact - the Supporter Dialogue Police officer knows how important this is to us and his colleagues have relied on his judgement. Finally, I would like to share an example from the big march from Medborgarplatsen in the centre of Stockholm to the arena, in which thousands of Hammarby supporters take part at the beginning of the season each year. As this event has grown, the police have increased the pressure on various supporter parties such as Bajen Fans – to apply for a permit for this and thus to take responsibility as an "organiser". This has led to growing irritation between supporters and the police, as from our perspective this started as a spontaneous phenomenon and this is an aspect that we think is important to preserve. It is also not the case that an individual organiser can take the level of responsibility expected by the police – there are many different actors involved in this march. In the meeting about this, our Supporter Dialogue Police officer was the only person that we felt we could really have a dialogue with, who understood us and could also explain the problem from the police's point of view, and who tried to come up with suggestions that would satisfy all parties. He was also able to take our side on certain issues where both he and we saw that there was a lot to do - for example the issue of applying for a permit and forbidding people from using pyrotechnics.

All this, the dialogue and the understanding that we developed together with our Supporter Dialogue Police officer and the Event Police, subsequently came to be a major contributing factor behind us as supporters feeling that there had been a change in the police's

basic attitude towards marches and matches. The feeling was that we increasingly avoided being confronted with drawn batons, barking dogs, mounted police and riot officers who seemed to want to exert violence. My impression is that the Event Police became increasingly familiar with their way of working, but also that the Supporter Dialogue Police officer was able to explain their actions to us so that we had a better understanding of their aims and methods. I believe that many of us have seen this as a positive thing. This has resulted in things being calmer in connection with matches, that it has been possible to have a dialogue, and that the respect we have built up for our Supporter Dialogue Police officer has also been mutual.

A serious setback

Unfortunately, however, this emerging cooperation suffered a serious setback when the person who had been assigned as our Supporter Dialogue Police officer suddenly had to leave his position. Many of us were surprised and irritated, as we thought that the respect and the dialogue had come a long way, and the change was also made without us being given any information about the reasons or the plans for the future. We found out that no replacement had been appointed, but did not get a clear answer about whether a replacement would actually be provided. Instead, rumours began to spread which added to the growing sense of irritation.

This led to Bajen Fans breaking off all contact with the police. In practice, this meant that no organised Hammarby supporters had any formal contact with the security authorities any longer, since Hammarby's other supporter groups had already taken this step. This might sound like a radical move by Bajen Fans, but we didn't know that our attempts to get information were being taken seriously and we wanted to show how important we saw the Supporter Dialogue Police function as being. The opportunity for

supporters to have a specific person whom we can turn to in connection with serious policing issues had already proven its worth. For this reason, the message from police management that there was "a group of Supporter Dialogue Police officers" who would work with Hammarby matches did nothing to soothe our irritation. The point of the Supporter Dialogue Police, and what actually made a difference, was that we had been given the chance to build mutual trust in a personal relationship, which could then be used in practice when contact was needed between us and the police.

How have things gone since then?

For us, the whole situation when our Supporter Dialogue Police officer was transferred was extremely unfortunate, as he had built up respect from parties such as Bajen Fans and had helped to develop a two-way dialogue, which was the purpose of the role. Taking him away and not being able to give clear confirmation about whether a replacement would be appointed – that was frustrating. If there had been clearer communication, it might have been possible to prevent a lot of negative reactions and it might not have taken so long before the position could be filled again.

In any case, Hammarby was assigned a new Supporter Dialogue Police officer in summer 2015. Since then, dialogue has surely but steadily been established between Bajen Fans and the new officer, but this is a process that takes time. Respect needs to be built up from both sides, and as everyone knows we as supporters are not always particularly open-hearted when it comes to trusting the police. However, we also have a responsibility for building this trust. We need to see that even though many of us are sometimes suspicious of the police, this is a role that actually shows a desire to break the situation of conflict that often exists between the security authorities and supporters. Despite everything, this is a role from

which we have had practical benefit, a role that has made things easier for us in various ways and that has meant we have not been "marked" as closely at pre-match gatherings. But we sometimes need to understand that even the police must see the benefit of the new role. That's why it is important for us to take responsibility in our contact with the Supporter Dialogue Police, for example when we have discussed practical matters before a match. When we ask to be allowed to take a certain route to the arenas or for the police to keep their distance from our gatherings, then we need to do what we can to take responsibility for our own behaviour. If we do so – and if both parties are careful to maintain clear communication – then the Supporter Dialogue Police can help to avoid unnecessary conflict between supporters and the security authorities, and thus create better conditions for cultivating a positive supporter culture.

"SAFE FOOTBALL IN GOTHENBURG?" – COOPERATION BETWEEN CLUBS, THE POLICE AND LOCAL SOCIETY

By Anders Almgren

"It struck me one day: When we work with young people who demonstrate risk behaviour in Gothenburg, we normally have methods for this – social resource units and clear action plans that can be activated. But we never apply these when dealing with lads who are into football!"

These were the words of Emelie Kullmyr, Deputy Chief of the Greater Gothenburg Police District. As SLO for IFK Göteborg, I was taken aback.

We were at the police headquarters on Skånegatan in Gothenburg, dealing with various issues. We were discussing a particularly troubling case, in which a 17-year-old Gothenburg supporter had been given a one-year ban. The circumstances surrounding the incident were a little unusual, but we were primarily discussing the effect that the sanction – a year-long ban from IFK Göteborg matches – would have on a young lad. What would he be doing while he was unable to join his friends in the stands? Who would he be hanging around with? What influences would he be inspired by, and who in the adult world would exercise any control or supervision? Was this really an effective way to deal with the problem in the long term?

And then it came – the observation from the Deputy Police Chief. A breath of fresh air.

As a supporter representative, including as Chairman of the Änglarna supporters' association, I had often reflected on the same issue following discussions with politicians, quarrels with journalists, talks with IFK Göteborg sponsors or, for that matter, conversations with Emelie's police colleagues. These discussions addressed complex issues, about a challenging youth culture with all the social and normative factors that influence such a culture. But the solution to transgressive, disruptive behaviour in connection with football was almost always described in the same simplified ways:

Apportioning collective blame. Sweeping actions. A tougher approach. Longer bans. These approaches were – and still are – the penicillin of the supporter debate, its universal panacea.

It was not uncommon for these views to come from individuals who, in other contexts – such as youth crime in the suburbs or challenging behaviour in schools – were able to contribute problematised reasoning about the need for balance between setting boundaries and different social initiatives. But when it came to football-related problems, things became emotional. Then, a ban – *exclusion* – was the only reasonable tool at individual level.

But now Deputy Police Chief Kullmyr was echoing my own thoughts. "The reasonable thing to do is to treat young football supporters who engage in disruptive behaviour in the same way that we treat other young people who exhibit transgressive behaviour." And she had an idea about how we could do it.

"Safe football in Gothenburg"

The City of Gothenburg has a working method called "Safe in Gothenburg". The project aims to address the issues caused by the lack of collaboration between different parts of the municipal authorities. The ambition is instead to allow them to work in a thematic and objective-oriented manner, in cooperation with local users and private actors. Another ambition is to identify and deal

with the causes of problems, rather than fighting an endless battle to deal with the symptoms. Here is a simple description:

Start with a problematic phenomenon, such as the escalation in gangs being formed in Backa, or the increase in car break-ins in certain public car parks in the city centre.

Identify the actors in the social environment surrounding the problem. This may involve different actors with public or private responsibility in the area, but could also involve voluntary organisations or citizens with links to the problem or the geographical area.

Bring the various actors together and discuss the current situation: How do the parties involved see the situation? Then discuss the desired situation. How do we want things to be instead? Conclude with what each individual actor can and should do to move things forwards in the desired direction. Establish a time line for when things should be done by each party, and when the actions should be evaluated and if appropriate adjusted. If necessary, link up with existing municipal programmes or authorities.

The trick is to formulate a clear definition of the problem, identify all the actors – including all the relevant public administrations with responsibilities within the field – and get them to take action together. The success factor has proven to be involving as many of the actors involved as possible in a joint, coordinated change process.

Now Emelie wanted the "Safe in..." concept to be applied to football in Gothenburg. "Safe football in Gothenburg", in other words. Could this be a way of dealing with young supporters who fall foul of the law in a more flexible and hopefully more long-term way?

