

Pidgin, Chaos and Cultural Communication

A Case of Sport-based Exchange between Finland and Sweden at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

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The Swedish-speaking community in Finland and its cultural production has long been a focus of studies. The Finland-Swedes' cultural identity has been met with curiosity, awe, and even caution and has been placed against a specific spatio-temporal background. A large share of the processes that resulted in the character of modern-day Finland and Sweden took place in the nineteenth century.¹ After the Swedish-Russian war of 1809, Finland became a Grand Duchy within the Russian Empire. Despite not being part of Sweden in a political or geographical sense, parts of Finnish society stayed under strong influence from the Swedish cultural sphere, as developing mass media, newspapers and magazines, prints and books, could find their way to Finnish soil because of the familiarity with the Swedish language.

In this article, I focus on cultural communication between Finland and Sweden, exemplified by sport-related texts from Swedish newspapers and magazines at the turn of the twentieth century. At that particular point in time, the linguistic barrier between the two nations was relatively easy to breach (which will be problematized further). This enabled an exchange to take place, which helped to shape the cultural identities in both countries. This article explores the possibilities of applying the term “pidginization” as a process referring to cultural communication rather than focusing on linguistic issues that normally define the phenomenon (Hymes & Gumperz 1964). Additionally, sport has been a vital element in many (if not all) modern societies in its commodified and formalized form since the nineteenth century. Though attracting a lot of attention, sport is rarely considered as a resource for

the performance and display of beliefs, structures and processes in a given society (Bourdieu 1978; Brabazon 2006; Herd 2018). The end of the nineteenth century saw Finnish nationalism and language on the rise, though Swedish continued to enjoy a strong position, especially in the educated spheres of society.

I argue that cultural communication at the turn of the twentieth century could be at least partly understood as pidginized communication of a specific cultural exchange between two countries. To understand this process I employ chaos theory (Mosko 2005). Chaos theory has been linked to the linguistic phenomenon of creating a pidgin language (Hymes & Gumperz 1964; Zhao 2010; Knörr 2010; Foley 1997; Velupillai 2015). In other words, pidginization framed in the context of chaos theory helps in analysing the development of cultural exchanges between Sweden and Finland in a specific “pocket of time” (Kayser Nielsen 2000), exposing a form of cultural communication. The ethnologist Nils-Arvid Bringéus engaged with the concept of cultural communication:

Cultural communication is *the study of the symbolic function of culture*. Symbols – as distinct from signals – are a specifically cultural expression. The study of communication teaches us that a thing is not just something, but that it also stands for something (Bringéus 1979:8).

Bringéus challenged ethnology to look for more aspects of culture, though praising its ability to engage with the past. I explore sport through a context somewhat absent from cultural sciences – as a way to transmit ideas and produce traditions. As Bringéus stated, it is not just something, but it also stands for something.

Various studies have examined sports in cultural-historical perspectives, providing insights into how physical identities help in discussing issues of belonging (Glaser 2017; Giulianotti 2004), gender in sport (Tolvhed 2015; Pfister & Pope 2018), urban space (Hellspong 2013; Bale & Gaffney 2004; Bale & Moen 1995), identity, nationality or class (Bourdieu 1978; Barthes 2007; Jönsson 2014; Nilsson 2014), football as heritage (Karlsson 2004), and cultural expressions through sports (Fundberg, Ramberg & Waldetoft 2005; Herd 2018, 2019). The cultural historian Michael Oriard studied the development and establishment of American football through its coverage in daily newspapers, as well as newsreels, radio programmes and early television (Oriard 1993, 2001). This article takes into consideration the form in which the information was spread (the press), its content (sport) and one of its preconditions (the possibility of communication between Sweden and Finland based on the Swedish language). This article contributes to research in cultural communication as well as the role and position sport can have in a society. Even though the nineteenth-century press has been studied, the magazine *Kamraten* has not attracted as much attention, especially in the context of Finland. Thus, it is also a contribution to studying links between Sweden and Finland at the turn of the twentieth century.

The cultural climate of the late nineteenth century made it possible to communicate through sports, contests, competitions and growing sport associations. This in turn facilitated cultural exchanges. The aim is to analyse communication processes through the concepts of *pidginization* and *chaos*. The questions are: what

kind of exchanges between Sweden and Finland could be facilitated through sports at the turn of the twentieth century and how could their rise, popularity and subsequent fall be understood through pidginization and chaos theory?

Material

This article is based on publications from the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. The material comes from the project about Swedish-speaking football clubs in Finland. The Swedish Literature Society in Finland (SLS) funded the project. The main sources are archived periodical publications: the magazine for Swedish (Nordic) youth *Kamraten* (“The Comrade”, published 1893–1911) and *Nordiskt Idrottslif* (“Nordic Sport Life”, published 1900–1920). Sidelights on other publications from the archives are also included. Although this article presents just a small fraction of the available material, I visited the Brage Press Archive, the SLS Archive, and Urheilumuseo/Sportmuseum (all in Helsinki, Finland). Further, I went through all issues of *Kamraten*, several volumes of *Nordiskt Idrottslif*, celebratory publications of sport clubs in both Sweden and Finland, and the Finnish digital press archive *Digitala Samlingar* (digi.kanslallisarkisto.fi).²

