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Is it worth it?

Swedish football supporters' perceptions toward a
potential introduction of video assistant referee (VAR)
in Swedish football

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Abstract

Video assistant referee (VAR) is a decision-aid technology that aims to help referees in association football to make more accurate and fair decisions. In recent years, Swedish football has been echoed by debates whether to incorporate the much contested technology, as many other countries have. This study investigates Swedish football supporters' perceptions toward a potential introduction of VAR in Swedish football. Further, it explores how these perceptions relate to the changing nature of football and what the supporters would risk losing if VAR was implemented in Sweden. The study employed a qualitative approach by conducting nine semi-structured interviews with Swedish football supporters. The results show that the participants opposed the potential incorporation of VAR in Sweden. Overall, the possible benefits of VAR were not perceived as worth the cost. VAR was perceived to harm the spontaneity of football and emotional experience, while contributing little to the greater fairness and accuracy in decisions. The opposition toward VAR was accompanied by a general dissatisfaction with the development of football, where economic rationalism increasingly dominates the sport, leaving less room for those who value the traditional aspects of football. This study demonstrates that an introduction of VAR can lead to a disenchantment of football which would risk supporters to lose their rituals, values, and beliefs that uphold their communities and constitute meaningful supportership.

Keywords: emotions; football; rationalization; supporter; disenchantment; video assistant referee

1 Introduction

Modernization of individuals' everyday life is one of the implications of modernization of societies. One of the characteristics of modern societies is that technology has become an increasingly influential part of individuals' everyday lives. Modern technological advancements do not leave many areas untouched, one of which is the world of sports, where technological aids are increasingly being used (Armenteros et al., 2019). In football, such technologies are, for example, goal-line technology (GLT), “vanishing spray”, and video assistant referee (VAR). Decision-aid technologies are meant to help referees to make more correct and fair decisions, as well as increase transparency in the decision-making process. However, the football world consists of various groups of actors who are influenced by the technologies in different ways (e.g. Aycañ & Onağ, 2022; Frandsen & Landgrebe, 2022) and sometimes, technologies in sports have unexpected side effects (Kerr, 2016).

Not too long ago, the world of football was introduced to video assistant referees. The function of VAR is to assist referees in situations of: goal/no goal, penalty/no penalty, direct red card, and mistaken identity (IFAB, 2018). It works under the philosophy of: “‘minimum interference – maximum benefit’ which aims to reduce unfairness caused by ‘clear and obvious errors’ or ‘serious missed incidents’ (...)” (IFAB, 2018). In short, VAR is a person (video assistant referee) assisted by AVARs (assistant video assistant referees), who together assist the on-field referees to make more accurate and fair decisions (Inside FIFA, 2022). The use of VAR allows the referees to stop the match, replay, and review a recording of incidents from multiple angles and in slow motion in order to overturn and minimize errors. VAR was incorporated into the Laws of the Game in 2018 by the International Football Association Board (Inside FIFA, 2022). Since then, many football leagues and competitions on both national and international level have adopted this technology. For example, the FIFA World Cup in 2018 (Inside FIFA, 2022), the German Bundesliga in 2017 (Bundesliga, 2018), and the English Premier League in 2019 (Premier League, 2020). In Scandinavia, Denmark and Norway have implemented VAR¹ (Frandsen & Landgrebe, 2022; Norges Fotballforbund, n.d.).

¹ VAR was implemented in the Danish Superliga in 2020 and the Norwegian Eliteserien 2023 (Frandsen & Landgrebe, 2022; Norges Fotballforbund, n.d.). However, there are two versions of VAR: “full VAR” and VAR Light (Inside FIFA, 2023). Denmark and Norway use VAR Light (Frandsen & Landgrebe, 2022; Zakrisson, 2023) which is a more affordable software version and encompasses for example fewer cameras (Inside FIFA, 2023).

One of the side effects of VAR is its influence on spectators. Fans, supporters, and other spectators are groups on which VAR is known to have an impact (e.g. Hamsund & Scelles, 2021; Petersen-Wagner & Lee Ludvigsen, 2023; Scanlon et al., 2022; Winand et al., 2021). Supporters have an undeniably central role in football: not only from a purely monetary perspective (customers generating revenues), but they are also the major factor for the creation of stadium atmospheres (Herd, 2017; Hill et al., 2022). They are sometimes referred to as the twelfth man of their team (Goal, 2020) and their influence on players has been proposed to partly explain the phenomenon of home advantage (Schwartz & Barsky, 1977). At the same time, supportership provides a sense of individual and collective identity and belonging (Giulianotti, 2002; Herd 2018) and constitutes an arena for emotional connections, expressions, and experiences (Herd, 2018; Hill et al., 2022; Radmann & Karlén, 2022).

This is also a group where the introduction of VAR meets resistance in Sweden. To this day, neither GLT nor VAR is used in Swedish football. However, in recent years, Swedish football has been increasingly subject to debate, whether to take a step toward an increasingly technologized football by introducing VAR as many others have done. The Swedish football supporters have mixed opinions as well, but passionate supporters opposing the idea of “modern football”, not least of all VAR, are certainly not uncommon (e.g. Herd, 2018; Larsson, 2023; von Knorring, 2024). Some supporter associations for Swedish elite football clubs have been clear about where they stand and expressed their opinions in news articles (e.g. Pettersson et al., 2024), websites (e.g. Bajen Fans, n.d.; Supras Malmö et al., 2023), social media platforms (e.g. Kvillestreamen, 2024) and in stadiums (e.g. Jönsson, 2023) regarding the matter. The question is: Why do supporters oppose VAR, despite VAR providing referees with tools to make more accurate decisions (see e.g. Spitz, 2021)? Or phrased differently: what would the Swedish supporters risk losing if VAR was introduced in Swedish football? These are questions which demand a deeper examination of the meaning of football for supporters and the role VAR plays in it. VAR is one example of how modernization and technologization can influence us in peculiar ways and challenge us to discern what we are truly passionate about.

This study set out to examine how Swedish football supporters perceive the potential introduction of VAR in Swedish football and how these perceptions relate to the changing nature of football. By drawing on theories by Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Randall Collins, I suggest that the implementation of VAR is a step toward rationalization of football. Further, I

argue that rationalization of football challenges the values, rituals, and beliefs of football supporters which constitute a *meaningful* football. Finally, I propose that rationalization risks leading to disenchantment of football. No sociological research has investigated Swedish football supporters' perceptions toward VAR. Hence, this study contributes to the research field on decision-aid technologies in Swedish context and adds on to the existing literature in social sciences (e.g. Hamsund & Scelles, 2021; Märtins et al., 2023; Petersen-Wagner & Lee Ludgivsen, 2023; Scanlon et al., 2022; Winand et al., 2021). It makes a sociological and an empirical contribution to the field of study. Moreover, the study investigates Swedish supporters' views on VAR in relation to the (late-)modernization process of football, also known as “modern football” (e.g. Hill et al., 2018; Numerato, 2015; Perasovic & Mustapic, 2018).

1.1 Research Aims and Questions

The purpose of this study is to enhance our understanding of Swedish supporters' views on the potential introduction of video assistant referee (VAR) in Swedish football. Furthermore, the study explores the possible risks entailed with the introduction of VAR on supporters and their culture from the supporters' perspective. In other words, it explores what is at stake here. Finally, it discusses these perceptions in relation to the modernization of football.

RQ1: How do Swedish football supporters perceive the potential introduction of video assistant referee (VAR) in Sweden?

RQ2: How do these perceptions relate to their broader views on the changing nature of football?

RQ3: What would these supporters risk losing if VAR was introduced in Swedish football?

2 Background

In this section, I will provide some information about Swedish football, some conflicts in Swedish football, and the role supporters played in them. This information provides important context to understand the VAR conflict.

2.1 Swedish Football

The system that Swedish football, among other sports under the Swedish Sports Confederation (Riksidrottsförbundet, RF), is built so that no investor can own more than 49% of a club which means that the members of club associations have the majority of the votes (Herd, 2018; Radmann et al., 2023). This rule is often called the 51% rule. Basically, it means that Swedish football is democratic, ruled by members of non-profit associations. The system is based on the idea that football is a popular movement (*folkrörelse*) not driven by external political or economic powers. For a long time, Swedish football has not been especially attractive to external investors, and they were “schooled” into not involving themselves in football with their money (Andersson, 2016, p.484). However, as money increasingly became a central aspect of football, Swedish football has not quite kept up with the development in Europe. For example, professionalization of the sport happened long after many other European countries and commercialization has not been as strong as in many more economically oriented football countries. The lower economic resources have led to a lower competitiveness of Swedish football in the European spheres (Andersson, 2016). On the other hand, the model and ideals are generally valued and proudly defended by supporters (Herd, 2018; Radmann et al., 2023). The 51% rule has prevented external investors from taking over Swedish clubs and modifying them as they like. A popular example of what private ownership in football can lead to is Red Bull Salzburg (e.g. Andersson, 2016; Herd, 2018) where the company changed, for example, the name of the club and the arena as well as the club’s colors. Despite that the old model has been maintained, and the ideals have left its marks, Sweden has not been immune to the globalization and neoliberal forces (Andersson, 2016; Radmann et al., 2023). They take form, for example, in an increase of player transfers (Radmann et al., 2023), sponsors on match kits as well as names of arenas for sponsorship reasons, e.g. Bravida Arena (formerly Rambergsvallen) and Friends Arena (soon to be Strawberry Arena).