Receiving away supporters

However, we wanted to test the working method under narrower parameters. If we could get this to work on a small scale, it would pave the way for bigger issues.

We therefore started with the challenge surrounding the facilitation of visiting supporters in Gothenburg and the safety issues that might arise. The background to this was that many visiting supporters questioned the situation they encountered in Gothenburg, which was anything other than welcoming. This led to irritation, which in turn involves a greater risk of disruptive behaviour – with more work and a requirement for more resources for everyone involved as a consequence.

We brought together the various actors – the police, the clubs, the arena owner GotEvent, representatives from the various municipal bodies and field assistants who worked in connection with matches – to review everything. This must have been autumn 2015. We tried to summarise what we know about the situation. Where necessary, we gathered additional information via contacts elsewhere in Sweden.

The image that emerged was that visiting supporters always had difficulties finding a pub in Gothenburg that wanted them. And if they managed to find one, the route to the arena – due to logistics outside the Gamla Ullevi arena – was always long, with a relatively heavy police presence. Once inside the arena, they were met by what was described as one of the Allsvenskan league's least welcoming away sections: narrow, over-fenced entrances, a low, broad away section that made it hard to create a good atmosphere, surfaces behind the stands that were dominated by asphalt and grey concrete, poor lighting, no seats and few food options. It was described as stripped-back, colourless and inhospitable – more like a 1940s coastal defence bunker than a football arena. To top it all off, the section had been built with under-dimensioned drainage

behind the stand, which meant that in heavy rain the water there could be ten centimetres deep.

Joint action

Of course, this was not acceptable. Allsvenskan matches should be a cause for celebration in Gothenburg, and the spectators who come to see them should get a better welcome.

The arena issues were mostly a matter of budget. The criticisms were justified – the away section really *was* a bunker – but when we went through the opinions, we realised that fairly obvious changes could be made at a relatively low cost. Those responsible at GotEvent took immediate action. The grey concrete walls were painted white, lighting systems to illuminate the walls in the colours of the visiting team were installed, more benches were added, with the option of at least some seating. Permanent capo platforms (raised platforms for those leading the chants) were also installed, both to ensure the same conditions for both home and away supporters (there were already capo platforms in IFK's curva section) and to stop people balancing on the rail, with the risk of falling down. Finally, the drainage was rebuilt so that supporters could avoid having to wade up to the stands in bad weather.

The difficulties involved in finding pubs and the problem of transportation from the pubs to the arena was a bigger problem. We could not force the pubs in suitable locations to host away supporters. We therefore agreed to look at a joint solution for a *fan hosting concept*.

"Fan hosting" is a concept that has been imported to Swedish football from countries such as Germany. Essentially, it involves welcoming incoming supporters with dignity – it should be safe and easy for them to gather somewhere close to the arena, and this should not have a negative impact on the experience or safety of the home fans. Finding a good set-up can increase the number of

incoming supporters, which creates better arena experiences, while also making it easier for the hosting club and the police to plan service provision and security. One decisive factor in this involves actually showing the guests that they are being welcomed in a professional manner. The point is that everyone should benefit from the solution.

Meeting wishes – and seeing needs

Since the problem for away supporters of finding hospitable pubs was an old one, we had already worked with fan hosting attempts from IFK Göteborg's side. The latest attempt – the Ullevi Lounge, located at Stora Ullevi a few hundred metres from the arena – had not proven particularly popular. Away supporters simply did not want to be there, which was a problem as it was virtually the only nearby restaurant that was not located in the area frequented by home supporters. But why didn't the away supporters want to be there?

We went through the information available and asked ourselves what away supporters expect from a place in which to gather. Some basic conditions were obvious:

- They want somewhere pleasant ideally an "ordinary" pub or restaurant.
- They want access to reasonably attractive menus and acceptable prices – going to an away game is expensive, taking into account the match ticket, travel, any loss of earnings due to taking time off work, and the fact that most journeys are long resulting in a need to buy food and drink for the entire day.
- It should ideally be relatively close to the arena.

There are also some aspects that are specific to the actual phenomenon of supportership and away game travel. In particular, supporters want to make their presence felt in the town they are visiting – it should be clear that the team is there.

The problem was that several of these basic conditions were not met at Ullevi Lounge. However, the venue had the benefit of being very close to the arena, which is a considerable plus for those supporters who do not relish the prospect of long marches before the match. So, there was potential. The question was now whether we could work together to ensure that the concept met as many of the conditions as possible, so that it would be seen as an alternative for incoming supporters.

The results

We went through what each of the actors involved could do.

We at IFK took it upon ourselves to coordinate and move the work forwards, to organise much of this work and to present the concept to the visiting teams' supporters. That fell to me as the SLO. GotEvent had a good relationship with Rasta, which runs Ullevi Lounge, and brought them on board. GotEvent also checked nearby municipal spaces, which made it easier to organise service and logistics. The police reviewed and granted approval for an outdoor restaurant, which was essential in order for the venue to meet an acceptable level from a supporter perspective.

We therefore had a concept ahead of the 2016 season whereby larger contingents of away supporters could be offered the following:

A venue where they were offered a degree of team-specific decoration – GotEvent were prepared to buy in materials to adapt the colour of the venue. Their own videos could be played on screens, and their own music could be played on the sound system. A large outdoor restaurant could be set up, making it possible to enjoy the warmer months of the year and also providing a reasonable opportunity to actually make their presence felt in

central Gothenburg. A special menu was drawn up, where Rasta pushed down the prices of certain food and drink alternatives and with the option of adding a sum to the beer price on request which could then be transferred to the visiting team's tifo activities, for example. Finally, through GotEvent's efforts, an area could be set up at the adjacent Valhalla sports ground to offer the away supporters their own dedicated free parking. All within a few hundred metres of the Gamla Ullevi arena.

Naturally, it was still the case that not all visiting supporter contingents would choose this alternative. Sometimes, the supporter organisations rejected this outright and found their own alternatives. Sometimes, some of the contingent made use of the venue while others headed for the pubs elsewhere in the city centre. However, it was no longer the case that larger groups were not welcome anywhere.

Generally speaking, opinions were positive, insofar as that people saw we were trying to offer visitors a sensible alternative to dealing with reluctant pub owners or being led on long detours to the arena. This particular effect should not be underestimated. An Event Police officer who followed a group of visiting Stockholm supporters towards the arena who had chosen *not* to go to the Ullevi Lounge despite the majority of their fellow supporters being there recounted his impressions of this. He said that the fact the Stockholmers had been offered the alternative (but also had the option of declining it) seemed to lead to a slightly lower level of collective tension than normal. The risk of problems was reduced and the chances for dialogue were increased, since the initial contact indicated a desire to welcome them in a relaxed and professional manner.

Cooperation in connection with alternatives to bans?

The point of this digression is that we were able to work together to identify alternative solutions to problems and conflict-reducing measures that none of the parties could have offered alone. And this brings us back to the beginning of this chapter and Deputy Police Chief Kullmyr's observation that we in Gothenburg – and perhaps also in the rest of Sweden? – systematically deal with "youth problems" and "football-related youth problems" in different ways. And to the possibility that we might be able to work together to change this. But how would it work in practice?

Let us assume that we acted in accordance with the networkbased method applied in "Safe in Gothenburg" in connection with the 17-year-old mentioned in the example at the start of this chapter. Then, alongside the regular police report, a report would also have been made to the collaborative body that deals with education, social services, policing and leisure activities. The case had been taken up within the network group that works with youth issues, to which the Gothenburg clubs should therefore also be linked. A number of actions could then have been activated as alternatives to bans and/or fines: involving families via discussions, involving the school since social problems during leisure time are usually reflected in school attendance or performance, various programmes together with authorities such as those intended to combat contempt towards the authorities, or social resource unit programmes such as drug rehabilitation, CBT (cognitive behaviour therapy, which involves various methods for dealing with e.g. anger) and so on. The appropriate course of action would be guided by the needs of the individual. Reasonably, the clubs should also be able to offer certain initiatives that would motivate the individual to participate in the various measures. One could imagine that the club would give the individual the opportunity to attend home games instead of banning them completely, but under controlled conditions and in a section of the stands and locations that the club and the individual could agree on. Various educational or valuebuilding initiatives could also be established by the club. In such a case, a decisive factor would be that this should be designed in a way that the club is able to deliver, in terms of both resources and competence.