Kamraten was established by Frithiof Hellberg, who worked with different newspapers and magazines in Sweden starting in the 1880s, most famous for establishing a magazine for women called *Idun* in 1887 (Frostegren 1979:17). When founding *Kamraten* in 1893 together with Johan Nordling, he already had a long experience in the publishing world (Svensson 2018:150). The literature scholar Sonja

Svensson states that the magazine, like other productions aimed at young people, was focused on helping to produce better citizens, with plenty of interests, activities and general knowledge (Svensson 2018:154). Sports became key factors as gymnastics was seen as necessary to develop young bodies and minds. *Kamraten* is linked to the beginning of an established network of sport associations called IFK (Idrottsföreningen Kamraterna – The Comrades Sporting Society). IFK was established after a short note was sent by a student to *Kamraten* in 1895, asking young people with an interest in sport to come together. As the magazine was known among young people in Finland, especially in Swedish-speaking schools, Finland started to establish its own IFK associations in 1897.

Viktor Balck, a Swedish army officer and sport enthusiast, was responsible for promoting physical activities in schools and often published in *Kamraten*. He edited two sport magazines and wrote three volumes presenting different sports (1886–1888). Physical activities had national, even patriotic, undertones (Peterson 2001:331). Balck's works were known in Finland and IFK Helsingfors presented him as “the father of Swedish sports” (Björkman 1997:18). Balck also lobbied for the Finnish presence at the Olympic Games (Björkman 1997:18). *Kamraten* often had articles written by Balck and even published a presentation of his career and achievements. Both *Kamraten* and *Nordiskt Idrottslif* referred to different disciplines, and sports like football and cycling were visibly growing in popularity. *Nordiskt Idrottslif* was published by Count Clarence von Rosen and presented sport-

ing achievements, contests, cups and results from Sweden and Finland. Count von Rosen sponsored the competition for the von Rosen Trophy in football, which was advertised in *Kamraten*. Additionally, pictures of young men in IFK uniforms, some of them bearing the surname von Rosen, appeared in *Kamraten* (“Kamraternas sommarfest” August 1897, no. 15:231–233).³

Sports proved to be more than just sports. The magazines provided an entry to an interesting sphere created at the intersection of class, age, language and education. In an anniversary publication celebrating 50 years of Åbo IFK (Åbo, Finland), William Fock, who belonged to the group that started the club, recalled that the inspiration for starting an IFK association came from a Swedish magazine (*Idrottsföreningen Kamraterna i Åbo 50 år*, 1958:10). Sport became a curious anomaly that became normality, an ordering structure within education that gained entry to public schools in the nineteenth century.

Archives are open to interpretations (Blouin Jr. & Rosenberg 2011:3–4), as the researcher digs in the archive, asking questions, connecting different sources, being inspired by a theoretical input, and going back to the material again. Therefore, it can be described as “fieldwork in the past” (Gustavsson 2014:25). I focused on close-reading of the chaotic bricolage of information presented in *Kamraten*. The process of collection, interpretation and analysis is what the anthropologist Axel Tjora calls “the step-by-step inductive method”. The method Tjora describes as “inductively empirically driven, in no way rejects the importance of theory, but stands as a contrast to research that is evidence- or documentation-driven. [...] It has a critical rath-

er than dogmatic nature” (Tjora 2017:21). The disadvantage is that the material can appear chaotic. Yet it reflects how one constructs, maintains and communicates one’s identity and everyday life.

Theoretical Framework

My main theoretical concepts are pidginization and chaos. Pidginization is a process resulting, in linguistic terms, in a pidgin (Foley 1997; Velupillai 2015). The linguist David Decamp defined a pidgin language thus:

A pidgin is a contact vernacular, normally not the native language of any of its speakers. It is used in trading or in any situation requiring communication between persons who do not speak each other’s native languages. It is characterized by a limited vocabulary, an elimination of many grammatical devices such as number and gender, and a drastic reduction of redundant features. This reduction has been often called simplification, but it is now considered debatable whether the less-redundant pidgin is simpler or more complex than the standard language (Decamp 1971:15).

There are several famous examples of pidgin, such as Hawaiian Pidgin English. Pidgin usually occurred in situations where large groups were displaced, creating a multilingual setting where members of different linguistics groups had to find a means of communication (Andersen 1983:3). Hence, pidginization has been connected to colonialism, having been observed in Central American or Asian communities created through colonial rule (Velupillai 2015). Pidgin has no native speakers. If used by a second generation, then it becomes their first language and thus a creole language (Velupillai 2015). This is rather common and as a result, very few pidgin languages

actually “exist”. They are a point in a temporal process of language development. I will utilize the terms “pidginization” and “pidgin” to analyse the cultural exchanges between sport-interested groups in Sweden in Finland. Thus, I treat “pidgin” in cultural terms only. It shall not refer to a language but to a communication process which is “pidginized”.

Chaos theory has been linked to the pidginization process (Zhao 2010). Chaos theory is a way of taking on complex systems that appear to be random but represent an ordered pattern (Mosko 2005; Zhao 2010; Wagner 2005). As the social anthropologist Mark Mosko put it, “Chaos theory has enabled mathematicians, physics, chemists, biologists, meteorologists, and others to identify new islands of pattern and order amidst what previously appeared to be seas of random, stochastic phenomena” (Mosko 2005:7). He stresses how social sciences utilized the characteristics of chaos theory that apply to societal patterns, belief systems, and ritualistic behaviour (Mosko 2005:16). By applying chaos theory I am able to focus on the pockets of order that appeared through the deluge of themes and topics that were printed in *Kamraten*.