We will soon turn to the battle of VAR, but before that, I present some other struggles in the history of Swedish football. First, it is worth mentioning the battle of the 51% rule that went on between 2008 and 2013 (Almgren, 2015). As mentioned, this rule is stated in the bylaws of RF. Therefore, all sports under RF act under it. In the annual meeting 2013 of RF, there was a bill proposing that the 51% should be changed so that every sport association could decide the percentage themselves (Wagner et al., 2013). While the Swedish Football Association (Svenska

Fotbollförbundet, SvFF) was in favor of this bill, the Swedish Football Supporter Union wanted to preserve the democracy of associations and therefore, it worked against this change (e.g. Almgren, 2015; Andersson, 2016). Eventually, the bill was not passed. The start of another long conflict period arose in 2016 when Swedish authorities employed a strategy called the Condition Ladder (Villkorstrappan) to manage disturbances in football stadiums (Karlén & Radmann, 2023). This strategy involved, for example, banning supporters' flags in order to prevent the use of pyrotechnics. It was met by critique and protests, not least from supporters, as it was considered a collective punishment and harming supporter culture. The Condition Ladder was abolished in 2021 (Johannesson, 2021).

2.2 The Swedish VAR Conflict

Sweden is the last country of the 30 highest ranked football countries in Europe who has not implemented VAR (Pettersson et al., 2024) and supporters have been a major part of this resistance as well (Sundkvist, 2024). VAR opposing supporters have mobilized by showing their opinions in different ways, for example, in newspapers (e.g. Pettersson et al., 2024), social media (e.g. Kvillestreamen, 2024; Svenska Supporterunionen, 2024), and in stadiums (e.g. Jönsson, 2023). One strategy employed by the supporters is through democratic paths. In 2024, the majority of the Swedish elite clubs had an annual meeting decision to oppose the introduction of VAR and work against its introduction in Swedish football (Stahre, 2024). No elite club has made a decision to be in favor of the implementation (Pettersson et al., 2024). In the same year, several elite clubs took the matter to the district level and the 2024 annual meetings of the Gothenburg Football Association and Värmlands Football Association passed bills stating that their districts will oppose the implementation of VAR (e.g. Berander, 2024; Wagner, 2024).

While VAR would affect various stakeholders in Swedish football, such as referees, players, supporters, and clubs, the main conflict seems to surround the supporters and the Swedish Football Association. In 2023, the former Prime Minister of Sweden, Fredrik Reinfeldt, became the chairman of SvFF. Shortly after, he stated that “VAR is our future” (SVT, 2023), which left many supporters dissatisfied with him leading to protests in stadiums through, for example, the use of banners (e.g. Jönsson, 2023). Hammarby IF went even so far as to vote in favor of a bill in their annual meeting 2024 to remove Reinfeldt as the chairman of SvFF (A. Johansson, 2024). One of the main arguments for this, though by no means the only one, was

Reinfeldt's views on VAR. The VAR opposing supporters meant that since the majority of the elite clubs have an annual meeting decision to oppose the implementation of VAR, their decisions should be respected. The question became a matter of democracy (M. Johansson, 2024). What Reinfeldt on the other hand meant was that everyone involved in football should have a say, not only elite football (SVT, 2023). One year later (25th of April 2024), Reinfeldt announced that the introduction of VAR is not on SvFF's agenda anymore (Sundkvist, 2024).

The conflict of the 51% rule, the Condition Ladder, and VAR illustrate power relations in Swedish football as well as resistance and mobilizing strategies of supporters. While I will not focus on these theoretical concepts in my analysis of the VAR question, they are factors that make the Swedish VAR case sociologically significant. Furthermore, they provide important context to the topic: The major mobilization of supporters tells us something about how critical this question is for them. This study seeks to understand the underlying reasons for *why* the supporters resist VAR and mobilize to prevent the introduction of the technology.

3 Previous Research

Currently, there are no sociological studies conducted in Sweden concerning VAR from football supporters' perspective. In this section, I will first present previous research on the modernization of football and research on VAR from fans' and supporters' perspective in other leagues and competitions. Thereafter, I will discuss studies which have focused on Swedish supporter culture².

3.1 Modern Football and Technologies

Modernization of football has been discussed much in sports literature. "Modern football" comes from a movement called Stand Against Modern Football and has gained popularity globally (e.g. Hill et al., 2018; Numerato, 2015; Perasovic & Mustapic, 2018; Radmann et al., 2023). According to Numerato (2015), despite the name "modern football", the movement opposes neoliberal forces in football in late modernity. This is because the movement opposes

² To find previous research, I used Sociology Collection, ProQuest Social Sciences, Scopus, the Supersök of the University library of Gothenburg, and Google Scholar. I also used cross-references. To find research about Swedish football and supporter culture, I used search words: Sweden/Swedish, supporters/fans, supporter culture, football/soccer with different combinations. To find research about video assistant referee, I used search words: VAR/video assistant referee, football/soccer, and supporters/fans/spectators with different combinations.

commercialization, commodification, and increased surveillance and control of supporters (Numerato, 2015; Perasovic & Mustapic, 2018) which, in a sociological sense, are characteristics of neoliberalism in late modernity rather than modernity. Increasing prices (Williams, 2007) and changes in stadiums (Giulianotti, 2011) are usually also part of the late modernization of football and criticized. One of the characteristics of late modernity can be considered the increasing use of technology in sports, and social scientific literature on technologies used in football is growing. Below, I will present and discuss some of these studies focusing on VAR.

Previous studies on VAR have adopted various approaches on the matter, focusing on for example coaches (e.g. Chen & Davidson, 2022), referees (e.g. Samuel et al., 2020), and broadcasters' discourse (Bell, 2021). Some studies included the perspective of multiple actors (e.g. Aycan & Onag, 2022; Frandsen & Landgrebe, 2022; Schwab et al., 2023). Focus has also been on VAR in relation to the rules and standards of football (Zglinski, 2022). There are several studies that have investigated VAR from the perspective of fans, supporters and other spectators. Both quantitative and qualitative methods have been used, varying from ethnographic fieldwork and interviews (Scanlon et al., 2022), analysis of social media platforms such as Twitter (nowadays X) (e.g. Kolbinger & Knopp, 2020) and YouTube (Petersen-Wagner & Lee Ludvigsen, 2023), to different quantitative methods (e.g. Winand et al., 2021; Hamsund & Scelles, 2021). Below, I will discuss some of the studies.

Winand et al. (2021) studied British and German fans' satisfaction toward VAR. They found that the majority of the fans support VAR, but that there were differences between groups to which degree. Higher identification with one's football club was associated with lower satisfaction with VAR. These individuals also enjoyed debating football more, and the researchers suggested that VAR might take away the enjoyment of debating football. Winand et al. draw on the study of Koenigstorfer et al. (2010) suggesting that there might be differences in the level of satisfaction depending on one's nationality and the league followed. Hamsund and Scelles (2021) studied the English Premier League (the EPL) fans and their perceptions toward VAR through an online survey. They found that the majority of EPL fans want to continue to see VAR, and VAR did not decrease their interest in the EPL. However, it was also perceived that the use of VAR should be improved due to its time-consumption. The perceptions were associated with age: younger fans were more positive about the use of VAR.

The study of Scanlon et al. (2022) is the closest to my study methodologically, since they conducted ethnographic fieldwork and short on-spot interviews with the EPL fans. Their results showed that while some respondents were positive about VAR, there were problems concerning the accuracy of VAR and transparency of the decision process. They also found that the flow of football and in-stadium experience were harmed due to VAR. Furthermore, Märtins et al. (2023) studied the German Bundesliga fans and their attitudes and perceptions on VAR with a focus on transparency, social influence, and procedural justice. Overall, the attitudes toward VAR were found to be positive, but those who watch matches in stadiums were generally more negative about VAR. Additionally, Petersen-Wagner and Lee Ludvigsen (2023) studied fans' perceptions of VAR in the 2018 Men's World Cup by using YouTube comments. The majority of the comments were negative, and they focused on what the negative comments were about. They found that VAR was not perceived to make neutral decisions but to exercise neocolonial power benefiting the Global North more than the Global South. Moreover, some comments indicated that VAR kills the authenticity of football since refereeing mistakes were perceived as a part of football. Some fans perceived that the purpose of VAR is commercial.

3.2 Football and Supporter Culture in Sweden

As mentioned earlier, no previous studies have explored Swedish supporters' views on a potential introduction of VAR in Sweden or supporters' views on VAR in relation to the late-modernization of football. Nonetheless, there are studies that have investigated Swedish football and supporter culture. In this section, I will present some of these studies because understanding the Swedish supporter culture helps us to understand the supporters' perceptions toward VAR.

Karlén and Radmann (2023) studied the Condition Ladder, implemented in Swedish football by authorities to control "disturbances and pyrotechnics in the stands" (p. 350), and its implications to supporter culture. In the struggle, police, clubs, and supporters had different perspectives on the matter which led to a conflict. The main conflict was revolved around the use of pyrotechnics, which police tried to control because they were considered dangerous. On the other hand, pyrotechnics play a central role in supporters' culture, for example, creating tifos. Therefore, restricting pyrotechnics meant restricting their cultural expressions. Restrictions and control over supporter culture can be considered a part of "modern football" (Numerato, 2015)

and helps us to understand the struggle surrounding VAR. Similarly to controlling the use of pyrotechnics, VAR can influence supporters and their culture because it has an impact on what they can and cannot do in the stands. Furthermore, Radmann and Karlén (2022) studied the experiences of Swedish supporters during the Covid-19 pandemic, when they could not attend matches physically. The study highlights the importance of physical space and place for the supporters. Not being able to be in stadiums and other sacred places (e.g. gas stations and pubs) harmed their sense of supportership. They found that the supporters missed “the atmosphere, the community, and the emotions” (2022, p.338).

Herd (2017) has studied the supporters and supporter culture of a Swedish football club in Allsvenskan called Malmö FF. She uses the concept of magic to understand how the supporters are part of and “create the magic of football” (p.1046). The study found that the supporters see themselves as an important part of Swedish football culture. Stadiums are important and sacred, and inside them, there are specific rules and rituals that are needed to create experiences and emotions. The magic of supporters is needed to make stadiums meaningful places. Herd also found that the supporters value emotional flow and experiences more than money, commodification, and commercialization which try to find their way to their club. Further, Herd (2018) studied history producing in football. She shows how supporters engage in rituals that can take a material form, such as tifos and banderoles, as well as bodily form, such as chanting and jumping. Emotions play a crucial role in rituals, which need to be repeated in order to sustain the connection. A part of history creation is the construction of collective identities and myth making. Rituals, emotions, and collective memories construct the history of football.