It should be emphasised that the above system would not be *instead* of bans, but as a complement. Sometimes exclusion might be the most reasonable course of action – and if so, a ban should be issued. In other cases, the various programmes could perhaps be applied in combination, with a ban being reduced in return for the individual's involvement in other measures. Sometime, it might be possible for the programmes to completely replace a ban. The most important thing is flexibility. The basic signal in this type of system would be: "We want to you stay in football, but in an orderly manner", rather than a short and direct: "You're a problem – go away!"

Overall, this would be expected to create better conditions for young people to make constructive choices in the future, as opposed to the conditions offered by a ban. Simply excluding young individuals risk putting them in contact with other excluded supporters, some of whom might be older and exhibit established destructive behaviour.

"Why change a system that works?"

However, this type of change would certainly come up against resistance. The mainly repressive logic applied today has, despite everything, been around for a long time. The entire social debate about football supporters is also often characterised by a surprisingly high degree of emotion, which makes factual and rational discussion more difficult. It is easy to imagine the criticism that such a change might bring:

Why change a system that works? What reasons are there to believe that a "Safe football..." model would produce better results? What actual benefits can we expect?

These are reasonable questions, but there are also reasonable answers.

Firstly, there is no reason to change a system that works. It's just that we don't currently have one. We cannot point to a general, positive trend relating to orderliness in recent years and link this causally to the application of bans or fines. On the contrary, the explanations behind most of the positive trends are usually considerably more complex and feature joint objectives, involvement, building legitimacy, and so on. The introduction of the SLO system is one example that tends to be praised by all actors in connection with Swedish football. Seen from such a perspective, it is more reasonable to ask: "Why should we not abandon or develop a non-working system?" One where youngsters who misbehave are primarily punished into better behaviour – a logic that is probably not used in other areas of Swedish youth and criminal care.

Secondly, there *is* a simple, logical reason to believe that it would work: These methods are already used in other areas and with other young people! In other words, this is not a case of reinventing the wheel. It would be more reasonable to turn the question around: *If these methods are deemed appropriate in other contexts, what grounds are there for them not being appropriate in connection with football?*

Finally, a few words about potential effects. At individual level, the benefit of cooperation between football and society should be that the individual's emotional engagement with their club is linked together with society's social resources. Club loyalty and the desire to attend matches can act as a driving force for the individual's desire to participate in a change process. Of course, the results cannot be expected to be perfect or immediate – in some cases, the effects will only be seen in the long term and sometimes, perhaps, not at all. But this is not unusual – this is often the case when working with young people. There is also nothing to lose by trying new courses of action. Most people seem to agree that the effectiveness of the primarily repressive methods used in recent decades has been doubtful.

At a collective level, one should not underestimate the possible effects over time of moving towards a more balanced system. Perceived illegitimate pressure on a group that has developed a common social identity, such as the supporter culture, is always met with resistance and the group closing ranks. The feeling of injustice spreads to more than just those who are directly affected by this pressure, and in this case even to individuals who do not normally break rules and laws. This stirs up destructive norms, such as contempt for authority, and legitimises questioning and resistance. The conclusion is obvious: "They don't care about us. They only see us as a problem. They want to get rid us of if they can." Certainly, this analysis is almost caricature-like at times, and in some contexts, it is downright daft. But how could it be otherwise? It actually is the signal that is sent out, when the toolbox only contains one tool exclusion – while at the same time there are more flexible systems in other contexts.

However, the opposite is possible. The example from the line of reasoning about fan hosting above, with the Event Police officer who followed the supporters to the arena, suggests the direction. Start by working *with* supporters. If this fails, repressive tools can then be used.

When Deputy Police Chief Kullmyr presented the idea of working in this direction within the framework of the "Safe in Gothenburg" method, it was therefore very welcome. I hope to get the chance to follow developments in this area.

"RIVALRY AND COOPERATION" – INTERACTION AND COOPERATION BETWEEN DIFFERENT TEAMS' SUPPORTER FACTIONS

By Eric Sjölin

It may seem strange to the general public that supporters from rival clubs seek out exchanges and cooperation with each other. After all, the picture we get from the media tends to expose rivalry and violence, which really does not suggest any desire to have dealings with each other. And yes, rivalry towards one's antagonists is one of the strongest unifying factors within supporter culture. One way of defining oneself and one's supportership is to point out differences and deficiencies in one's opponent.

However, those who are more familiar with the phenomenon of supporter culture know that rivalry can easily be put aside on occasion in order to achieve greater common objectives. Even within those groups where violence is common, discussions and exchanges with other groups are also common. Despite everything, a dedicated supporter has more in common with an equally dedicated supporter of a rival team than with anyone else.

Up until the end of the 1990s, exchanges between football supporters in Sweden were mainly limited to meetings in connection with matches, or the big summer event of the time – the MFF Support Cup, which ran for almost ten years. This was a football tournament at which supporters from all over Scandinavia came together in Malmö for three days to play on friendly terms. When the situation was deemed to be particularly important, joint

action could be organised. The best-known example of this was probably Eurostand '98, a demonstration in September 1998 at which ultras across Europe were encouraged to sit in silence during the first half of matches to protest against UEFA's ban on standing in the terraces. However, they rarely got much coverage as supporters' own opportunities to reach out were limited. They were dependent on the traditional media taking an interest and reporting in order to reach a wider target group. Just like in the music scene, most clubs in the 1980s and 1990s had supporter fanzines, for which the target group was the audiences in the stands, and where collectors swapped issues with each other. Fanzines were also a way to communicate across team borders with correspondence by post when new issues were published, often a few months apart. Things were slow and not easily accessible, but if fans were sufficiently devoted there were channels available.

In the late 1990s, however, the phenomenon of the internet made an explosive entry into every home. A number of different forums and chat rooms increased contact between supporters. At the same time, the tifo scene and subsequently the ultras culture grew rapidly, attracting a new generation of supporters. I myself was passionate about the new influences. Being inspired by and exchanging ideas with other teams' supporters was a way of forming my own supportership. The Tifo Hooligans guestbook, Global Tifo and the Ultras Channel were just a few examples of the online meeting places where a new generation of young supporters found like-minded people in the early 2000s. Swapping videos and images and discussing supporter culture meant that supporters turned to a technological world where they communicated across team borders on a daily basis. Without doubt, the internet was a powerful force for the tifo phenomenon, enabling interest to explode and spread across Sweden. The contrast with the less accessible tifo influences of the 1990s, where supporter culture made only sporadic appearances on TV, on the radio and in the press, was enormous. I personally remember watching VHS tapes featuring compilations of tifo scenes from Eurosport. The clips were a couple of seconds long, and were then played back in slow motion to give a glimpse of what our role models in Italy and France were doing. Today's situation, where videos of tifos, pyrotechnic displays and even riots can be spread across the globe in a few hours via websites and specialist channels on social media, was completely unimaginable before the advent of the internet and fibre optics.

The increased technological exchange gradually led to more and more cooperation across team borders, and hence also to awareness of shared interests and expressions. But this also led to new common opponents being established. Examples included the Swedish Football Association and the police, whose attempts to limit pyrotechnics, for example, were regarded as unjust and hostile towards supporters. Demonstrations and protests could also be organised more quickly and communicated more widely. Opposition to SvFF's (Swedish Football Association) fines system, for example (where clubs were fined if individuals in the audience broke the rules), or to what was seen as excessively heavy-handed interventions from the police, was shown increasingly often through demonstrations in the stands. Many of the young men and women who were part of the new tifo or ultras groups around the turn of the millennium had reached important positions in supporter associations or larger ultras groups a few years later. This helped make it easier to bring about cross-border cooperation with a more professional image. As the supporter culture phenomenon grew in Sweden, there were of course a number of people who had the knowledge and the desire to come together in connection with national issues.

In March 2008, a bill was submitted to tighten up the Swedish Act (2005:321) on refusal of access to sporting events, often referred to in the media and the public debate as the Hooligan Act. Several of the points in the bill, including those relating to interim bans (the opportunity to exclude supporters from matches during an

investigation, on a provisional basis and without a detailed examination of the facts), immediately encountered strong resistance from parts of the organised supporter movement. In connection with the match between IF Elfsborg and IFK Göteborg in May 2008, Elfsborg's Guliganerna therefore worked together with Gothenburg's Supporterklubben Änglarna and Ultras Göteborg to draw attention to the issue. A joint debate article and a press release were issued before the match. At the beginning of the match, supporters organised similar tifos at both ends with the message "Dialogue, legal rights, freedom with responsibility – for active, responsible supporter culture". To further reinforce the message, both ends remained silent for the first 15 minutes.