Though pidginization applies first and foremost to linguistic processes, the folklorist and sociolinguist Allen Grimshaw presents it as “that complex process of sociolinguistic change comprising reduction in inner form, with convergence, in the context of restriction in use” and a pidgin as “a result of such a process that has achieved autonomy as a norm” (1971:84). I apply the concept to the actual exchange process, treating the Swedish language as a social variable that enabled an exchange

between Sweden and Finland. Tensions, discussions and controversies concerning Finland's Swedish-speaking population were discussed back and forth for many decades (Ståhlberg 1995; Wolf-Knuts 1995, 2013; Klinkmann, Henriksson & Häger 2017; Klinkmann 2017). I intend to treat the cultural pidginization as possible because of a shared language which thus enabled cultural exchanges.

Cultural pidginization can be conceptualized as a process over the course of which a culture and identity are developed in specific contexts of ethnic and cultural diversity. In contrast to creolization, this process does not involve ethnicization. No new ethnic group is formed, and original identities based on their heritages remain in existence (Knörr 2010:739). To simplify, Swedes were Swedes and Finns were Finns. Yet, because of a shared language on both sides of the Baltic Sea, an exchange developed that helped to shape cultures and build identities. This exchange resulted in pidgin-like elements as channels of communication, in this case sports, solidified for a brief moment in history. The rather short-spanned, early frenzy in sport commentary and mutual encouragement in exercise, competition and reports around them can be understood in terms of chaos theory and pidginization. Although this frenzy seems random, it stems from previous lines of development and manifests itself in perfect, even if brief, order (Mosko 2005:7). The material represents culture with a function. It was used, applied, made into a tool for forging connections. Quoting Nils-Arvid Bringéus, "only if we become clearly aware of culture as a function of society will we understand what culture is" (Bringéus 1979:13).

I will begin my analysis with an overview of my main sources, and proceed to discuss the material based on the IFK movement stemming from the magazine *Kamraten*. Finally, I will discuss sport as rebellion, continuation and tradition, and finish with the processes beyond pidginization.

Comrades in School Uniforms in Sweden and Former Sweden

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Finland was part of the Russian Empire, with limited autonomy. The Swedish-speaking population in Finland had their own channels of communication, such as newspapers and magazines, books, schools, art, literature and sports. The image of sport as linked to physical strength, the school system, military service, patriotism and health projects that would produce good, strong citizens, existed in both countries (cf. Andersson 2002). This image and connection depended on the language. Swedish publications in Finland were numerous and popular, and presupposed a market that could communicate in Swedish (Svensson 2018:71–90).

The position of the press in Finland in the 1800s and early 1900s was complicated due to the restrictions imposed by the Russian state apparatus. The Freedom of the Press Act did not come into force until Finland became an independent country in 1917 (Landgrén 2017:288). Newspapers circulating in Finland, in both Finnish and Swedish, tiptoed around the Russian censorship for decades. The press developed into an important player in society, especially in politics (Landgrén 2017:286). The daily press grew throughout the nineteenth century. Youth journals appeared through-

out that period, both in Sweden and in Finland (Svensson 2018:90–157; Tommila & Salokangas 2000:44–57).

Kamraten follows the patterns seen in similar publications for young people when it comes to its layout and content. It seems like an organized chaos, with topics ranging from excursions abroad, instructions on how to build a camera, instructions to build a bookshelf or a steam engine to regulate your indoor climate.⁴ There are fictional adventure stories about Indians in the US, reports from explorations of the Arctic, letters from schools describing lessons and teachers, bicycle rides, the introduction of new sports (some more obscure than others), poetry and a dose of enthusiastic, even naive, nationalism. It is a product of its time, similar to other youth journals of the time throughout Europe, and often referring to literary work from Britain and the US (Palme 1963:6–9, 31). There is a lot of praise of the Fatherland (Sweden), opinion pieces on how to be a good citizen, pictures of the royal family, in both formal and informal situations, including images of the young princes Gustaf Adolf and Sigvard playing in snow in 1911 (“Småprinsarnas vintersport”, February 1911, no. 4:83).⁵ The cultural communication swirls in spirals, seemingly innocent, youthful, playful and full of excitement, but it carries heavier elements of patriotism and good citizenship (Bringéus 1979:11).

Kamraten was meant for, and circulated among, schools and students. Educated, with access to various resources, they represented a class preparing to take on positions in society. As already mentioned, the magazine was supposed to help raise good citizens, which at first glance seems to mean patriotic, healthy, with knowledge

about upcoming technologies. There is nevertheless a fair bit of entertainment, such as adventure stories, poetry, and reports from various balls and celebrations throughout the year. The historian Sven Ulric Palme pointed out that Hellberg made a conscious choice to include sport as a way to attract subscriptions. Palme referred to the changing cover as skating and sailing appeared in the background pictures (Palme 1963:7).