The studies by Radmann and Karlén (2022), Karlén and Radmann (2023), and Herd (2017; 2018) shed a light on Swedish supporter culture and what supporters value in football. Furthermore, they demonstrate the importance of emotions attached to supportership and emotional experiences in stadiums. These studies contribute to our understanding of Swedish football supporters and supporter culture, and help us understand supporters’ perceptions toward VAR that is missing from Swedish literature.

Despite the existing social scientific research on VAR, there is a need for sociological research on decision-aid technologies in sports and their impact on fans and supporters (Petersen-Wagner & Lee Ludvigsen, 2023). This study makes an empirical contribution to this

research field by bringing in and investigating another football nation: Sweden. Although I do not measure Swedish supporters' satisfaction or attitudes toward VAR in quantitative terms, there might be differences between supporters' nationality or leagues in terms of supporter culture and the perceived effect of VAR on different supporter cultures, as suggested (Winand et al., 2021). Furthermore, the lack of sociological studies on VAR in Sweden is evident, perhaps because VAR is not used in Sweden. Thus, this study contributes to the research area from a slightly different perspective than the above-mentioned studies. It explores views and perceptions of supporters prior to the technology's potential implementation. The implementation of VAR into the football world raises a question of how Swedish supporters have experienced the use of VAR in other leagues and competitions, and if they want it to be incorporated in Sweden as well. I aim to answer these questions and by doing that, fill the gap in this research area.

4 Theoretical Perspectives and Concepts

I draw on theories by Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Randall Collins to understand the supporters' perceptions toward VAR in Swedish football. Durkheim's theory of religion helps us to understand the football community and its meaning for football supporters. I combine Durkheim's theory with Collins' theory of interaction ritual chains to emphasize the emotional aspects of football. Weber's theory of rationalization and disenchantment is used to understand which implications they may pose to football communities.

4.1 Religions in a Durkheimian Tradition

In a religion, individuals have common beliefs and practices (rituals) (Durkheim, 1995, p.44). Their beliefs and practices are based on a distinction between sacred and profane, and they constitute a moral community: a church. Practices must be repeated in order to continue being collective and ensure the maintenance of mutual beliefs, values, and morals, which make rituals key. The modernization of society leads to a decline of traditional religions. Nonetheless, new communities emerge. While the decline of traditional religions leads to secularization of societies, people continue to create and find communities, beliefs, and ritual practices in other ways. One concept to describe these new communities is, "secular religions" (e.g. Yinger, 1970).

The idea is that traditional religions do not disappear completely, but instead leave their marks on even secularized societies (Durkheim, 1995). This means that even the “secular religions” are characterized by, what Durkheim calls, the elementary forms of religious life. They have their beliefs, rituals, and sacred things, and they form a moral community, though all these aspects may take a different form in modern societies compared to traditional religions. They can be distinguished from traditional religions in that they might not believe in a divine entity, for example, god. Scholars have drawn parallels between traditional religions and “new”, “secular religions”, for example, Jacobsson and Lindblom (2016) by studying individuals who engage in animal rights activism. As many others have done before (e.g. Bromberger, 1995; Holt, 1990), I draw parallels from traditional religions to football communities and understand football communities as sharing similarities with traditional religions. This can be, for example, a football match as ritual or a club’s logo as a sacred symbol. This is to help us understand the importance of their beliefs and repeating rituals. Furthermore, it helps us to understand how modernization and rationalization, defined by Weber (1978; 1963), affect individuals in contemporary football communities as they affected individuals in traditional religions.

4.2 Interaction Ritual Chains

To understand the importance of emotional experience in football, we turn to Randall Collins’ theory of interaction ritual chains. Inspired by Erving Goffman’s concept of interaction ritual (IR) and Émile Durkheim’s theory of rituals, symbols, and solidarity, Collins developed a radical micro-sociological theory of interaction ritual chains (Collins, 2004). Durkheim saw the importance of rituals for communities; however, I want to complement his theory with Collins’ to emphasize the emotional aspects of rituals. By doing this, we can explore supporters’ perceptions on VAR and the potential implications of VAR on emotional experience.

Rituals can be formal or natural (Collins, 2004). Formal rituals are guided by clear pre-decided patterns and procedures, whereas natural rituals lack such procedures and happen spontaneously. Football matches can be understood as rituals (p.58). I see a football match as a formal ritual with clear and pre-decided patterns: the walk-in of the players, players shaking hands and perhaps the home team’s song playing and spectators singing. During the match, there can be several natural rituals happening: rituals that emerge without a before made decision about them, such as booing, whistling, and celebrating. These interaction rituals (IR) consist of

1) bodily presence of at least two people, 2) boundaries between participants' of the ritual and outsiders, 3) mutual focus and 4) emotional experience of the participants (p.48). Both formal and natural IRs can be successful, unsuccessful, or forced, and the successfulness of an IR depends on the level of those four components. If there are high levels of shared attention, intensified emotional resonance, clear boundaries to the outsiders, and bodily presence of at least two people, the IR is successful. An IR can fail if there is lack or absence of mutual focus and collective effervescence. A forced IR lacks genuineness in a way that individuals engaging in them lack *natural* emotional flow and shared attention. Forced IRs do not produce emotional energy but exhaust it because due to the lack of naturalness of the ritual, individuals have to put effort in the ritual situation (Collins, 2004). Examples of individuals engaging in forced rituals can be job interviews or service jobs, where one might have to put effort in appearing enthusiastic to the customer or the interviewer.

The outcome of an IR can be emotional energy (EE), feelings of group solidarity and morality, and group symbols (Collins, 2004, p.49). The level of those outcomes depends on the successfulness of the IR. For example, a successful IR generates high emotional energy in forms of enthusiasm, confidence, happiness. In a failed IR, an individual can feel boredom or constraint, and failed and forced IRs can drain emotional energy. In the market of interaction rituals, individuals engage in IRs that are rewarding. Motivation to engage in IRs depends on the experiences of similar IRs in the past. If an individual's IRs in a certain context and with certain people are not successful, but drain EE, the motivation to engage in such IRs decreases. The long-term effects of engaging repeatedly in IRs where the produced emotional energy is low or that they drain emotional energy can lead to avoidance of such interactions (Collins, 2004).

Collins' theory has been used to understand sport fans' behavior (e.g. Cottingham, 2012; Hill et al., 2022). Hill et al. (2022) draw on Collins' theory to illustrate that interaction rituals are detectable in football stadiums, and they create social atmospheres. Spectators engage in interaction rituals through collective focus on the match, shared emotional energy, and symbols like songs, flags, and banderoles. They demonstrate that IRs in stadiums can be disrupted and fail if spectators do not share focus, for example, on a song, or if emotionally meaningful symbols are altered or removed (Hill et al., 2022). Similarly, I will apply Collins' theory of IRs and emotional energy when investigating supporters' perceptions toward VAR. I will illustrate that for supporters, the emotional energy that natural rituals produce during a match is important for

the motivation to be in a stadium. I argue that VAR's disruptions can lead to supporters engaging in failed and forced IRs by affecting the collective emotional effervescence as well as the genuineness and naturalness of the ritual. Furthermore, I demonstrate that repeatedly forced and failed IRs during matches can ultimately lead to a decrease in motivation to participate in these kinds of IRs, i.e., seeing football with VAR.

4.3 Rationalization and Disenchantment

Weber distinguishes four types of rationality: practical, theoretical, substantive, and formal rationality (Kalberg, 1980, p.1148-1149). I will focus on substantive and formal rationality. Weber's concept of formal rationality is a type of instrumental-rational action (Weber, 1978) and refers to means-end calculation (Kalberg, 1980, p.1156), more specifically, "the most precise and efficient" (p.1158) way to calculate the means to ends. Bureaucratic rationalism, economic rationalism, and legal rationalism are characterized by this kind of rationality. It is an opposition to substantive rationality that is a type of value-rational action. It is based on values such as ethical, political, religious values, e.g. loyalty, equality, or traditions (Weber, 1978, p.85-86). In the economic sphere, the formal rational calculations are optimized through money, and it disregards moral or ethical values and beliefs and its consequences for individuals. However, in substantive rationality for example ethical or political values may guide both means and ends more strongly than the purely monetary calculations (Weber, 1978, p.86).

The process of rationalization is a part of the modernization that takes form all over the world but especially in Western societies (Kalberg, 1980, p.1150). The rationalization process can occur in different spheres and levels and to different extents, including economical and erotic spheres (1980, pp.1150-1151). Modern bureaucracy and capitalism are some examples where the rationalization process is evident. In economic rationalism, accumulation of material wealth is sought through rational action. Modern bureaucracy, under the rule of capitalist economy, performs its tasks with precision, efficiency, and "without regard to persons" (Weber, 1978, p.974-975). The administrative staff in bureaucracy is specialized, trained, and subordinated so that the machinery functions as smoothly as possible. One of the characteristics of rationalization is that the outcome of an action should be predictable. Since rational actions are based on science and standardized rules and calculations, one should be able to anticipate the outcome.

I argue that the implementation of VAR in football is a further step, or at least an endeavor, toward rationalization with a desire to achieve a judgment of right and wrong in “the most precise and efficient” way (Kalberg, 1980, p.1158). I say “a further step” because professional football is already rationalized and standardized (Sandvoss, 2003). It can also be seen as an “endeavor toward rationalization” because rules and standards of football still leave room for ‘human error’ (Zglinski, 2022, p.15). Goal-line technology can also be considered as part of the rationalization process of football, as it allows one to determine a goal by millimeter precision. Weber’s concepts of rationalization, formal-rationality, and substantive-rationality are helpful to understand football supporters' perceptions toward VAR.