A couple of months later, the Änglarna supporters' group with the backing of Guliganerna and MFF Support – submitted a statement to the Swedish Ministry of Justice. A statement was also submitted by Djurgården's Järnkaminerna group, supported by fellow Stockholm groups from AIK and Hammarby. Although these protests were organised at short notice and were somewhat loosely connected across the team borders, this led to supporters being invited to discussions with officials from the Ministry of Justice. In actual fact, the proposed legislation was adopted anyway, with the exception of a few points that supporters had succeeded in influencing. However, the entire process was an important milestone in terms of Swedish supporters' ability to form opinion and to push forward important issues together – it became apparent that they were actually able to make an impression together. This demonstrated both the need for and the potential strength of the newly formed SFSU.

The Swedish Football Supporters' Union (SFSU), which organises much of the Swedish supporter movement at national level and now has around 40,000 members, was founded in 2008. There had already been a number of less successful attempts to form a national supporter organisation. The desire had been there, but there were not enough passionate individuals to form the basis

for a stable association. In 2008, however, the Football Alliance, which is affiliated with the Fryshuset youth centre in Stockholm, paid for hotel and conference rooms so that supporters from all around the country could meet up and form an organisation during a conference weekend in Stockholm. Discussions had been taking place on joint online forums for several months before the meeting, and the time was right to form an organisation as there were several important questions relating to Swedish supporter culture on the agenda. Supporters from almost every Swedish club and half the Superettan league's supporter groups attended the conference, forming the basis for what is now the SFSU. However, the difficulties in actually taking the next step and acting as a national association, with a fully functioning board, operations and finances, were occasionally significant. Geographic distance has been a factor, as has the fact that many of those who were elected to positions of trust already held time-consuming voluntary positions locally. Despite the obstacles along the way, SFSU has evolved into what is now an important opinion-former and a natural discussion partner within Swedish football.

The work involved in *Vår kärlek är inte till salu – bevara 51-procentsregeln* ("Our love is not for sale – keep the 51 percent rule") represented a breakthrough in terms of SFSU's position and influence. This was a campaign to retain member democracy within Swedish sports, and the work relating to the so-called 51 percent rule has been seen by many Swedish supporters as the most important fight ever. The issue revolved around ownership of sports clubs, and had been much debated since 1999, when the possibility of forming limited sports companies was seen as the first step towards abolishing the 51 percent rule. This would allow full external ownership – in other words, clubs could be controlled by individuals or by companies, instead of being "owned" by their members, all of whom had a vote at an annual meeting.

It took a few years for football supporters to open their eyes and begin to mobilise in earnest. Fifteen years ago, very few active supporters saw any real point in attending annual meetings and getting involved. However, this changed when faced with the risk of losing their democratic rights in exchange for ownership based on capital. The first motions were submitted to annual meetings in 2009 with the aim of preserving the 51 percent rule. The members of clubs including IF Elfsborg, AIK, Hammarby IF and Djurgården IF discussed the issue at their annual meetings in 2009, with the aim of their clubs working to keep the rule. This was the first time supporters had used club democracy as a means of exerting pressure on a broad front in their capacity as members. Over the course of the following years, this example was also repeated elsewhere.

The campaign was divided into several stages, and was initially led by a working party set up within the framework of SFSU. The group consisted of a handful of supporters with links to IFK Göteborg, Elfsborg, Örgryte and AIK, illustrating just how far cross-team cooperation had come. A campaign logo was produced and circulated in different teams' colours, as a way of achieving greater coverage in these teams' stands on flags, banners, souvenirs and stickers. For several years, debate articles were written, motions were proposed, and opinion-forming took place within clubs, local associations and SvFF, the national association. The fight to retain the 51 percent rule and the efforts behind it also attracted the attention of the media.

Finally, in May 2013, there was a two-hour debate at the National Sport Meeting, where the matter would be settled. The impact of the supporter movement on the matter was demonstrated through the speakers at the meeting including Anders Almgren, former Chairman of Gothenburg's Änglarna supporters' group and a member of SFSU's working party on the 51 percent issue. He now represented IFK Göteborg at the meeting, as the club had submitted a direct motion to the meeting to keep the democracy rule as a result of a motion and decision at the club's annual meeting. When the discussions drew to a conclusion, it was clear that the "No" side

had won. The 51 percent rule was left unchanged, and the Swedish Sports Confederation was not given a mandate to hand responsibility for the rule over to the individual sports associations. The decision to keep the 51 percent rule was an enormous victory for the organised supporters, headed up by SFSU. The actual issue is currently buried, but the supporter movement will certainly take a strong stand if it is ever revived.

Other well-known examples of cooperation in recent years include the *Here We Stand* campaign, which revolved around scrapping the reduction in standing room in Swedish football, which SEF decided on in 2008. In practice, this involved SEF's intention to regulate what proportion of the spectator places at Swedish arenas could be used for standing spectators. Many supporters saw this as a step towards a complete ban on standing. Parallel work was also carried out in connection with this issue to exert influence through club democracy, through demonstrations in the stands and through opinion-forming in the media. Standing in the terraces has always been a foundation stone of supporter culture, and the fight to retain standing spaces won enormous support. Here, too, the views of Swedish supporters were met with sympathy, and the decision was changed by SEF's member clubs at the end of 2013.

Positive Fan Culture was an appeal and campaign that ran during 2011 and 2012 with the aim of highlighting the importance of supporters for Swedish football. It featured in-depth opinion work across team borders in an attempt to change the media debate climate and to encourage more nuanced writing about supporter culture. The initiative is one of several occasions on which Swedish supporters have tried to play an active role in influencing the public image of Swedish supporter culture, in order to improve what is often a problem-focused and stigmatised image. Overall, it has to be said that this has had an effect. I believe that a great difference can be seen in the editorship of Sweden's biggest media outlets, at least, where knowledge and opinions of supporters are much better

today than they were a decade ago. Swedish supporters have made a huge contribution to this trend through their ability to organise themselves seriously and to take an active, level-headed place in the public debate, and have won several major victories on key issues.

Today, SFSU offers a network and a platform for organising supporters. Swedish supporters have three powerful tools for making their voices heard: club democracy, the internet and various forms of expression in the stands. When a question is raised, broad support can now be gathered nationally, and incredibly quickly. All supporter groups work with their own communication channels, which can mobilise thousands of people in a matter of hours. Increasingly often in recent years, the media has shown football supporters' ability to organise themselves and the possibility of driving major issues forwards. When, for example, supporters from most of the clubs in the Allsvenskan league raised huge sums of money in support of the refugee crisis of 2015, this generated significant media attention.

In Sweden, there is a sensible debate on which issues football supporters should get involved in. What is policy? What belongs in the stands, and what doesn't? The answer will vary over time and in different contexts. As a consequence, in recent years Swedish football has chosen a direction where issues such as the 51 percent rule, the role of the SLO, dialogue and democracy work are central concepts. The supporter movement must play a major role in the development of Swedish football. However, it is important that we take responsibility for continuing to be level-headed and constructive if this development is to be sustainable. If we routinely brush aside criticism, if we instinctively believe that certain parties are always wrong and we are always right when conflicts of interest arise, or if we forget that Swedish supporters' biggest victories are based on our ability to mobilise the broad movement and not just a narrow strand of supporter culture, then the successes we have achieved can rapidly become nothing. It is important that we remember this, both in our words and in our actions.

However, I would currently note the following: A few years ago, German football was the main role model in all respects. Now, it is increasingly often Sweden and the work carried out by Swedish supporters that is highlighted in international contexts.

We have a great deal to be proud of!

"A LACK OF CURIOSITY" – THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUPPORTERS AND THE MEDIA

By John Pettersson

The post-match ritual is virtually the same, whatever the result. Take the bus back home to Hisingen, go up the stairs, say hello to my other half, and then straight to my computer.

I fire up my laptop, check the highlights and the interviews on the Football Channel, read the coverage (including live reports) on the newspapers' websites, scan YouTube to see if anyone has managed to upload any ultras clips yet, and log in to SvenskaFans to check the forums – ours and theirs. (Reading the other team's forum after a particularly resounding victory is a special kind of guilty pleasure, but everyone does it – it's usually referred to as "forum porn"). Then come the blogs, the other side's local media, FotbollDirekt...