Finland has a strong presence in *Kamraten* and *Nordiskt Idrottslif*. Reports, pictures and letters from Finland were published regularly. The flow of ideas is rather overwhelming for a modern reader. Published twice a month, *Kamraten* presents a large chunk of material that can be rather repetitive and monotonous, yet often surprises with its content. *Nordiskt Idrottslif* was more streamlined, even though it also displayed a plethora of information, from rather poetic descriptions of contests, trips, essays expressing different opinions to long columns of results and numbers. *Nordiskt Idrottslif* was first published by Count von Rosen in 1900 and, when read side by side, one can notice that reports on sports, especially in the IFK movement, gradually disappears from *Kamraten* after 1902.

The fourth issue of *Idrottslif* had a picture from a skating ring in Helsinki, with a description “Helsingfors’ skridskobana” (no. 4, 23 January 1900). Finland was present in *Nordiskt Idrottslif* from the beginning, with communication possible through a syntax of sport and sport interests. In the chaotic mix of small hobbies and exotic adventures, sports emerged as a common discourse. The communication through sports took off in *Kamraten* together with the newly established sport associations for young people

(IFK). It then developed into complex reporting in *Nordiskt Idrottslif*, slowly dwindling in *Kamraten* as the magazine changed looks, editors, content and ceased to exist in 1911. This process of creation, rapid growth and then extinction “illustrates in a comprehensive way how pockets of order typically appear in diverse complex dynamical systems – pockets of order that otherwise would be dismissed as ‘aberrations’ or ‘disorder’” (Mosko 2005:12).

IFK – Contests, Values, Balls and Parties

The Comrades Sport Association (Idrottsföreningen Kamraterna) was formed as a result of a spontaneous call in 1895. Louis Zettersten, who initiated the movement, was active for several years in organizing it. Soon all over Sweden the IFKs popped up like mushrooms. Hellberg, the editor of *Kamraten*, encouraged sport associations. IFK became a success example, moving from school yards to become a national organization that is still functioning (Palme 1963:8). The name was discussed and after due consideration of several alternatives (e.g. Svea, Friska Viljor, Sport, Bore) IFK was chosen (“Idrottsförening Kamraterna IFK” March 1895, no. 4:63). In subsequent issues, inquiries appeared asking whether someone would be willing, for example, to start an IFK in Norrköping, Malmö etc. (“IFK”, May 1895, no. 9:144). In 1897, *Kamraten* published a question as to whether one was allowed to establish an IFK association in Finland. The answer was enthusiastic, with the heading “To our Finnish comrades!” (“Till våra finska kamrater!” August 1897, no. 16:256).

The text affirms that the Finnish students are very welcome to start their own associ-

ations. It also mentions that it will be an additional way to strengthen the comradeship between Finns and Swedes that already existed. Finnish girls, described as “hurtiga och trefliga” (lively and lovely), were called to help with the movement as well. Often there were comments, regarding both Finnish and Swedish IFK groups, inviting women to join. It also seemed a point of pride to have mixed clubs. In a letter from Halmstad in 1899 a comrade described a bicycle trip on 27 August. It was a fun outing with “games and dancing”, and about twenty boys and girls came home happy. At this point the writer felt this should be stressed and a text in brackets reads: “för se, nu ha vi flickor i föreningen här också” – see, we have girls in the association now as well (“IFK hade utflykt på velocipede”, September 1899, no. 18:287).

As IFK, connected to the magazine, presupposed an educated audience representing middle/upper-class youths, it encouraged young women to join and participate, at least in some activities. There are norms guiding any communication, and cultural communication is receptive to inclusions and exclusions. The “grammatical system” of this pidginized exchange was not completely fixed and allowed for probing which elements could be omitted and which used. Gumperz (1964:151) refers to cultural and grammatical variables that shape communication and prompt social change. Seen through a chaos theory, the quickly developed language of communication in *Kamraten*, based on an interest in sport, stemmed from various unstable variables that created an ordered and accepted mode of cultural exchange.

The very first IFK in Finland, IFK Lappvik,⁶ was short-lived. Instead, Uleåborg

and Helsingfors, urban centres, became the forefront of the movement, followed by IFKs in other cities such as Åbo, Vasa and Viborg (e.g. “IFK Finska Filialförening Uleåborg”, October 1897, no. 19:303; “IFK Finland”, November 1897, no. 22:352). After just a couple of months, Finnish IFKs reported having about 40 members each, eagerly sent reports of competitions (usually running or skiing), official meetings, and various parties. IFK quickly realized that commemoration was a thing and yearbooks started appearing. In a yearbook from 1898, both Uleåborg and Helsingfors IFK are given proper introductions, with pictures of leading athletes, best results, and names of the young men who started the movement. IFK then became a form of pidginized communication. A pattern was established that allowed to the transfer of information between schools and countries.

When referring to Helsingfors, the name of Georg Doubitsky was mentioned, as he, together with other students, established IFK at Svenska Real-Lycéet in the capital (a Swedish-speaking secondary school). The “father-figure” of any movement is an appreciated token. Robert Carrick at Gefle IF, Isidor Behrens at AIK, or Eric Pärsson at Malmö FF are all mythical founders still existing in the collective memory of modern fans (Herd 2018:80–81). Georg Doubitsky was there in the beginning, but faded away. An interviewed person working for Helsingfors IFK said that there was an attempt to “resurrect” Doubitsky, for example by delivering flowers to his grave on the anniversary of his death, as one did in the 1950s. However, it did not work out because his grave was not easily recognizable (interview with Herbert, 7 February 2020).