To connect back to Durkheim’s religion and decline of religions: “One of the first enemies of religion is the human tendency to rationalize” (Weber, 2005 as cited in Beyers, 2013, p.7). In a rationalized world, we no longer seek to believe or find meaning in magic, mystical, or divine, but try to reason through science, intellectualism, and logic. According to Weber, this leads to a disenchantment of the world (1946; 1963). It means that since we have science and technology to explain and calculate everything, individuals no longer need to rely on magical or mysterious beliefs or explanations. The world becomes demystified. In Weber’s words: “the world’s processes become disenchanted, lose their magical significance, and henceforth, simply “are” and “happen” but no longer signify anything” (1963, p.125). In the decline of traditional religions, we turn to new communities, “secular religions”, that share resemblance with traditional religions: New communities that provide us with *meaning* and *significance*. In secular religions in contemporary societies, it does not necessarily have to be magic (in a supernatural way) that we believe in. Rather, I want to emphasize the part where things “simply “are” and “happen” but no longer signify anything”. I propose that the rationalization process did not stop after demystifying traditional religions but continues to find its way into contemporary societies as well. Therefore, the things individuals find meaningful and significant in their new communities can also be disenchanted and lose their meaning: meaning, that holds the community together. I suggest that football is one of these matters that individuals believe in and find meaningful, for example, through interaction rituals (Collins, 2004). Rationalization can lead to it losing its meaning, that is: get disenchanted.

5 Methodology, Material, and Ethical Considerations

This study set out to investigate the perceptions of Swedish football supporters on video assistant referee and how these perceptions relate to their broader view on the development of football in Sweden as well as outside Sweden. Additionally, it explores the risks entailed with the potential introduction of VAR. Therefore, qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine Swedish football supporters. In this section, I will discuss the sample, methodology, material, and ethical considerations of this study.

5.1 Sample

The sample of this study was obtained through purposive sampling and snowball sampling. The only prerequisite for the participants was that they were interested in Swedish football and had knowledge and thoughts about VAR. To be able to answer my research questions, I believed that individuals active in supporter associations would fit the criteria well and therefore, I first employed purposive sampling (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I reached out to 19 supporter groups of Swedish elite football in different parts of Sweden. These groups consist of supporter associations, ultras groups, and a supporter organization. I contacted the groups or their representatives by email. If I could not find their email, I sent a message through Facebook if they had a Facebook page. I believed that VAR would be introduced in elite football (at least at first), and therefore, affect supporters who watch Swedish elite football. This recruitment strategy generated few responses, and I found two participants through this strategy. Given the time frame, I started to search for participants through my different social networks. I did not interview people whom I knew personally, but they led me to other people who were interested. I also employed snowball sampling (Marshall & Rossman, 2016) which means that I found some of the participants through participants who I had interviewed (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p.227). In total, I included nine participants from six different Swedish elite football clubs: participants from six different social networks to ensure a wider representation.

The sample consists of male participants between 20 and 60 years old. The participants have different levels of education, and they have grown up and lived in different places in Sweden. The majority of them were active in one or more supporter associations/clubs. These participants are or have been board-members in one or more supporter associations' boards, or are otherwise active in their associations'/clubs' activities. Some of them had been or were still

active in other supporter activities, such as tifo groups and podcasts. These participants' attendance in their teams' home and away matches is high: they go to all of their team's matches if they can. They are socially, economically, and emotionally invested in their clubs. One of the participants has never been active in supporter associations but described himself as a passionate supporter and a football lover. One participant can be described as football interested but to a lesser extent than the others. Some, but not all, participants follow other leagues than Swedish. All participants have seen football matches with VAR and how it is used in a match. The common denominator of all participants is that they are all against a potential introduction of VAR in Swedish football.

My approach of sampling may have affected the results of this study. Previous research on British and German fans has found a connection between the level of satisfaction toward VAR and the level of identification with one's football club: the higher the identification, the higher the dissatisfaction (Winand et al., 2021). Moreover, German football fans who watch football matches at home have more positive attitudes toward VAR than fans who attend matches in stadiums (Märtins et al., 2023). These findings can partly, however not necessarily fully, explain the opposition toward VAR of my participants. Furthermore, I did not restrict the sampling to those who are against the potential introduction of VAR in Swedish football (Appendix 1) but the sampling method may have attracted those with stronger views. They may have been more motivated to speak about their perceptions toward VAR. Additionally, I did not limit the search of participants in terms of gender, age, class, city, or football club. While there is variation in the sample regarding these individual factors, only men were interviewed. It was not my plan to restrict the sample to only male participants, but only one female expressed interest towards the end of my data collection period. Since all my other participants were men, I decided to not include her. My sample can be said to echo the still male-dominated football world (Andersson, 2016).

5.2 Method and Material

A qualitative approach was employed because I wanted to explore the participants' own lives, experiences, and thoughts about football (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). Together, nine semi-structured interviews were conducted: five face-to-face interviews and four interviews through the Zoom platform. After the nine interviews, there were clear patterns in the

interviewees' answers, indicating that saturation was reached (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). The interviewees and I decided together the interview location and sometimes, online was more convenient. There can be disadvantages with computer-assisted interviews, such as missing the body language (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). However, in all computer-assistant interviews both I and the interviewee had cameras on so that I was able to see the interviewees facial expression. To have all interviews conducted face-to-face might have enriched the interviews, but I believe that bodily presence was not crucial for the study.

The interviews lasted from fifty minutes to one hour and ten minutes. All interviews were recorded. The interviews followed mostly the structure of the interview guide: 1) Background information of the participant, 2) General information about the participant and their relationship to football and supportership, 3) The development of football in and out of Sweden, and 4) Video assistant referee. The interview questions were mostly open-ended: "Can you describe...?", "Can you tell me...?", "What do you think about..." (Appendix 3), to encourage the interviewees to express things in their own words. Follow-up questions were asked to add richness to the interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p.287). All interviews were transcribed³ manually word to word. The transcribing was done as soon as possible to evaluate the interview questions before the next interview, as well as to keep the material fresh in mind.

In an interview situation, the material is co-produced by the interviewee and the interviewer (Radley, 2001). Not only does the researcher's background affect the interview situation, but different parts of the study process, such as the interpretation and analysis of the material (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I have not grown up in Sweden, and prior to the study, I had no strong knowledge about Swedish football and supporter culture. I consider myself a football interested person and a fan of a football club (not Swedish), but never had any strong views about VAR. The relatively strong mobilization of Swedish supporters to oppose the potential introduction of VAR left me puzzled as to why that is so, and eventually led me to explore this topic. These aspects can also have influenced the course of the study and the results. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that while I am fluent in Swedish, it is not my first language which can have affected the interviews, analysis, and interpretation, for example, the formulation of the interview questions and the follow-up questions asked (or not asked). Besides the

³ The interviews were held in Swedish, but I translated the direct quotes that are used in this thesis to English.

sociological contribution I hope to make with this study, I saw this as an opportunity for me to immerse and explore the Swedish football culture.

5.3 Coding and Analyzing

This study employed an abductive approach. I focused on the meaning of the participants' interviews. This included meaning coding, categorization, condensation, and interpretation (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018, p.136). I coded the transcriptions by letting the material “speak to itself” (data driven) as well as with the previous research and theories in mind (concept driven) (p.121). I printed out the transcriptions and coded by pens while taking notes on the side at the same time. For the meaning condensation, I created a table for each interview to reformulate longer meanings into shorter versions (p.123). Thereafter, I conceptualized and categorized statements to be able to see recurring patterns and themes in the interviews (p.121). I created mind maps of the recurring patterns and themes. In the phase of meaning interpretation, the researcher tries to go deeper than what is said by the interviewees and look beyond the statements (p.125). I did this by attaching statements to theories that could explain the meanings. The analysis part entailed me going back and forth between the transcriptions, tables, and mind maps.

5.4 Ethical Considerations

All participants were provided with information about the study in the process of contacting and/or deciding the place and time of the interview in the form of an invitation letter (Appendix 1) After deciding the location and time, the participants were given information about the study once more and the consent letter (Appendix 2), which consisted of more information about the study, the interview, what happens with their information, confidentiality and voluntary participation. Those who were interviewed through Zoom were sent the consent letter digitally prior to the interview, and the consent of those participants were obtained orally and recorded. The participants who were interviewed face-to-face were given a physical consent letter and written consent was then obtained. The data was stored in a password protected laptop on a cloud. The names of the participants were neither included in the recordings, transcriptions, nor were they stored in any other way. Additionally, neither the participants' names, the teams that the participants support, nor any supporter group is named in this study to ensure confidentiality.

The results are presented in a way that no outside party can identify specific participants or their statements. All material will be deleted after the completion of the study.

6 Results and Analysis

A short answer to the first research question is that all participants oppose the potential introduction of VAR in Swedish football. In this section, I will first discuss the most common reasons behind the opposition and address the question: What would supporters risk losing if VAR was implemented? Thereafter, I address the second research question: How can we understand the perceptions toward VAR in relation to the changing nature of football and, more specifically, “modern football”?

6.1 The Emotional Game

For most of my participants, emotions make the basis of their motivation for being a supporter and going to matches. One of the participants said, “It is that [emotions] that is the big thing with this. It’s the reason why people watch sports”. Emotions were often described as euphoric and nearly unique, something that one cannot experience in many other places. The importance of emotions for football supporters is well-documented in previous research (e.g. Giulianotti, 2002; Herd, 2018; Radmann & Karlén, 2022). Football matches are rituals that generate emotional energy (Collins, 2004, p.58). I consider a football game itself a formal ritual, but during a football game, there are many natural rituals emerging. It is a formal ritual because there are some set of patterns in what happens (Collins, 2004, p.51): The walk in of players, the song of the home team playing, people singing along with the song and waving flags. During the match, there can be several natural rituals in which spectators engage: rituals that happen spontaneously. These natural rituals are often reactions to what happens on the field: booing, whistling, standing ovation, clapping, and celebrating are some examples. The natural rituals are especially important because they are spontaneous and spontaneity is one of the fundamental parts in football according to my participants: “the thing that is the essence in football, that is the spontaneous goal celebrations, for example.” The goal celebration ritual emerges when one’s team scores a goal, the group celebrates, and it happens spontaneously and through a natural flow of emotions.