For an average match, I might read through a couple of hundred different testimonies from people who were also there, including forum posts, supporter journalism and more "traditional" media reports in the many different channels. And I am not alone – most of the people I know do the same. This is a natural part of being a supporter in the 2010s. The match is not over when the referee blows the whistle – the match is over when you have read the final match report, when the heated discussion on the forum has died down, and when fans have stopped tweeting about the offside situation in the second half.

You can sigh at the click economy of the sports site, or smirk at particularly clumsy or starry-eyed supporter journalism (there have been posts on SvenskaFans that have caused me to cringe as I read them though my fingers), or you can simply choke in rage at the fact that every idiot with a keyboard seems to be out there with opinions on football – sometimes it seems that the signal to noise ratio is totally screwed.

But things are better than they were. Much, much better. "You don't know how lucky you are" isn't a particularly promising introduction to a text, but in all honesty, dear brothers and sisters who are growing up in the football media landscape of the 2010s: You don't know how lucky you are.

But I know. Because I remember the columnists. A little way into the 21st century, the dominant testimonies from the Swedish football stands – the most read testimonies, and to outsiders the "most reliable" testimonies – were those of the columnists. Their stern late middle-aged faces adorned the image bylines in the Swedish daily press (which at that time had not yet reached crisis point), where after every round of Allsvenskan matches they had the chance to hold forth about what they saw as various failings on the pitch, in the stands and in the boardrooms.

The all had monosyllabic Swedish names – Mats, Jan or Ulf – and when they wrote about supporters, they tended to use descriptions such as:

"baying pack..."

"brain-dead troglodytes..."

"certain brain-damaged individuals..."

All the quotations above are taken from a single book by Mats Olsson, a compilation of his sports columns from the tabloid Expressen between 1990 and 2002. I have chosen them not because Olsson was worse than anyone else, but to illustrate a specific point. He was a revolutionary among the sports columnists in the 1990s. Stylistically nimble and armed with an entire arsenal of cultural references, he wrote long, probing articles loaded with a sense of

presence and empathic personal portraits. His eye for the game was nothing to write home about, but his eye for the people who played was almost unrivalled. Compared with his columnist peers, he was phenomenally progressive, but whenever he wrote about supporters they were described as damned howling gorillas, braindead swine or fascist thugs.

And that's the way things were, with very few exceptions. Sometimes the suspicious tone took on absurd proportions, such as when Tony Ernst (the then Chairman of MFF Support) was described – for unclear reasons – as "the hooligan with the quill" in Svenska Dagbladet, or when Göteborgs-Posten's ageing pundit in the field misread a banner and rashly informed his readers that a network of criminals had taken over the stands of the Gamla Ullevi arena.

Do you recognise this rhetoric? You certainly should. After all, they are similar to the tone – conspiratorial, hostile and grudging – that we supporters use when describing the media. In any case, it was previously hard to spend any time in supporter circles without hearing the opinion at least once that journalists are a bloody rabble that deserve to be shot. Ultimately, I believe that the "bloody pack" mentality originates from a lack of curiosity. The angry supporter has no interest in understanding *why* a journalist writes the way they do, they simply decide that "the bloody journalist must hate my club". And equally few of the columnists were interested in the nuances of twenty-first century supporter cultures. Instead, they were interested in passing judgement on what, in their eyes, was "a pack of fascist thugs who don't actually like football – they're just there to fight".

The only difference is that when supporters act in a conspiratorial, envious manner, they tend to have an audience of no more than fifteen people around a pub table. The columnists had hundreds of thousands of readers.

Victor Capel, with his background at the Swedish Football Supporters' Union and AIK's Black Army supporter club, has said

in an interview that anyone who is described as a complete idiot for long enough will start acting like a complete idiot. If you opened a newspaper fifteen years ago, you would generally see two images of supporters: yelling drunks or violent semi-fascists. Encouraging, eh?

But then something happened. Offside magazine is usually given much of the credit for the revitalisation of football journalism that took place around the turn of the millennium, but I would maintain that Aftonbladet's Sportbladet supplement - despite its tarnished reputation in supporter circles – was at least as important in changing how football and its followers are depicted in the sports pages. From the outset, writers Simon Bank and Erik Niva were completely honest about the fact that they were journalists by trade but supporters in their everyday lives. Although they supported an English team (Tottenham Hotspur) – it is, and was, justifiably still extremely sensitive for an Allsvenskan journalist to admit to having a favourite team in the league - they often succeeded in capturing the emotional substance of supportership: the irrationality, the gallows humour, and the constant disappointments. For the first time, Swedish supporters had football writers they could identify with, not just relate to.

Their colleague Robert Laul was less popular with supporters – he was, and still is, downright disliked by many of them – but in his own way he was probably even more important in terms of opening up the conversation between supporters and reporters. The old school professional pundits mostly practised one-way communication. But Laul? He replied to every e-mail, got involved in every debate, and was the first in the country to have a football journalism blog that was actually worth reading. He attracted huge amounts of criticism, some of it well deserved, but somehow he always bounced back.

During the years when Laul's blog was taking off, between 2004 and 2006, I was studying to become a journalist myself. In hindsight, those years feel a bit like the calm before the storm when

it comes to the future of journalism. Smartphones were just a twinkle in Steve Jobs' eye, and social media consisted of something new called Myspace. Journalism training was still tailored for old-fashioned local newspaper reporting, with digital media added in as an afterthought. The blogging phenomenon, one of the great talking points of my studies, was implicitly just that – a phenomenon, a fad. Nothing that would have any real effect on journalism.

So, it was without any great expectations of what would come of it that I started writing for a new football blog, which had been started by an acquaintance of an acquaintance, while I was still studying.

His name was Markus Hankins, and the blog he started was called *Bara ben på Glenn Hysén* (*Bare Legs on Glenn Hysén*).

If Laul converted journalistic football opinion writing from monologue to dialogue, Hankins was a pioneer in the opposite direction. Manically productive, always hungry for debate and extremely committed to IFK Göteborg, he had been a constant fiery online presence since writing his first blog post in March 2005.

I finished journalism college, and got a job writing for a largely unread newspaper in my home town of Gothenburg. I soon came to feel ill at ease as a journalist, and nothing I wrote in a professional capacity during the five years that I worked on editorial boards would ever attract much in the way of reactions. However, the sporadic posts that I wrote anonymously for the "Bara ben" blog received hundreds of comments, put me in touch with people I still call friends to this day, and ultimately led to my involvement in writing a book about the history of IFK Göteborg supporters. Quite simply, it changed my life and my way of writing in a way that "traditional" journalism had never managed.

At the height of its success, the blog was something of a football media oddity: a clearly biased supporter voice that nevertheless had the capacity to make a real impression. A few individual editorial teams at SvenskaFans had the same threshold of originality (I'm

thinking, for example, of the Malmö FF page Himmelriket), but I would go so far as to say that "Bara ben" stood out amid the snowball of competent supporter journalism that began to gather momentum during the early years of the twenty-first century. Hankins and a handful of the other writers that he constantly recruited did sterling groundwork, came up with their own revelations, and often produced the best and most critical coverage of IFK Göteborg to be found online. For them, "supporter journalism" was simply journalism. They uploaded highlight compilations from matches (and full matches for downloading), they reported on pre-season training camps, they provided live broadcasts of matches that were not shown on TV, and one day in February 2008 I was there when they recorded an early version of what many years later we would come to call a podcast.

Today, the blog format is dead and the "Bara ben" site is hardly updated any more, but the legacy of the blog lives on. The biggest IFK Göteborg podcast comes direct from "Bara ben". The best-known writers are still legendary in Gothenburg supporter circles. Two of us who wrote for the blog, together with others, wrote a book about IFK Göteborg's supporter culture.

Hankins went on to become a reporter, news chief and eventually local paper web manager. He is far from alone, at "Bara ben" and among Swedish supporters, in making the journey from the stands to the editorial board.

After all, who were my fellow journalism students back in 2005? Active HIF, Djurgården and Hammarby fans. There was a former supporter club chairman, a dedicated ÖIS fan who joined me on the terraces at Gamla Ullevi a few times, who is now a well-known writer for an evening newspaper.