Not every element survives the passing of time, but the structure, the pattern of trying to establish a lasting reference – a myth, is there. Using terminology from chaos theory, one can refer to the patterns as part of “fractal self-similarity”, “universality”, and “self-organization” (Mosko 2005:17). The image of young men with physical strength, able to organize young people, able to be leaders and build something lasting, illustrates the ability of a complex system to become orderly. This is “fractal-like” as the same things happen in different places spontaneously. Together with an idea of game, sport and play, additional elements are added: strength, leadership, stamina, and a way to express them. As Nils-Arvid Bringéus puts it, cultural communication, as a “system of actions, signals and symbols is the observable side of norms, values, and attitudes” (Bringéus 1979:11).

Doubitsky left IFK early on, but in 1898 he sent a notice to *Kamraten* where he described how the young association in Helsingfors was operating (“I.F.K. Helsingfors”, March 1898 no. 6:92–93). This short text begins with stating that it is an answer to a question about how they were doing posed by a writer with “a throat-breaking nickname”. Doubitsky wrote about initial difficulties establishing the association, though they reached a number of about forty members. He also stated that there was a lack of snow almost all winter, and only in February could they start with some winter sports. And since sports were not possible, “we, Helsingfors comrades, decided to have a little party to spice up our little association and make it known”. It was a success, with about a hundred attendees, a hall decorat-

ed in white and blue (the colours of IFK), speeches and a soprano concert accompanied by a piano. There were also gymnasts performing human pyramids lit up by pyrotechnics (a bit hard to imagine, as no pictures are provided). The evening continued with a recitation of a poem by Topelius and finally with a comedy act, performed by “a comrade from the Swedish secondary school, dressed up as a farmer, of course!” who told funny stories pretending to be a person living in the archipelago.⁷

The letter presented above was rather typical of what one could find in *Kamraten*. Other IFKs sent similar reports of pleasant events that they organized. Several elements made the exchange possible, including the education system, class and linguistic abilities. A certain level of comprehension is needed to put them into a context that is recognizable, special or unique yet readable enough to be understood. As Bringéus comments: “Reception of the message requires an intellectual activity, which is called cognition. It means familiarity with, recognition of, and understanding or comprehension of the signal or message” (Bringéus 1979:6). For example, a human pyramid lit with flares appears several times in descriptions of balls and parties.

Sport formed one of the grammatical skeletons of cultural communication, it prompted the pidginization process of the exchanges visible in *Kamraten*. For instance, students started sending letters describing balls and parties connected to the sport activities. Social life was narrated through *Kamraten* as a unifying element. Cultural pidginization, stimulated by the flow of information through magazines, allowed the receivers on both ends to form

an additional layer of identity that navigated between the familiar and the new. Young (mostly) men could now communicate through physical activities and be positioned based on their performance and engagement, mixed with other cultural elements. For example, one could consider the comedy performance at the party, the very existence of a party, opera singing and a dress code for that evening. Subtle information sips through, and it is possible because of cultural pidginization. The social anthropologist Jacqueline Knörr commented on the process:

Cultural pidginization, on the other hand, can be conceptualized as a process over the course of which a common culture and identity are developed in specific contexts of ethnic and cultural diversity as well, yet in contrast to creolization, this process does not involve ethnicization. No new ethnic group is formed, and original identities based on the heritages of their protagonists remain in existence (Knörr 2010:739).

The groups stayed independent. The different character of Finnish comrades was not questioned, but the very existence of sporting comrades makes up a pidginized communication. The introduction of different sports as a backdrop allowed for “pockets of order” to appear that were available for a certain group to explore.

Another example of exchange comes from a letter written by Uno Westerholm from IFK Helsingfors in 1899. He introduced himself as the new chairperson of the association. He stated that even though almost a year had elapsed since the organization began, there was a standstill. The rescue for membership numbers and activities came from some energetic young women who broke a trend of solely male

presence in IFK Helsingfors, thus invigorating the association. Westerholm then recalled their first outing, taking a boat out into the archipelago. Upon reaching an old angler's cabin, the party had coffee and "the association experienced some of its nicest moments". The letter finished with hope for the future together with new female members ("I.F.K.-Kretsen i Helsingfors", March 1899 no. 6:95).

The letter illustrates the difficulties of sustaining the creation of an IFK and the lack of straightforward development of the organization. It seems somewhat chaotic. Using a statement from the anthropologist Mark S. Mosko:

In the unpredictable operations of complex systems lie several of the central elements of chaos theory: extreme sensitivity to initial conditions, nonlinearity, and fractal geometry or self-similarity (Mosko 2005:8).