What does all this have to do with VAR? We begin with the most reported reason as to why the participants do not want VAR to be introduced in Swedish football: interruptions and their negative implications for the spontaneity of football, emotional experience and stadium atmosphere. If we see the actions happening during a match, such as a goal celebration, as Collins' defined natural rituals, we can demonstrate why and how VAR negatively affects the emotional experiences. Here, I argue that a goal celebration is an interaction ritual that can be successful, forced or unsuccessful (Collins, 2004). I propose that the "first" goal celebration (before VAR check) can be seen as an *unsuccessful ritual*, and that it can fail in two ways. The "second" celebration (after VAR check) can be seen as a *forced ritual*, to some extent. The "first" goal celebration can fail because supporters do not "dare" to celebrate anymore and one has to "hold on to oneself" or "guard oneself" as two participants said.

Everyone stands and waits. Then the referee maybe says: "We have looked at this. Yes, it is correct". Then all of this is gone, the spontaneity. It's not fun anymore: "Okay, we scored a goal, yeah. But it was a couple of minutes ago we scored a goal". Then you don't dare to celebrate.

This goes under the category of intensified emotional energy (EE) and collective effervescence (or rather, lack of it) that are important for an IR to be successful (Collins, 2004, p.51). Supporters' emotions are affected even before the action is realized because of the anticipation, a thought of what can happen in the future (Kemper, 2006, p.97). Anticipatory emotions are based on individuals' previous experiences in similar context or with similar actors in the past (2006). As a supporter, you know that a VAR check can come after a goal, and you know what happened last time you celebrated a goal. Last time it was perhaps "emotions that come out unnecessarily" as one participant said, which gives you a "false sense of security", as another participant said. Then you can anticipate what will happen in the future: when VAR is used in a match and a goal is scored. You anticipate that a VAR check is very much possible, which can ruin the initial, spontaneous emotions. Knowledge of the emotional outcomes of similar encounters in the past guides your future actions (Barbalet, 1998). Hence, you might not want to celebrate with full EE as you have done before because you know that it can be taken away from you.

Secondly, the IR can fail because it is disrupted by VAR. Even if supporters do not hold on to their emotions, and they dare to celebrate with full EE, the celebration can be interrupted by VAR, and thus, one does not get to fully complete the ritual. Instead, one can feel emotionally

constrained by VAR and, due to a long waiting period, *boredom* (Collins, 2004, p.51). Furthermore, a participant said that the way VAR is being used out in Europe will decrease the quality of stadium atmosphere, and remember, emotions are contagious (Collins, 2004). The emotional mood of one person affects the other and so forth. If a goal celebration is cut short, the IR fails because of the lack of intensified *collective* effervescence, thus, affecting the stadium atmosphere. Hill et al. (2022) also studied interaction rituals in football matches and illustrated that an interaction ritual, such as a song, can be disrupted and fail if individuals do not have mutual focus and engage in the IR.

The “second” goal celebration can be understood as forced to some extent because, as many participants stated, one obviously celebrates a goal even after a VAR check, but an interference in the emotional flow disrupts the spontaneous emotional expression.

It becomes like... you can't celebrate truly. It's like you have to hold on to your celebration and then when VAR says: “Yeah, but this is a goal” and then you can celebrate again. It becomes a bit fake because it's not even spontaneous emotions that come out.

A celebration after a VAR check was described as, “not the same”, or “not real”, but “fake” as the participant above said. In forced IRs, the shared attention and heightened emotions lack genuineness or naturalness, and the individuals participating in them are “overly self-conscious” (Collins, 2004, p.53). This means that the IR lacks natural flow, which in this case would be the spontaneous emotions. It can be interpreted that since during a VAR check the match stands still, there is a momentary lapse of concentration on the play itself, especially if the decision takes a long time to make. There is an unnatural mutual focus on the referees and whether it is a goal or not, instead of the natural continuum of the ritual: spontaneous emotions. There is an excessive consciousness and attention on whether one gets to feel extreme relief or disappointment, happiness or sadness, instead of emotions naturally flowing along with the match. In conclusion, VAR's interference was considered disruptive and too time-consuming, and as one participant said: “(...) you can go and take a pee and go and buy a beer or whatever you want. You can go and bake bread, basically. No, it ruins so damn much”. While forced rituals can become successful, they drain emotional energy instead of generating it because one has to put effort precisely because of their unnaturalness (Collins, 2004).

The potential impact of the introduction of VAR was a topic of discussion in the interviews. The participants reported that if VAR was to be implemented in Swedish football, there might be different consequences for supporters and their culture. One of the participants said:

I think that it would have become a negative, a completely different environment like when you go to the match it's not the same feeling as before VAR. I think it would have made many or some maybe to stop going to matches as a whole... [...] I don't actually know if I had done it [continue to go to matches]. I think it would have made such a big difference in how it makes me feel and which emotions I feel when I'm on the matches, so it wouldn't have been the same thing anymore, I think.

Some participants thought that they and possibly other supporters might try to seek “real” football and the “real” experiences somewhere else, for example, lower divisions or that the engagement in associations might decrease. Other participants speculated that supporters would stand strong, and that they would continue to go to matches because of their love for the sport and their team. Another often reported short-term consequence would be protests. While it is difficult to predict one's future actions in a hypothetical (however, possible) scenario, the majority of them were certain of one thing: VAR would harm the emotional experience in stadiums, and it will have consequences in the long run.

Let us focus on *why* their assumptions could be plausible from Collins' perspective: Why might some supporters stop going to their teams' matches, and why do some supporters think that their activity in supporter clubs would decrease or cease? Willingness to engage in IRs depends on the successfulness of the individual's previous similar IRs in the past (Collins, 2004). Communities must repeat their rituals to uphold mutual beliefs and values and maintain the continuity of the community (Durkheim, 1995). However, if one engages in IRs where the outcome is repeatedly low or even an exhaustion of EE, the consequence can be lack of motivation or avoidance to engage in such situations (Collins, 2004). If we now assume that supporters getting disrupted by VAR engage in failed or forced IRs repeatedly, it would generate lower levels of EE or drain EE. This was described as: “the emotions disappear totally” and “you kill the emotions”. It is not as emotionally rewarding an experience anymore. Therefore, it might be plausible to assume that, in the long run, one starts feeling unmotivated to attend matches and

even stop going to them. In the market for emotional energy, people try to maximize their benefits over costs when engaging in an interaction (Collins, 2004). People go to football week after week, year after year because it is a highly rewarding experience that gives motivation to continue engaging in such IRs.

Furthermore, I argue that football gets disenchanting if VAR harms supporters' emotional experiences and stadium atmospheres. Supporters find football meaningful because of the spontaneity of the game and, thus, spontaneous emotions. Emotionally charged rituals give meaning to this community of people: meaning to what they do. If you harm the emotions by interfering in the rituals, not only do the rituals become unrewarding experiences, but football loses its significance for supporters. It is "those emotions you stand there for", one participant said, and if you "deprive the supporters of that, then you've changed the sport fundamentally. Then you've changed the whole supporter culture as well. It's not football anymore... ", another participant said. Herd (2017) sees supporters as magicians who actively engage in myth-making through rites in stadiums. These magicians are a part of creating football, and they believe that their magic has the power to affect the outcome of a match. But in a disenchanting world, we no longer believe in magic because "technical means and calculations perform the service" (Weber, 1946, p.7). Or rather, in this case, we no longer *let* magic happen because of our will to rationalize the world.

Could this finding support Collins' claim that football communities have "no other coherence, and no other purpose, than the experience of the peaks of ritual emotion itself" (p.59)? Cottingham (2012) criticizes Collins' claims and demonstrates that sports fans can have successful rituals through symbols outside stadiums. These kinds of successful rituals also generate emotional energy and contribute to long-term emotions (2012). One study participant said, "It's clear that it's a blow to this and that it affects, but honestly, the associations would stand strong and continue doing what they do". This, on the other hand, would support Cottingham's critique toward Collins. Successful IRs, supporter culture, extend outside the stadiums, perhaps especially in Sweden where supporters can engage in the decision-making in football.

6.2 Minimum Interference - Maximum Benefit

Other recurring arguments for why the supporters do not want VAR to be introduced in Sweden is that it does not work and that it is not what football is about. We can go back to the philosophy of VAR: “‘minimum interference – maximum benefit’ which aims to reduce unfairness caused by ‘clear and obvious errors’ or ‘serious missed incidents’ (...)” (IFAB, 2018). Nonetheless, these criteria were not met, according to the study participants. In this section, I further analyze why the participants oppose the introduction of VAR in Swedish football by drawing on Weber’s theory of rationalization and disenchantment. I argue that the philosophy of VAR and the use of VAR is an expression of rationalization. Further, I develop my argument that the rationalization of football leads to the perceived disenchantment of football.

The first point I present is fairness. In rationalization, one has a clear end, which in this case is fairness. This end can be understood to have inherent value and, therefore, can be seen as substantive rationality (Weber, 1978). It is a shared value in football to be as fair as possible toward every team. Fairness was a less reported “problem” with VAR, but it was a topic of discussion in many interviews. Some participants said that VAR has not brought any more fairness to the game. The relatively little contribution of VAR to “football justice” is also what Zgliniski (2022) discusses. According to him, it is an implication of the standards of football rather than a fault of VAR because VAR does not fully remove subjective interpretation from football (2022). One study participant said:

But it’s more about the feeling that it would be so good, it would be so fantastic with VAR, it’s going to be so fair, fairness is huge. But it didn’t turn out that way. It’s not perceived like it at least and when it comes to football supporters, how it is perceived is as important as how it really is.