The sports writers at my local newspaper used to include a chap who seriously believed that criminal gangs held court on half of all football stands. He's gone now, and has been replaced by a journalist who wrote his first lines on the SvenskaFans IFK Göteborg pages. Supporter journalism is not an insult. In fact, a

background on the terraces can be an advantage. The finest brains from the stands have found places on editorial boards.

So, the media has shifted its position slightly. This represents a victory for the nuanced reporting of supporter culture, for a media description of our world that is not simply disassociated and suspicious. However, it is not a definitive victory.

Not everything is fine and dandy. The majority of supporter depictions in the Swedish press are still negative. And there is still reason to claim that "journalists hate our passion", as some put it. We can have ten SLOs at every club carrying out damage limitation and football reporters in the press stands can be made up entirely of old ultras – they will still call a spade a spade. Idiotic behaviour will always generate headlines in a way that anticipated positive behaviour never will. (With a bit of luck, fans in good singing voice might be mentioned as an aside, but a scuffle outside the stadium will always be the dominant narrative about the match.) I sometimes feel that we have failed to understand.

We have control over our own narrative to a much greater extent than before.

But that's not enough. We have to do our part. We know that the media image is skewed, but we can fix it – if we can only understand certain simple principles about newsworthiness and press ethics. For the media is a tool, and it can work for us or against us. It's a matter of grasping the rules of the game. You can't be happy that fire cooks your food and be mad it burns your fingertips, as Chris Rock once said.

That said, we must continue to be critical. We have a responsibility that we sometimes fail to uphold, but on the other hand the media also has a responsibility. A responsibility that they neglected during many years of columnists and one-sided reporting, and sometimes absurd news choices. There will always be occasions when supporters and the media are opponents, when our respective interests lead to direct conflicts of objectives, but in actual fact there are more occasions when we benefit from each

other. Robert Laul likes to mention that nothing sells as well in the sports world as good news. Let us hope that editors adopt this approach and reflect the positive developments to the same extent as the closely scrutinised tragedies and all that is negative.

Then we might approach, if not true peace, at least some kind of productive ceasefire.

For we know what the alternative is, what war is like. We've seen it. The alternative is decades of distrust and boycotts, quarrels and ill-founded arguments.

And surely none of us can stand that any longer?

"DEALING WITH THE RABBLE" – THE IMAGE OF SUPPORTERS IN PUBLIC REPORTS

By Mathias Henriksson

The organised supporter movement has evolved rapidly during the last 10 to 15 years, and the Swedish Football Supporters' Union (SFSU) is now seen as a natural partner within Swedish football. However, despite this, there are still common features in the images of the supporter environment portrayed on the one side by the two most recent national coordinators' final reports and on the other side by media reports from one hundred years ago.

When going through the public reports and investigations that deal in various ways with the supporter environment in connection with Swedish football over the last thirty years, one is struck by a number of things.

Firstly, they have all had the aim of using a set problem formulation to propose solutions to a problem. However, this problem has rarely been defined and clearly demarcated, and the reports have rarely been based on statistics and figures or any form of research within the field. Secondly, those who have carried out the investigations are linked by a common theme. Some of them have had a certain background in the sporting movement as such, but they cannot in any event be said to have had any relationship of their own with – or experience of – the supporter environment that they have been tasked with understanding and influencing. In almost every case, there has been a complete lack of interest in starting out from a value-neutral overall understanding of

supporter culture and involving those people who are involved in active supportership. The supporters in the stands have always been "someone else", a problem to be dealt with from above, ideally by suggesting rules and tougher measures.

But how did this come to be the case?

Before the public reports

The discussion on the nature of football audiences and how they should – or perhaps should *not* – behave is an old one, although for much of the 20th century it took place in the media and within the sporting movement, rather than government authorities and the public sphere. This is an interesting point to consider, as an investigator who does not have any experience of their own of supporter culture still forms their own opinion of it via the media debate. So what has the tone of the debate been?

As early as 1912, following a rowdy derby in Gothenburg where fights between players led to the spectators storming the pitch, a media debate about the behaviour of the spectators ensued. A sports newspaper suggested that standing spectators should not be allowed access to matches, or that ticket prices should be raised to prevent "the unruly elements" from attending. There were repeat disturbances at the derby the following year, whereupon Chairman of the Swedish Football Association Wilhelm Friberg declared that "notices should be erected on the pitch, asking spectators not to disturb the players, either by yelling or by other means". Regarding the question of ticket prices, Friberg said that "the price of entry tickets might possibly be increased to remove those spectators who behave improperly", and that similar measures had been tried before "and had led to the desired result: the exclusion of the rabble". After the Swedish Championship final between AIK Stockholm and Helsingborgs IF in 1914, the discussion continued when the Stockholm supporters were accused of being too ardent in their local patriotism. The question of whether the spectators were entitled to clearly sympathise with only one of the teams on the pitch and to "give audible expressions to their sympathies and their enthusiasm" divided contemporary sports writers.

What we can see here is how sports authorities and the media distance themselves from football audiences – some of them are labelled as "problematic" or "a rabble", but without making any clear distinction. Which spectators actually constitute the rabble? Nor is it only violent behaviour, for example, that is called into question, but also the actual emotional investment in a chosen club and the expression of these sympathies. This was certainly natural according to contemporary views of "the spirit of sportsmanship", but it still involves a distancing from football supporters' ways of following the sport and their teams.

Almost sixty years later, the discussion featured the same tone after the final round of Allsvenskan matches in 1970, when Örebro SK played IFK Göteborg at Eyravallen in Örebro. After a disallowed goal for the away team (who were at risk of relegation), which resulted in some of the spectators invading the pitch, the arena's announcer threatened to abandon the match unless people returned to the stands. However, the appeals broadcast over the loudspeaker actually led to more Gothenburgers running onto the pitch, as the threat of a rematch was seen as the last chance to keep their team in the Allsvenskan league. Just as had been the case sixty years previously, the ideal lived on of a gentlemanly football audience whose passion should be controlled and never lead to blinkeredness. It was to these ideals that the announcer in Örebro was appealing, but the reality in the stands was different. Football audiences were drawn to their team, not to a spirit of sportsmanship from the turn of the century. In several of the media reports the next day, the supporters' passion was viewed with suspicion as something unfamiliar, dangerous and "southern". Nor, on this occasion, was it only the fact that the away supporters had caused a public order disturbance and broken off the match that was called into question, but also their unreasonable strength of feeling in itself. In an article in the Aftonbladet newspaper, representatives from the Football Association said they had not believed that something like this could happen in Sweden, and that the only solution was to "fight fire with fire", and to "take radical action". A board member from IFK Göteborg distanced himself from the behaviour, but did not believe that the supporters were members of the association: "Experience has shown us that coach journeys in connection with sporting events often attract a certain clientele. People who see the chance to get out and about at a reasonable price."

This tone is undeniably similar to that taken by Wilhelm Friberg and others when calling for the exclusion of the rabble from the stands in the early 1900s. It is important to bear this in mind as we look at the public reports published by various authorities during the last thirty years.

The first public review

Despite the National Sports Board having taken action as early as 1970 "to turn the tide in the right direction" – among other measures, the associations were given a grant of 50,000 kronor for "propaganda, instruction and the like" – it was not until the mid-1980s that the state administration began to pay serious attention to what was happening in the stands. At the beginning of 1985, a couple of years after young supporters of the three Stockholm clubs had formed the Black Army, Bajen Fans and the Blue Saints, and a few months before the Heysel Stadium disaster in which 39 people died and 400 were injured at the European Cup Final in Brussels, the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (BRÅ) set up a working party to study the trend. It was tasked with proposing measures to reduce violence, damage and disruptive behaviour in connection with football and ice hockey matches. The working

party was led by BRÅ's board member Bosse Ringholm and, in addition to two officials from BRÅ, also consisted of representatives from the Swedish Football Association, the Swedish National Police Board, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and the Swedish Ice Hockey Association.