IFK in Helsingfors took off with determination, joy and parties, then it halted and stumbled. The board changed, a new person introduced himself as a leading figure, and saw the previous shortcomings in not having a female presence in the organization. Even though it is not exactly clear what women could or could not do (there are no explicit/written rules of conduct for different sexes in the communication), one can assume that the positions were not equal. There are no details of women taking part in any disciplines. Westerholm narrates chaos into order with the help of the pidgin communication. IFK was hibernating, one could hardly call it an operating association, and no sporting activities occurred. Yet an excursion, new female members and a nice coffee break ensured

the very existence of IFK and a new beginning. Women became an element in the narrative that marked a revival, an element added to the sporting activities that would make the club more attractive. Westerholm's message was intended for a special audience that could understand the difficulties of running IFK. "The message has reached its destination only when it has gone through de-coding and the original message has been fit into the new experiential world" (Bringéus 1979:7). It was constructed according to the rules of communication, hence it was comprehensible.

The cultural communication around IFKs was done in shortcuts, with very straightforward references. It served the purpose to talk about sports, but also upheld other social categories that could be packed into reports of physical activities. Parties and trips are referred to often and in colourful language. It shows a willingness for communication. The strength of cultural communication lies in its simplicity, the pidgin-like structure of readily available symbols and tokens that can be thrown together, shaken a bit, and produce ordered chaos. The ordering that generated the IFK movement is an example of how sport can produce lasting cultural communication. The process continued and even though the umbrella organization exists, it has a different shape and purpose nowadays, for IFKs in both Finland and Sweden.

Sport as Rebellion, Continuity and Tradition

Mosko suggested that chaos theory offers a possibility to explain "cross-cultural similarities observed so far as consequences of the inherent nonlinearity characteristic of complex systems" without the aid of group

psychology (Mosko 2005:17). The nonlinearity is a characteristic of communication discussed by Bringéus: “If one instead selects a spiral, as communication researchers have done, one can symbolize the connection to both past and present, and even future” (Bringéus 1979:12). Bringéus opts for a spiral as the best way of representing communication, as interaction is never linear or straightforward. This corresponds with chaos theory as presented by Mosko, as nonlinearity as “a characteristic of a complex system”. The sport-based interactions from the turn of the twentieth century present surprising, chaotic exchanges of images and ideas, but these are ordered and structured.

Nordiskt Idrottslif was focused on different sport disciplines and results, but together with it came other layers of communication. The magazine saw the light of day in 1900, and it included Finland from the start. In issue 15 a “Letter from Finland” (“Bref från Finland”, 1900, no. 15:123) was published. In the letter, Finnish IFK comrades from Uleåborg presented the results from their third gymnastics contest, a reoccurring gathering, that was somewhat smaller than intended, but still pleasant; there was a gymnastics show, prizes and songs. The comrades had an excursion, complete with a cross-country skiing race “of unknown distance, but about three kilometres”. Names and times were meticulously stated. The second part of the letter referred to a skiing contest in Kemi, a town in the north close to the Finnish-Swedish border. A skiing contest over 30 kilometres was recalled. As the weather was splendid, five of the contestants beat the previous records.

The letter from Finland was published between an article on a sporting event in

Stockholm and a short notice that boxing had been forbidden in the US. As already seen in the letters sent to *Kamraten*, physical activities are accompanied by social ones, and are dutifully reported. Participation in sports meant participation in group-making on various social levels. One needed to report them, to show the peers what one’s circles were doing. Finnish writers could recount their activities without unnecessary explanations about who they were or why their letter would even need to appear. It seemed commonly understood and taken for granted. A lot of the local context was omitted. Interaction, whether linguistic or social, was at its core:

... a process of decision making, in which speakers select from a range of possible expressions. The verbal repertoire then contains all the accepted ways of formulating messages. It provides the weapons of everyday communication. Speakers choose among this arsenal in accordance with the meanings they wish to convey (Gumperz 1964:138).

Gumperz relates in this quotation to the characteristics of a linguistic interaction. He refers to two communities wishing to communicate. Taken on the level of social interaction, it explains the pidginized character of the Swedish-Finnish interaction presented here. Skiing contests, parties and excursions were translatable. The communication through sports was possible because some elements crystalized and guided the exchange. Elements used in a social repertoire were accepted ways of formulating an exchange.

Among different factors that characterize chaotic phenomena, Mosko lists “complex, unstable relations among variables”

(Mosko 2005:7). The listings of names and results indicate such relations. It was not clear from the start what would be a lasting reference, but the structuring made the lists important by the sheer fact of them being the basics of communication. It is clear that the cultural exchanges surpassed the lists of results as letters published are given space to communicate other aspects of social engagements. Another letter, from IFK Vasa published in 1901, gives a bit more detail. The letter states that the then one-year-old association drew its members mostly from the Swedish high school, but (apart from other men interested in sports) there were also about 20 “ladies” (not school girls, even though they tried to invite them). The letter finishes with a sentence that there are about 70 members in IFK now, but the writer cannot say whether all of those are truly interested in sports (“IFK Vasa”, 1901, no. 12:xx). The dependence on initial conditions, unstable relations among different elements, “fractal or self-similar patterning on different scales”, dynamic transformations and self-organization, all features of chaotic systems, are visible through these letters that combine sport with social organization (Mosko 2005:7). The letters and the systems made structuring parts of society visible. Nonetheless, they are able to reshape society ever so slightly, as sport could mean female involvement in the otherwise male association. Following a pattern meant that one knew how to play with it.