Some said that fairness is not important in that way because it will “even out in the end”. One participant points out that it is not fairness VAR is about but accurate decisions and that it is a matter of misconception of the word “fair”. Implying that VAR increases fairness would imply that referees judging without VAR would be unfair. He states that if you get a “bad” referee, the referee is equally “bad” for everyone, and vice versa. For him, VAR is about making more correct decisions, not being more fair. This is somewhat connected to the “even out in the end”: every team faces correct and incorrect decisions. Petersen-Wagner and Lee Ludvigsen (2023)

discuss “justice” in their study of fans’ perceptions toward VAR in FIFA Men’s World Cup 2018. They found that VAR was perceived to not make neutral decision but favor the Global North more than the Global South⁴, and thus, increase injustice in football. Different findings could suggest that perceptions toward VAR depend on the league or competition or the cultural and geographical background of supporters.

In formal rational action, the end (fairness) is achieved through the means of efficiency and precision (Weber, 1978). VAR can be interpreted to employ these means. I interpret “minimum interference” as that a match should not be stopped unnecessarily and for too long, and thus, efficiency (timewise). Additionally, there are sets of rules and standards to make the whole process as efficient, effective, and precise as possible, for example, in which situations VAR should be used. However, the envisaged “minimal interference” was not perceived by the interviewees to be achieved with VAR as discussed earlier. Quite the opposite: it meant too many breaks, too much waiting, and longer matches. Scanlon et al. (2022) also found that the English Premier League fans perceived the technology to disrupt the flow of football and that it took too much time for referees to make decisions. The amount of time VAR consumes was also a reported problem in the study by Hamsund and Scelles (2021).

The “maximum benefit” can be interpreted to mean that the fairness should be taken to its “extreme” (millimeter accuracy), and thus, precision. Furthermore, I suggest that VAR reinforces the “without regard to persons” (Weber, 1978) part in the context of rationalization. To ensure that the decision-making is as impartial as possible and based on objective criteria, room for subjective interpretation is limited. There are additional referees and access to technology. While some supporters perceived that VAR has indeed increased the number of correct decisions in some leagues, it is marginal. The benefit is that the referees can watch unclear or missed situations again and, thus, correct their decisions. But “maximum benefit”? This quote highlights how most participants perceived the accuracy of decisions with VAR:

[A]nd then I have a problem with that, we can see that it doesn’t work. They promise that it will be right, but we see that it doesn’t get right, and then the price is too high. Not just money but you

⁴ VAR was perceived to be used in favor of the “big teams” or “loosely defined Global North” (Petersen-Wagner & Lee Ludvigsen, 2023, p.879). This included, for example, in which situations VAR was used (and “against” which teams). The fans’ perceptions suggested that VAR is a tool for a practice of neocolonial power and institutionalized racism by Eurocentric FIFA and IFAB who introduced the technology.

also pay with spontaneous goal celebrations, and you don't even get 100% out of it, and you won't get it because it's still some human sitting in a room and looking at it. You only get extra replays.

The participants pointed out that some situations are still unclear. Situations are being contested because it is still humans who judge what clear and obvious error, handball, and too much force is. While the aim is to minimize human error, there is still room for it. One participant wondered: "(...) is it worth it? Is it worth having a system that's supposed to give fairness, that costs a lot but can still get it wrong?". No, the price one pays for VAR was perceived as too high: In addition to money, the cost is football's spontaneity, spontaneous emotions, and stadium atmosphere.

Supporters value fairness (end) in football. It can be interpreted that supporters also evaluate the means (efficiency and precision), not only the end (fairness): how that end should be achieved. In this way, we can interpret that these supporters value substantive rationality over formal rationality (Weber, 1978). The value of efficiency and precision should be considered too, not only the value of fairness. However, it is exactly because both means and ends are being evaluated, that they perceive that the means are too costly for the promised end. But again, it is not perceived that VAR increases fairness (end) nor that the process itself (means) works adequately enough. The means are especially important for those participants who reported that they might be okay with VAR if the process of making decisions were as fast as, for example, goal-line technology, thus, removing their biggest problem: interruptions. Generally, the participants did not oppose changes in football. However, the changes should not harm the *fundamental* ideas of football, such as spontaneous emotions and emotional flow, which VAR was perceived to do. One participant said:

Everything is reduced to make a judgment of what is right and wrong and trying to distill the perfect. That's not what it [football] is about for me, and I feel that it's not what it's about for the vast majority of supporters either.

Millimeter precision and fairness as well as replaying situations in slow-motion is not what football was about for most of the participants. "Football has never been some form of exact science, but it is a sport of judgment", said one participant. It is a fundamental meaning of the sport that there are referees who use their subjective judgment. Some participants said that refereeing errors are acceptable because it is the meaning of football that it sometimes ends up

wrong. These findings are consistent with those of Petersen-Wagner and Lee Ludvigsen (2023) who also found that some fans think that mistakes are part of football. Nonetheless, excessive focus on how we can get as correct and fair decisions as possible has overshadowed all other meaning and value. Furthermore, VAR can be interpreted to be means-ends action because it does not consider its effects on individuals (Weber, 1978). In this case, it is the supporters' rituals and emotional experiences, as discussed earlier. The instrumental goals of VAR are prioritized over the rituals, values and beliefs that constitute meaningful football for the supporters. This can lead to further disenchantment of football.

In conclusion, while some participants agreed that the use of VAR does increase the amount of accurate decisions marginally, there are too many downsides. The cons of VAR outweigh the pros, and then "the price is too high". Not only would it cost a lot of money for the clubs, which also was one of the reported problems with VAR, but one would also pay with emotional experiences, stadium atmosphere, and football's fundamental meaning and ideas.

6.3 Modern Football

The development of football outside Sweden was considered "following a wrong path". It was reported that football is too much about money. The development of football was seen as a sort of Americanization of football, or football becoming more like ice hockey with advertisements and commercial breaks. The private and multiple ownership of clubs in Europe were perceived extremely negatively as well as FIFA World Cups hosted by controversial countries, for instance, Qatar and Russia. Sportswashing and corruption are also reported to be major problems in the international spheres. In many leagues in Europe, the teams that have the most money win more often, which was also a reported problem. These aspects constitute what some people call "modern football" (e.g. Hill et al., 2018; Numerato, 2015). These different aspects of "modern football" have been criticized by both Swedish supporters (e.g. Herd, 2017; 2018) and supporters outside of Sweden (e.g. Hill et al., 2018; Numerato, 2015; Perasovic & Mustapic, 2018). One study participant said:

But again, it depends on what you think football is about. For me, partly the sport in itself and partly as a popular movement, and then VAR doesn't contribute anything. But if you see it as if we are a part of the hyper-commercialized Champions League and that part, then VAR is only a natural step for one and one doesn't need to reflect about it a lot: "Everyone else has it so we will

also have it. We also want to be a part of the Champions League, then we're going to do exactly as they do. We will also have a sheik then and VAR".

The incorporation of VAR is also seen as part of "modern football" as can be interpreted from the quote above. This result is supported by Petersen-Wagner & Lee Ludvigsen (2023) who found that VAR is seen as an extra element to "modern football". Some participants stated that these different elements of "modern football", including the implementation of VAR, partly explained why their interest in European football had decreased or ceased. It was reported that certain actors advocate VAR's implementation in Sweden, for example, the Swedish Football Association. Furthermore, VAR was frequently linked to economic interests. It was suggested that those who economically benefit from the technology's implementation, also push its implementation. One explanation for its introduction into football was that because there is so much money at stake for so many parties, millimeter precision is crucial. In addition, some speculated that it is a way to drive football toward commercialization. This view resonates with Petersen-Wagner & Lee Ludvigsen's findings (2023). One participant said:

Of course they want VAR to be everywhere because they earn enormous amounts of money. It's so many in football who can earn money from football today. It's not only the players or the clubs but agents, and you know all... It's so damn much money that the answer to almost all of your questions is money.

Economic rationalism means seeking material wealth through rational action (Weber, 1978; 2005). From the quote above, it can be interpreted that football reflects economic rationalism which supports Sandvoss's (2003) claim of McDonaldization of football, where quantity is more important than quality. He argues that the football industry prioritizes their economic wealth over the quality of watching football. For example, match schedules are increasingly being adjusted to accommodate watching football on television in order to maximize TV revenues. This is done by scheduling matches at inconvenient times for supporters who seek emotional experience in stadiums. According to Weber, protestant religious beliefs became intertwined with economic rationalism (Weber, 2005). "This love for the material and worldly possessions will ultimately distract attention from religion" (Weber, 2005 as cited in Beyers, 2013, p.7). Since economic rationalism found its way to the "religion" of football, VAR is a further step toward it. It can be

interpreted that the aspects that supporters see as football's fundamental values, beliefs, and rituals, such as goal-celebrations, other actors aim to accumulate material wealth out of it. The focus of football as having traditional values and beliefs shifts to the focus of football as a money-making machine, diminishing any religious-like, *meaningful*, elements that were perceived to constitute football and supporter culture. This shift is driven by rationalization, exemplified by the implementation of VAR, leading to disenchantment.

[I]nternational football is just on its way to some sort of hyper-commercialization where everything is about money and geopolitics and then... No, but I don't see the meaning with that kind of football.

This quote illustrates that football loses its *meaning* if it is too much about money. Instead, the supporters value something else, such as their rituals and the emotional experiences that these rituals give rise to. It can be interpreted that in a way, the focus on the monetary pursuit of football harms the fundamentals of the football "religion" because it "distracts attention from" football's religious-like beliefs, values, and practices (Weber, 2005 as cited in Beyers, 2013, p.7). Moreover, the participants saw Swedish football as more attractive because it was considered to be closer to "people". The 51% rule allows football supporters to engage in the democratic decision-making in their local community, and it prevents investors from taking over a whole club. One participant described that Americans buying clubs in the English Premier League "takes you so far away from the local people who live in those places so that it's not their team or club anymore". This again can be interpreted to echo the economic rationalization of football. The rationalization and standardization of football has been discussed in previous research (e.g. Duke, 2002; Groves, 2011; Sandvoss, 2003; Williams, 2007). Standardization, globalization, and rationalization of "super-clubs" can make supporters feel alienated as their clubs no longer represent their identities (Grove, 2011; Williams, 2007). Economic rationalism of football was echoed in this participant's statement as well:

[...] they [a team] proved that it's not only about money, but it's at least as much about daring and believing in it [...] And I wished that... but can't a part be free from money and that everything is just about that they should... that the one who has the most money wins [...] Ten years ago it was a shock if Barcelona won against Umeå, and we're never going back to that, and I grieve it.