The working party submitted four interim reports on different themes and a final report. The first interim report was based on the question of whether violence in the stands is caused by "normal lads who turn wild as a result of intoxication and the prevailing atmosphere", or whether they are "professional hooligans" who only go where trouble can be expected. The latter alternative was said to be the perception of the police and security guards. The investigation was carried out by studying the backgrounds of 125 people arrested in connection with events at Råsunda in Stockholm and Idrottsparken in Norrköping in 1984 and 1985. Peculiarly, this included 51 people – almost half of the total number – who had been arrested at a rock concert at Råsunda, with the comment that the violence that occurs at rock concerts is not significantly different to "football violence". The conclusion presented by the report was that most of those who had been arrested were under the influence of alcohol, and that they were previously known to the police or the social authorities. Sixty percent of those who were apprehended for reasons other than drunkenness had previously been charged with a crime, leading the author of the report to maintain unambiguously that "when serious trouble occurs in the stands in connection with football matches or other events, there is a large element of so-called 'hooligans'". Perhaps it was this basic view that resulted in the working party focusing mainly on measures to control audience behaviour through fencing, security guards and police officers, and to try to persuade audiences to see reason by appealing to them and providing information. The question is whether recommendations and measures proposed by the group could be seen as innovative even thirty years ago.

In the interests of fairness, however, it should also be said that parts of the group's reports also addressed the issue of a repressive focus. They identified a risk that fencing off and increased policing could mean that the sports arena would be seen as a place of violence, attracting individuals who were looking for trouble. At the same time, it is hard to see that this insight influenced their proposed measures and the image of the supporter environment that characterises the reports. Similarly, the authors of the reports expressed a partly positive view of the newly formed supporter clubs - while at the same time referring to supporters throughout the reports as "someone else", someone who needs to be educated by the sporting movement. This is expressed, for example, in the opinion that the sports clubs should be responsible for ensuring that supporters were characterised by "good norms and a sense of fair play", and that the best way to achieve this would be if the new supporter clubs became their own sections within the framework of the relevant sports association. There was absolutely no mention of any dialogue with supporters about this matter, or even a line of reasoning about whether this really was a solution that the supporter clubs wanted. They also urged the sports associations to be open to suggestions for improvements from the members of supporter clubs and fan clubs, but not in the first instance that young people should be involved in activities or that their commitment could be a positive thing. Instead, it was explicitly stated that such an attitude would allow the clubs to impose requirements on how supporters should behave.

BRÅ's second attempt

After the BRÅ reports in the mid-1980s, it took more than twenty years before the Swedish Government tasked BRÅ with a fresh assignment on this topic. The new assignment involved compiling knowledge with the aim of reducing public order disturbances in

connection with sport, and proposing measures to improve coordination between the various actors at all levels. The result was a 98-page report on strategies to combat football-related public order disturbances. The assignment was carried out in cooperation with the Swedish National Police Board, and during the process, three seminars were held with researchers in the field, supporter police officers, the Swedish Sports Confederation, the Swedish Ministry of Justice, security managers from the Stockholm clubs, and a single, solitary supporter representative in the form of the Chairman of Djurgården's Järnkaminerna group.

Right in the foreword, it is mentioned that there was a distinct shortage of action-focused research into football-related public order disturbances, both in Sweden and abroad, which was deemed to make it hard to say anything about the effectiveness of the proposals that cropped up time and time again in the media debate (such as stricter legislation, removing standing spaces and higher ticket prices). It was also noted in the report that the nature of public order disturbances has changed since the report in the 1980s. The new violence problems of firms – organised risk supporters – was compared with other forms of organised crime for the first time.

The 2008 BRÅ report resulted in an inventory of actions (social, situational and repressive) that had already been applied in Sweden and the rest of Europe, and in proposals for future strategies in the form of short- and long-term measures. The social actions presented included the initiatives that had been taken to reinforce positive supporter culture, such as the Fryshuset's *Football Alliance* project and individual clubs' initiatives such as the AIK Style and the Djurgård Spirit. Positive supporter culture was defined by the authors of the report as "being engaged and supporting one's team, and showing young people alternatives other than fighting in order to be a good supporter", while also raising the fact that views on subjects such as pyrotechnics differ. They also wrote about the importance of "the actors" trying to agree on what should and should not be included in the concept of a positive terrace

atmosphere, and that the fact pyrotechnics are used despite being banned may be because there is a "tacit acceptance from elements of the football world for what is called 'a positive terrace culture'". Regarding the clubs' actions to strengthen a sense of unity between supporters and the clubs, the report stated that there should be actions that primarily reach "young supporters" and not those who are already established in the firm culture. The short-term strategies dealt with issues such as improved control at entrances, peripheral events in connection with the match to create a less aggressive atmosphere, recruiting new types of audiences (such as families with children and women) and scheduling high risk matches at lunchtime on weekends. The more long-term actions involved reviewing arena security, training security guards and police officers to deal with crowds, and the Government appointing someone to investigate and draw up a national action plan to clarify responsibilities and forms of cooperation between the actors involved.

The reasoning that actors other than supporters themselves should define what constitutes a positive atmosphere for them appears in several investigations, and is telling of the lack of knowledge about how supporter culture works. Describing the environment in the stands as consisting of either "young supporters who can be influenced" or "those who are already established in the firm culture" also demonstrates a strange view of all the thousands of people who regularly visit Swedish football arenas and a lack of insight into how to influence subcultural norms. Despite this, it is worth noting that someone from the supporter environment had actually been included for the first time in the discussion on this environment. Although the supporter perspective seems to have been seriously under-represented in this work, this still suggests an emerging insight into the fact that supporter parties can be a part of the solution, and not just a problem.

The reports of the national coordinators

The Government chose to follow BRÅ's latter recommendation by appointing a national coordinator in 2011 with the task of submitting proposals on how crime in connection with sports events can be countered. Moderate Party politician and Governor of Stockholm County Per Unckel was first appointed investigator and national coordinator, before being replaced by former National Police Commissioner Björn Eriksson following Unckel's death that same year. The role was unusual in that it involved both carrying out a major investigation and contributing towards improved cooperation between the relevant parties. The investigation assignment was also fairly broad, encompassing everything from carrying out assessments of the extent of sport-related crime to clarifying the distribution of responsibilities between the parties and submitting proposals on what was required in order for sports events to be carried out in a safe and pleasant manner.

The investigation stage resulted in an interim report and a final report, totalling 812 pages. Eriksson and secretary Stefan Dellså's main findings can be summarised in three points: support positive supporter culture including greater consideration for the travelling away supporters, prevent undesired elements from accessing the arenas, and counter the inward flow of new supporters with risk behaviours. Although Björn Eriksson's media appearances in the years following his assignment related almost exclusively to the proposed bills of a repressive nature, it was primarily the sharper focus on the positive forces within supporter culture that were the most innovative feature of the investigation. For the first time, official Sweden now recognised that the organised supporter movement is an important actor with the experience, knowledge and competence to develop sports culture, and that the supporters' own voices are essential in order to identify constructive, sustainable long-term solutions. Eriksson also highlighted SFSU's important role and that the supporter movement – through SFSU – provided several proposals that he had taken on board in his work. The chapter on pyrotechnics is no less revolutionary. Following pragmatic reasoning, it was suggested for the first time by someone in an official position (and also a former National Police Commissioner) that trials should be begun to allow legal pyrotechnics at some football arenas for evaluation purposes – an issue that the organised supporter movement has been pushing for many years.

Unfortunately, it is harder to see Eriksson and Dellså's view of the potential offered by supporter culture reflected in the two subsequent national coordinators in this field, Rose-Marie Frebran and Agneta Blom. Their roles were certainly different, as they were tasked with supporting the various actors' continued work instead of investigating any specific issues, but the difference in attitude is nevertheless striking. Frebran's final report in 2015 mentions the importance of the Government continuing to work actively for positive supporter culture, and that there are grounds to invite the sporting movement to a discussion on the supporter concept and to "clarify who should be included in this". The "top downwards" perspective is further reinforced through the proposal that the clubs should challenge each other to see who can create the most pleasant atmosphere at their events. Under the heading "How commercial interests can promote and counter a positive trend", Frebran also writes that TV broadcasts of matches at pubs and restaurants encourage the masculine culture in connection with sport, and thereby "contribute towards the worse aspects of supporter culture: drunkenness, disorder and in the worst case criminal actions". Linked to the question of pyrotechnics, Frebran writes in her final report that certain supporter groups use pyrotechnics in order to create spectacular special effects, while others use illegal pyrotechnics more as a symbol of power than as a way of enhancing the atmosphere with tifos, without providing further details of the background to this analysis.