Certain Finnish elements are also visible in use of references from Finland in the Swedish publications. *Nordiskt Idrottslif* had a special section about skiing, which was headed by a short quotation from the Finnish national epic *Kalevala*. The quotation is accompanied by a drawing of a

Finnish man on skis. One becomes aware that the man is Finnish because of a specific hat. Known as *Väinämöisen lakki* or *väiski*, the hat appeared on national-romantic paintings depicting the *Kalevala* and a main character, Väinämöinen, wearing the hat.⁸ This heading evokes very strong connotations of Finland’s national elements, without naming the country.

The text under the picture comes from two separate verses of the *Kalevala*. The first verse praises skis; the fastest mode of transportation, asking if there is any animal in the forest on four legs that could not be caught with these particular skis. The second verse is a question asking if any of the new generation would be up to the task of donning those skis (*Kalevala*, the elk Hiisi, Runo XIII, p. 148). Part of this *Kalevala* text appeared in Victor Balck’s volume of sports, published in 1888. There, Balck referred to the Finnish national poem to stress the importance of winter sports, at the same time quoting a lengthy piece about the hero Lämminkäinen’s hunt for the elk Hiisi. Balck saw in the poem a proof that skiing is an ancient tradition (Balck 1888:5).

Both uses of the Finnish epic poem should be put in the context of the political realities of the late nineteenth century. Being a part of the Russian Empire, Finland’s freedom was dwindling towards the end of the century. Finnish national identity or traditions were not supported by the tsarist regime. In 1898, the Russian general Nikolai Bobrikov became Governor-General of Finland, and set about combating separatism and awakening nationalism⁹ (Polvinen 1995). The *Kalevala* inspired other branches of culture and quickly became an important reference point for Finnish cultural identity.

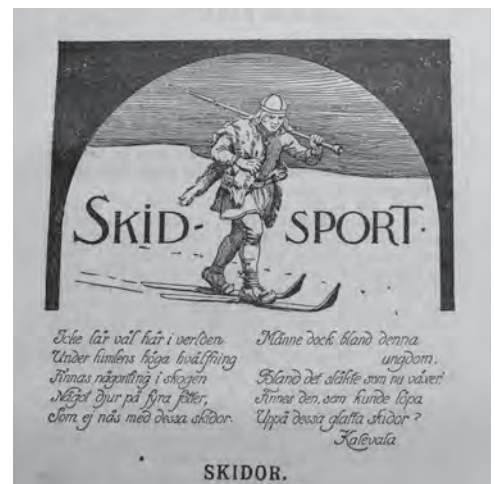
Because it was combined with sport, the message in using the *Kalevala* does not seem particularly nationalistic. The sport publications were aimed at an audience interested in all sorts of physical activities, but they were also educated, belonging to the upper strata of the society, and aware of the political realities. Yet a subtle patriotic undertone persisted. This exchange suggests that the cultural capital infused in the Finnish epic poem was useful in the Swedish publications, not only to signal something for the Finnish audience, but also for Swedish nationals. Not all references could travel in this way, but in the case of the *Kalevala*, references seem straightforward enough that one could use them in a sport magazine without further explanations, thus creating an extra layer of communication as it alluded to Finnish heritage and national elements. One can see it as a pidgin in that it functions as an additional exchange, not able to carry full communication, but rather as an “auxiliary language” (Decamp 1971:16) of the press, allowing the cultural communication, still based on sports.

The communication based on sport interests was possible because of the input from Finland and Sweden. The will to share and develop communication meant that sporting associations like IFK, or some sports (skiing, sailing, cycling and later on football) provided a background for sharing other information. Even though the exchanges seemed chaotic and random at first, the flow of ideas was steady and orderly and the culturally pidgin-like exchange continued. As Zhao puts it, “The uniqueness of the pidgins lies in how they cope with the new information” (Zhao 2010:91).

Sport-based publications developed a mode of cultural exchange. They were used to maintain contact between two countries that were once united. This was and is an ongoing, ever-developing process. The communication that flourished in *Kamraten* and *Nordiskt Idrottslif* took a different shape later, as the popularity of the magazines dwindled and other social factors diverged too much to uphold this communication:

Simply put, two communities which may have begun with only the slightest of differences in their cosmologies might well diverge as their respective histories unfold, a result as much of chaotic processes inherent in complex systems as of diffusion or differential experiences of external influence (Mosko 2005:22).

Drawing further on the linguistic terminology in culture, one can suggest that the pidgin here went through a process of creolization (Knörr 2010:733). As the pidgin-like communication flourished, it



1. A heading introducing a section on skiing sports in *Nordiskt Idrottslif*, no. 47, 1900:379.

also developed and helped to shape sport movements in both countries, but on different premises.

This communication simultaneously solidified and challenged identities; identity often happens “precisely through communication” (Bringéus 1979:11). Class and education seemed a stronger connection than political borders. A shared interest in new sports made gender differences fluid. Results from a Finnish skiing competition in Kemi seemed to matter as much as a sports day in Stockholm. The possibility to communicate one’s achievements and identities brought the periphery to the centre, or at least made it seem possible. At the same time, self-similarity (Mosko 2005:7) – uniformity of structure, hierarchy and roles – appears in the material. Order was challenged and upheld simultaneously.