From this quote it can be interpreted that football becomes rationalized and disenchanting because leagues where money is a major influence contribute to their predictability: We can predict the two or three likely winners of a league because of the uneven distribution of money. This can also be interpreted as a part of economic rationalism because a predictable outcome of an action is exactly what rationalization is about. In rationalization, actions are calculated and based on rational rules or laws so that the outcome is as predictable as possible (Weber, 1978). We can control and anticipate what happens in the future. I do not argue that money in football leads to predictability in the exact same sense as in, for example, bureaucratic or economic rationalism. Rather, I suggest that due to economic rationalism, football's predictability might take away belief in wonder: A belief in that one's team can succeed even if they are not the wealthiest club. Another participant said: "(...) so we should pretend that it's a competition between 20 teams, but in practice it's a rotation of Real and Barca or only Bayern München as it is in Germany (...)", when he discussed the increasing imbalance within leagues due to economic powers and his concern that Swedish football is following in the same direction. For him, it is a major factor as to why his interest in the English Premier League has decreased. This may be an indication that football loses something of its meaning, i.e., get disenchanting, due to economic rationalism.

Here, I want to add to my previous discussion on why one could assume that some supporters would stop going to football matches if VAR was implemented in Swedish elite football. That some supporters would stop going to matches in no way means that they would stop going to football altogether: they speculated that they would go see football without VAR. One participant said:

No, but it's like this: maybe it's going to be that you go watch some other division football then instead. To get football. I think because with VAR, it's not football anymore for me. It's something completely different.

According to Durkheim (1995), even secularized societies are full of communities that share similarities with traditional religions (e.g. football) with their "new" rituals (tifos, celebrations) and sacred objects (e.g. a club's logo). According to Weber, traditional religions were threatened by rationalization and the world gets disenchanting when belief in the magical, mystical, or divine ceases (Weber, 1963; 2004). I suggested that similarly, due to further rationalization, even these

secularized communities can become disenchanting because they lose their *meaning* that ensures the coherence of the communities. Disenchantment can lead to individuals searching for meaning somewhere else. Williams (2007) also stated that the globalization and rationalization of “super-clubs” might cause supporters to lose interest in them and turn to other clubs instead. Some supporters might seek authentic football experience somewhere else (Grove, 2011; Williams, 2007). This can also explain the unwillingness to watch football with VAR. It supports the idea that if football loses its meaning due to VAR and economically oriented football, supporters might try to find meaning somewhere else.

“It’s going to be authentic football you’re going to watch”, said one study participant when he described Swedish football. There is an idea that in the ever-changing football world, Swedish football does not have to follow the same path as the modern Europe but rather be a land for authentic football with power of supporters, spontaneous emotions and euphoric experiences: a land without VAR, hyper-commercialization, and privatized club ownerships. In fact, some participants speculated that in the future, these aspects may attract people from abroad for people long to see the kind of football that not many has to offer anymore.

Concluding Discussion

This study set out to make a sociological and empirical contribution to the growing research field of decision-aids in sports by investigating Swedish supporters’ perceptions toward a potential introduction of video assistant referee (VAR) in Swedish football. Further, it aimed to examine these perceptions in relation to the changing nature of football, i.e. “modern football”. The study employed a qualitative approach by conducting semi-structured interviews with supporters of Swedish elite football clubs. The research questions were: 1) How do Swedish football supporters perceive the potential introduction of video assistant referee (VAR) in Sweden, 2) How do these perceptions relate to their broader views on the changing nature of football, and 3) What would these supporters risk losing if VAR was introduced in Swedish football? Although Durkheim’s elementary forms of religious life (1995), Weber’s rationalization (1978), and Collins’ interaction rituals (2004) have been used to understand the sports fans behavior, football, and supporter culture (see e.g. Bromberger, 1995; Cottingham, 2012; Holt, 1990; Sandvoss, 2003), this study combines them in a new way and applies them in a new empirical context. The study also attempted to provide new insights as to how we can understand Weber’s

concept of disenchantment (1946; 1963) in contemporary society and what disenchantment may entail for secularized communities.

Firstly, the results show that all participants opposed an introduction of VAR in Sweden. The participants perceived that VAR does not work adequately and VAR violates the fundamental ideas of football. Firstly, VAR's disruptions in matches were perceived to harm the spontaneity of football, the spontaneity and flow of emotions as well as the stadium atmosphere. The study also found that although some participants acknowledged the marginal increase in correct decisions, VAR still leaves room for subjective interpretation and mistakes in the decision-making process. Furthermore, the use of VAR was not perceived to increase fairness, which is one of the main arguments for its incorporation. The results also showed that VAR was perceived to harm the fundamental meaning and ideas of football, such as spontaneity of football, emotional experience, and football as a sport of judgment. Overall, the price one pays for VAR was perceived as too high. Secondly, VAR was understood as a part of the negatively perceived development of football, i.e., "modern football". It reflects the late-modernization of football (Numerato, 2015) where economic rationalism increasingly dominates, involving private ownership of clubs, commercialization, and corruption. Finally, responding to what supporters would risk losing with an implementation of VAR, we may conclude that an implementation of VAR would harm supporters' rituals, such as spontaneous goal celebrations, as well as their values and beliefs, such as that football is a spontaneous sport of judgment, which are needed for the continuity of communities. What is left is disenchanted football. Thus, if VAR was implemented in Swedish football, supporters would risk losing community, rituals, values, and beliefs: factors that constitute *meaningful* football and supportership.

Some of the results of this study are supported by previous research in other countries, for example, that VAR disrupts football's flow, consumes time, and harms football experience (e.g. Scanlon et al., 2022; Hamsund & Scelles, 2021) and that mistakes are considered part of football (Petersen-Wagner & Lee Ludvigsen, 2023). Moreover, this study highlighted the importance of emotions for supporters which is also well-documented in previous research (e.g. Herd, 2018; Radmann & Karlén, 2022) but offered a new perspective to understand problems perceived with VAR and its potential implications by applying Collins' (2004) concepts of failed and forced interaction rituals. Despite the similarities with previous findings, there were indications of differences as well. Lack of transparency is highlighted in previous studies (see e.g. Mårtens et

al., 2023; Scanlon et al., 2022) but not in this study. These differences might convey that the perceptions toward the use of VAR may depend on the league and competition or the background of a supporter. This can also be the case whether VAR is perceived to contribute to the greater fairness or justice in football (see e.g. Peterson-Wagner & Lee Ludvigsen, 2023). On the other hand, the fact that Swedish football does not have VAR might have also caused differences in the results. Moreover, the unique Swedish sports model and the influence of the amateur and popular movement ideals (Andersson, 2016) might also lie behind the study participants' opposition toward VAR. However, these are topics to be further explored in future research.

As suggested by previous research (e.g. Hamsund & Scelles, 2021; Märtins et al., 2023; Winand et al., 2021) perceptions toward VAR vary depending on factors, such as individuals' age, the level of identification with a club, and whether they watch football home or at stadium. Such differences could not be addressed given the limited scope and the non-generalizable nature of this study. It remains for future research to further investigate whether the study participants' opposition toward VAR is more of an effect of the Swedish ideals or of individual factors. Comparative studies between supporters of different leagues, or perhaps, interviews with Swedish supporters with positive views toward VAR could provide some answers to the remaining questions.

Notwithstanding the limitations, this study offers some insights into Swedish football supporters' perceptions toward a potential introduction of VAR in Swedish football and adds to our understanding as to why decision-aid technologies in sports are still contested. It illustrates how our lives can be affected by technologization and raises important questions of the implications of technological advancements in the era of late-modernity. While technologies like VAR aim to enhance fairness, it is crucial to ask: For whom is this technology designed? In pursuing fairness, there might be unexpected consequences, with some essential elements of football potentially lost in the process. After all, this study shows that football's spontaneity, emotional experiences, and stadium atmospheres were the major factors as to why the participants attend live football and that the interference of VAR in these aspects were the most discussed problem among the participants. It poses a significant challenge to balance between increasing fairness and maintaining vital elements of the football experience. At the same time, we may ask ourselves: *Can VAR contribute to greater fairness in football* (see e.g. Zglinski, 2022)? Overall, considering that supporters are an essential part of football, constituting the

twelfth player of a team, the various implications to them should be taken into account when developing decision-aid technologies. Simultaneously, the challenge posed to us is to discern the very nature of football in the ever more technologized and commercially oriented world.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Letter of invitation to participants

Inbjudan till deltagare i intervju om assisterande videodomare i svensk fotboll

Supportar du någon svensk fotbollsklubb? Är du intresserad av svensk fotboll och dess utveckling? Har du åsikter om införandet av assisterande videodomare i svensk fotboll?

Jag heter Sanna Ranta och jag skriver min masteruppsats om svensk fotbollskultur ur supportertrarnas perspektiv. Fokus i min studie ligger på ett eventuellt införande av assisterande videodomare (VAR) i svensk fotboll, som har väckt debatt i fotbollsvärlden om både dess för- och nackdelar. Därför söker jag deltagare som vill dela med sig av sina tankar om VAR i svensk fotboll och dess tänkbara påverkan på svenska fotbollssupportrar och fotbollskultur.

Om du är intresserad, skulle jag vilja intervjua dig. Intervjun kommer att ta från ungefär 45 minuter till en timme och sker i form av ett samtal. Vi kan tillsammans komma överens om platsen för intervjun (online eller på plats). Intervjuerna kommer att spelas in och transkriberas. Möjliga intervjufrågor skulle kunna vara: "Vad betyder fotboll och supporterkultur för dig?" "Vad är din syn på assisterande videodomare i fotboll"? Och: "Hur tror du att VAR skulle kunna påverka dig om VAR infördes i svensk fotboll?".