After the report, Frebran's work was criticised by both SFSU and certain journalists for the fact that the supporter movement as a whole had not been involved in her work. Frebran commented on this criticism to the Football Channel by partly blaming her secretary Agneta Blom, who had led the practical work: "I believe that they had started working on something, and then asked if the supporters should be included. But by then they had made so much progress that it felt strange to include a new party. Not including them probably wasn't a decision that was thought through very much, it's just how it turned out." The fact that SFSU was incorrectly called "Sweden's United Supporter Union" in the final report and that the supporter clubs were not invited to the full-day conference on positive supporter culture that she arranged felt symptomatic of Frebran's efforts.

Agneta Blom herself took over as national coordinator in 2015. Blom's final report in 2016 was twice as many pages long as her predecessor's, and took a critical position both towards football's representatives and their cooperation with the police authorities and towards the supporter environment in general. The sensitive issue of pyrotechnics seems to be bubbling away under the surface. The coordinator (and perhaps the police top brass she has spoken with?) believes that football's representatives listen too much to supporters instead of taking the tougher line of the police authorities. In the worst case, this says a lot about both the investigator's and the police's views of supporters - and in particular about whether they see the supporter movement as part of the solution or simply a problem that needs to be dealt with. Both the report's sweeping description of orderliness in connection with Allsvenskan matches in cities, with regard to a description of a Stockholm derby from a report by the Swedish Agency for Public Management, and the wording that "all people who have been in the arenas, as spectators or to work, have been exposed to danger through individuals in the terraces throwing fire crackers and illegally burning pyrotechnics of various types" drew criticism from SEF representatives in the media.

In the report, supporter culture is described as a culture that is characterised by destructive masculine norms in which people do things, say things and excuse the behaviour of others in a way that is rarely accepted elsewhere. The latter is deemed to be due to the threats and harassment that would be suffered by those who did not excuse this behaviour. It is maintained that the supporter environment attracts people who are drawn to environments in which destructive behaviour - alcohol, drugs, violence and other criminality - is accepted and cultivated. The fact that many spectators see it as natural to meet up over a few beers before the match is mentioned in the same breath as the problem of violence, that there are "groups who train in both incitement and fighting" and others who "obtain and deal in combustible and explosive goods beyond society's control". Blom makes a big deal of the fact that within various subcultures connected with the football stands there is a perception that the football environment is a place of refuge from the rest of society, which she believes nurtures violence. As an appendix to the final report – and perhaps as an alibi for the investigator herself not having to balance her views of the supporter issue? - there is a 42-page report on methods for working with positive supporter culture, written by IFK Göteborg's then SLO Anders Almgren. One important point in this in-depth appendix is the significance of supporter culture being seen in a nuanced way and with a focus on the positive. "We must not be afraid to highlight the problems," wrote Almgren on SEF's website when the report was published. "But even the public debate about the bad things must be informed and must be addressed with objectivity and balance. Generalisations and exaggerations do not benefit anyone. Instead, they contribute towards the escalation of the problem." This is a position that Agneta Blom's final report would have benefited from.

Reflections: similarities and differences over time

A great deal has happened, both within Swedish top-flight football and within the rest of society, between the BRÅ reports of the 1980s and Agneta Blom's final report of 2016. In 1986, the average Allsvenskan audience figure was 5,074 spectators per match, and a Djurgården versus Elfsborg game drew as few as 468 people. Then, the ultras culture involved at most a couple of hundred young people following four or five big city teams – today, it is a mass movement. Despite this trend, it is easy to get the impression that the public debate about the supporter environment is still based on the same dubious conclusion that the BRÅ gentlemen drew in their 1985 report: that those young people in the football stands are always "someone else", cast by nature in a completely different form to "normal lads".

The perspective has consistently been that the problem should be dealt with from above – "the exclusion of the rabble", as Wilhelm Friberg put it more than a hundred years ago. In the 1970s, sporting should be educated through information propaganda, and in the 1980s the BRÅ reports suggested that the sporting movement should educate young ultras about good norms and fair play. In 2008, BRÅ encouraged the sporting movement and the clubs to agree on what they meant by a positive terrace atmosphere, and in 2015 the Government's coordinator proposed that the clubs should challenge each other to see who could create the most pleasant atmosphere at their events. With the possible exception of Eriksson and Dellså, the problem perspective has consistently had to define a movement that now includes tens of thousands of individuals. There has rarely been any sign of interest in seriously involving or understanding those people who live their lives in the football stands – and who should reasonably have been a part of the solution to the problems that actually exist. Even in those cases where supporters have been included, such as with Eriksson and Dellså, or when Blom had Almgren write an appendix

on working with positive supporter culture, the follow-up work has mainly followed traditional thinking. For example, since the conclusion of his investigation Eriksson has primarily been involved in pushing through the repressive bills that were put forward, and has been absent from the debate on legal pyrotechnics. In the same way, Blom's actions since her report have mainly involved criticism of football's central actors seeming to take a yielding attitude towards the supporter environment, rather than anything else. It is obviously hard to release oneself from the traditional attitude that supporters should be "corrected", or that repressive means can be used to force through desired changes. A partial explanation for this could be the media interest in the problem. However, if such an assertion is correct then it simply confirms the initial premise about the interplay between the repression focused attitudes towards supporters and the image reproduced in the media.

Whatever the reason, the real problem with this is that experience shows it does not lead us anywhere. For what change for the better can we achieve when the investigator fails to start out from a value-neutral overall understanding – in which the supporter environment can consist of both positive and negative elements – and instead paints such a dark, terrifying picture that few of those who are part of the supporter environment can recognise themselves? What desire for improvement can be created among supporters when the public reports show such an obvious unwillingness to even acknowledge the positive aspects of supporter culture? Most of those with experience of how the various subcultures in the stands operate would probably agree that this is hardly the way to achieve positive change or even hold a constructive discussion.

However, I would like to conclude by noting a gradual shift which nevertheless offers a degree of hope. For despite everything, the degree of "dealing with the problem from above", of "someone else" and of a lack of balance in public reports has changed over time. In BRÅ's 2008 report, a supporter representative was included for the first time. In both of Eriksson and Dellså's recommendations, supporters were given a voice – through SFSU, local supporter representatives and SLOs – and regardless of what then came of it, a number of ideas were presented that would previously have been unimaginable in such a context (for example trialling legal pyrotechnic alternatives). And alongside Agneta Blom's at best suspicious tone towards football and the supporter movement, she still allowed an SLO and former supporter representative to write a stand-alone appendix to her report. These signs of a thawing attitude towards the supporter movement in public reports are echoed by similar signs in, for example, the media and the rhetoric from central actors within the world of football.

We must see this as an opportunity. Who knows, if supporter representatives and supporter organisations continue to try to become ever better at taking their share of the responsibility for a positive and sustainable supporter environment in connection with Swedish football, then perhaps in the future we will see a public discussion about this, one of the biggest youth movements of our time, that is actually value-neutral, factual and balanced?

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Tony Ernst is the former Chairman of the Swedish Football Supporters' Union (SFSU) and of Malmö FF's supporter club, MFF Support. Lars-Christer Olsson is Chairman of the Swedish Professional Football League (SEF) and the former Secretary General of the European football organisation UEFA. Here, they write – in the form of an e-mail conversation – about the climate of cooperation between SEF and SFSU that emerged when they chaired their respective organisations.

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Pierre Nordberg is the Supporter Liaison Officer (SLO) for Malmö FF. Here, he describes the role of the SLO, the interaction between the police and supporters, the challenges this involves and how the SLO role influences and is influenced by this.

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Anders Almgren has been active in the organised supporter culture in connection with IFK Göteborg since the early 2000s, including as Chairman of the Supporterklubben Änglarna supporters' association and as SLO for IFK Göteborg. He is now part of Enable's management and one of the editors of this book. Here, he writes about cooperation between IFK Göteborg, the police and the City of Gothenburg during his time as SLO for IFK – and possibly in the future?

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John Pettersson is a trained journalist, IFK Göteborg supporter and former writer for the supporter blog "Bara ben på Glenn Hysén". He has also co-authored the book *Vi som är från Göteborg åker aldrig hem med sorg*. Here, he shares his perspective on the image of supporters that has been portrayed in the media over the years, and on how this image has changed over time.

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Mathias Henriksson is former Vice Chairman of the Supporterklubben Änglarna supporters' association and edited the book *Vi som är från Göteborg åker aldrig hem med sorg* (2014), which deals with IFK Göteborg supporter culture. Here, he writes about the image of football audiences and life in the stands as conveyed in public reports since the 1980s and up until the present day, as well has how this image has changed – or perhaps not changed? – over time.