Studien är en masteruppsats som är en del av utbildningen på masterprogrammet i sociologi vid Göteborgs universitet. Jag följer Vetenskapsrådets forskningsetiska principer samt Europeiska Unionens dataskyddsförordningen (GDPR). Deltagande är frivilligt och du kommer att ges konfidentialitet. Informationen om deltagarna kommer att lagras och hanteras så att ingen utomstående har tillgång till informationen. Informationen kommer att lagras, hanteras och presenteras på ett sätt att det inte är möjligt att identifiera specifika individer. Informationen kommer endast att användas för denna uppsats och allt material kommer att raderas efter godkänd uppsats. Resultatet av studien kommer att finnas tillgängligt på Göteborgs universitets publikationer - elektroniskt arkiv (<https://gupea.ub.gu.se/>).

Om du är intresserad av att delta i denna studie eller vill veta mer om studien, vänligen kontakta mig på gussannra@student.gu.se.

Mitt namn: Sanna Ranta
E-postadress: gussannra@student.gu.se

Min handledare: Kerstin Jacobsson
E-postadress: kerstin.jacobsson@gu.se

Med vänliga hälsningar,
Sanna Ranta

Appendix 2 - Information for participants and the letter of consent

Information till forskningspersoner

I det här dokumentet får du information om studentprojektet *Video assistant referee (VAR) as a part of the modernization of football. The perceptions of Swedish football supporters on video assistant referee and its possible consequences on Swedish supporter culture* för en Master uppsats och vad det innebär att delta i det. Master projektet görs av Sanna Ranta med ansvarig handledare Kerstin Jacobsson, professor på Institutionen för Sociologi och Arbetsvetenskap vid Göteborgs universitet.

Vad är det för projekt och varför vill ni att jag ska delta?

Projektet *Video assistant referee (VAR) as a part of the modernization of football. The perceptions of Swedish football supporters on video assistant referee and its possible consequences on Swedish supporter culture* handlar om fotbollssupportrars tankar och syn på assisterande videodomare (VAR) i svensk fotboll och hur ett eventuellt införande av VAR skulle kunna påverka svenska fotbollssupportrar och fotbollskultur ur supportrarnas perspektiv. Detta är intressant att undersöka då VAR inte finns i svensk fotboll men införandet av det och dess möjliga för- och nackdelar har debatterats. Jag kontaktar dig för att vi är intresserade av dina erfarenheter av svensk fotboll och dess utveckling samt av att vara en fotbollssupporter i Sverige.

Hur går studien till?

Om du vill delta blir du intervjuad på lämplig plats i uppskattningsvis 45-60 minuter. Intervjun kan även ske online (Zoom, Teams, Skype).

Ditt namn och personliga detaljer är konfidentiella och kommer inte att användas muntligt eller skriftligt i någon text som studien leder till och obehöriga har inte tillgång till dina uppgifter. Jag skulle vilja spela in intervjun för att ha möjlighet att lyssna på den och skriva ner den efteråt. Intervjufilen kommer förvaras på en lösenordskyddad dator. Ditt namn kommer inte att synas på någon av dessa filer – bara en pseudonym som döljer din identitet.

Om du ångrar dig kan du när som helst välja att avsluta sitt deltagande. När studiens resultat presenteras och publiceras på GUPEA vid Göteborgs universitet kommer alla deltagares identitet skyddas med hjälp av en pseudonym.

Vad händer med mina uppgifter?

Det insamlade materialet kommer att användas för att skriva en Master uppsats och uppsatsens resultat kommer att diskuteras på seminarium. Informationen hålls i säkert förvar och är endast tillgänglig för relevant student och handledare. Dina svar kommer att pseudonymiseras så att inte obehöriga kan ta del av dem. Allt material kommer att raderas efter godkänd uppsats.

Hur får jag information om resultatet av studien?

Uppsatsen är planerad att bli färdig den 31 maj 2024. Resultaten kommer publiceras i en Masteruppsats och deltagare kan ladda ner uppsatsen via GUPEA (<https://gupea.ub.gu.se/>) när uppsatsen har blivit godkänd. Deltagare är välkomna till muntliga presentationer om de vill den 3e juni 2024 när studien kommer att presenteras.

Deltagandet är frivilligt

Ditt deltagande är frivilligt och samtycke ges muntligt eller skriftligt. Du har möjlighet att ställa frågor om projektet innan du signerar ett 'samtyckesformulär'. Om du ångrar dig kan du när som helst välja att avsluta sitt deltagande under pågående intervju och du behöver inte uppge varför du inte längre vill delta. Du har också rättighet att radera uppgifter i efterhand.

Kontakt detaljer

Master student: Sanna Ranta
 xxxxxxxx0222
 gussannra@student.gu.se

Ansvarig Handledare: Kerstin Jacobsson
 Institutionen för sociologi och arbetsvetenskap
 Box 720
 40530 Göteborg
 031-786 27 64
 kerstin.jacobsson@gu.se

Samtycke till att delta i studien

Jag har fått muntlig och skriftlig informationen om studien och har haft möjlighet att ställa frågor. Jag får behålla den skriftliga informationen.

- Jag samtycker till att delta i studien *Video assistant referee (VAR) as a part of the modernization of football. The perceptions of Swedish football supporters on video assistant referee and its possible consequences on Swedish supporter culture*, samt att intervjun spelas in på det sätt som beskrivs ovan.
- Jag samtycker till att uppgifter om mig behandlas på det sätt som beskrivs ovan.

Plats och datum	Namnförtydligande och Underskrift (medverkande)
Plats och datum	Namnförtydligande och Underskrift (student)

Appendix 3 - Interview guide

Tema 1: Background information

Hur gammal är du?

Vad jobbar du med?

Vad har du för utbildning?

Var är du uppväxt?

Tema 2: General information about the participant and football

Hur blev du intresserad av fotboll?

Vad betyder fotboll för dig?

Är du engagerad i någon supporterklubb?

- Hur blev du engagerad i supporterklubben XX?
- Vad innebär det att vara engagerad i en supporterklubb?

- Kan du beskriva hur XXX föreningen/klubben fungerar?
- Vad är din roll i föreningen/klubben?

- Det finns olika supporterklubbar i [stad]... Kan du beskriva vad du tänker är skillnader mellan din supportergrupp och andra supporterklubbar i [stad]?

Hur skulle du beskriva dig själv som en supporter?

Vad betyder det för dig att vara en supporter?

Är du med i någon tifogrupp?

Kan du berätta om hur fotbollen påverkar dig?

Kan du berätta om hur fotbollen påverkar dig på din vardag?

Hur brukar du kolla på matcherna?

- På plats på stadion, hemma tv, bar tv?
 - Vad är skillnaden?
 - Hur ofta kollar du på matcher?
 - Stadion
 - Hemma
- Med kompisar, familjen, andra supportrar?

- Kan du beskriva stadion? Hur känns det att vara där?

Hur går det till på matchdagarna?

Vad brukar du göra på matchdagarna?

Brukar du åka på bortamatcher?

- Hur ofta?

- Hur brukar det gå till?
 - Åka tillsammans?
 - Traditioner?

Kan du beskriva känslorna när du är på läktaren?

Kollar du på andra fotbollsligor än svenska?

- VM eller EM?

Kan du beskriva skillnaden mellan att kolla på andra fotbollsmatcher än svenska?

- Finns det någon skillnad?

Tema 3: Utveckling av fotboll i Sverige och utanför Sverige

Vad tänker du om fotbollens utveckling i världen?

Vad tänker du om fotbollens utveckling i Sverige?

- Hur har svensk fotboll påverkats av den internationella utvecklingen?
 - Hur ser "moderna fotbollen" ut i Sverige?

Tema 3: VAR

När du första gången hörde/läste/fick veta om VAR, vad var dina tankar?

Hur har din syn på VAR ändrats genom tiden?

Har du kollat på fotbollsmatcher där VAR används?

- Vill du beskriva hur den/de upplevelserna var?
- Kan du berätta hur det känns när du kollar på fotbollsmatcher som har VAR?

Vad tänker du om ett eventuellt införande av VAR i svensk fotboll?

- Kan du berätta varför du inte gillar VAR/varför du inte vill se VAR i svensk fotboll?

Är du engagerad i att motverka (eller förebygga) ett eventuellt införande VAR i Sverige?

- Hur? Aktiviteter?
- Kan du berätta om samarbetet mellan er och andra supporterklubbar eller -föreningar i VAR-frågan? (om det finns samarbete)

Om VAR infördes i svensk fotboll...

Hur tror du VAR skulle påverka...

- dig?
- svenska supportrar?
- den svenska supporterkulturen?
- Svensk fotboll?
- Känslor? Kan du beskriva dom här känslorna du har på läktaren?
 - Exempel på hur VAR stör/tar bort känslorna?

- Föreningsliv? Engagemang? Skulle VAR påverka ditt engagemang?
- VAR inte en del av “äkta” eller “riktiga” fotbollen? Kan du beskriva vad det betyder för dig?
- På matcherna
 - Känsloerna
- Efter matcherna
- Utanför stadium
 - Engagemang
- På vardagen

Den här VAR-frågan verkar vara en återkommande grej. Vad tänker du om att det tas upp igen och igen?

Det är mycket debatt om införandet av VAR även om supporterklubbarna verkar vara ganska eniga om att VAR inte ska införas i Sverige.

- Vad tänker du om den här hela debatten som pågår bland olika aktörer?
- Varför tror du det är så (mycket debatt)?
- Vem vill införa VAR i Sverige? Och varför?

Tema 3: Avslutning

Extra fråga: Blått kort och sin bins i fotbollen?

Har du något annat att lägga till? Någonting du känner att du inte har haft möjlighet att prata om?

Har du några frågor till mig? Eller funderingar?

Tacka deltagaren.

Känner du någon annan som skulle vilja prata med mig om VAR och fotboll?