Concluding Remarks

The last issue of *Kamraten* came out in 1911 and *Nordiskt Idrottslif* was published until 1920. By that time, Finland had become an independent country in 1917 and Europe went through the First World War. Nevertheless, the IFK associations in both Sweden and Finland persisted. Initial engagement and communication helped to establish IFK on Finnish soil, and prompted the appearance of a separate publication. IFK Helsingfors’ own magazine, based on the comradeship of the association, started publication in 1917. The very first sentence in the trial number from January 1917 stated: “It is undoubtedly bold to start a journal in these distressful times” (“Provnummer”, January 1917, HIFK archive). Later on, when published during the Second World War, the journal would list comrades from IFK who died on the Russian front. The

first issue of *Nordiskt Idrottslif* published after Finland proclaimed its independence on 6 December 1917 featured a reference to Finnish sport. A picture of two Swedish sportsmen, John Zander and Yngve Häckner, was accompanied by a poem about sport, “När skola väl folken mötas” (When would the people meet), written by Artur Eklund from *Finskt Idrottsblad – Finnish Sport Magazine* (December 1917, no. xx:73–74). The cultural exchange was morphing and taking different shape, still using sport and sporting organizations as platforms for further communication.

I have presented examples of communication based on sport. This can be conceptualized through pidginization, a process that later developed into “creolized” (Knörr 2010:739) elements in both Swedish and Finnish societies. By creolized I mean another stage of development that is characterized by a certain inability to communicate in the “mother tongues”. For example, some IFK clubs in Sweden grew bigger and stronger than the central organization, developing independent identities. In Finland, troubled as it was with military conflicts, developing national character took over the enthusiastic connection to Sweden. Differences and unique features became more important than similarities. The analysis highlights a moment in time when (fairly) unproblematic exchange between two groups was possible and fostered strings of communication. This communication re-established a bond between Finland and Sweden. It was possible because of a shared language and growing interest in sports. As presented in the text, the exchange happened in complex systems that behaved according to the models of chaos theory; going through se-

ries of changes and ordered-random developments that result in a different pattern, yet having a lasting effect.

There are several points that arise from the analysis: (1) The potent and fruitful role of sport in a society; (2) the complex relationships between Sweden and Finland are made visible in interest-based exchanges at the turn of the twentieth century; (3) the possibility to see the shaping, re-shaping and consolidation of identities based on sport; (4) the usefulness of chaos theory as its terminology can be applied in cultural sciences, opening up possibilities for further investigations. The cultural anthropologist Roy Wagner saw the application of chaos theory as a part of a reflection needed in cultural sciences:

So the “scientific” aspects of fractal modeling can be understood much more simply than the Chaos theorists would have us believe. We not only rationalize to determine the agency of cause-and-effect in the data, but actually rationalize the fact that we rationalize, hence overdetermine the effects of the modeling process by underdetermining our own agencies in doing so (Wagner 2005:207).

The material analysed here is of course selective, and it is a mere glimpse of the astounding amount of letters, essays, comments, poems, songs, excursions, medals and matches that provided a flow of information between these two countries.

The sport-based exchanges were not superimposed on Finland from Sweden. Rather, they were collectively shaped by groups with access to education, press and language. It was a conversation rather than a monologue. This conversation allowed both sides to apply certain elements that developed further, when pidginized sport exchange had lost its meaning in transmit-

ting thoughts, ideas and identities in this context.

This exchange also connects, as Bringéus suggests, the past, present and future on several levels. The hundred-year-old material has its own encapsulated past, present and future, but also connects us, present-day researchers, with those temporal realities. The flow of rather random information could seem chaotic, but also allowed for the creation of pockets of order that could work as a further catalyst in the process of cultural communication. As Bringéus remarks:

What we must strive for in an age when the mass of information is increasing at a breakneck pace is not more facts above all else, but assistance in orienting ourselves – theories, aspects and concepts which increase our understanding of the mechanisms or forces which build up and alter our world and which, in spite of everything, make it a cosmos instead of chaos (Bringéus 1979:16).

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Notes

- 1 The nineteenth century saw an awakening national movement in Finland. Russian authorities looked positively at the development of Finnish language and literature, and saw it as weakening the ties with Sweden. Being associated with the rural population first, Finnish became the language of choice for the educated classes. The members of the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland, such as Johan Wilhelm Snellman, Elias Lönnrot and Johan Ludvig Runeberg had a profound influence on the “Fennomania” movement (promoting and

encouraging Finnish language and culture) and awakening nationalism in Finland. For an in-depth discussion of the political and linguistic issues see for example Barton 2008; Lindgren et al. 2011; Mäkinen 2015.

- 2 During the project, I interviewed several people currently working in different Swedish-speaking football clubs in Finland. In this article, I refer to only one informant regarding the commemoration of one of the “founding fathers” of Helsingfors IFK.
- 3 Count von Rosen was an important figure for the development of sports. He was interested in football, riding, and the new and coming automobile sports. He had personal connections with Victor Balck (<https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/mobil/Artikel/6864>). The von Rosen family became controversial as they expressed Nazi sympathies (see for example Carlsson 1942:63, 119–120, 133–134).
- 4 The instructions for the steam engine, “Att göra sig en ångmaskin”, appeared in September 1899, no.18:281. The explanation states that questions about it came often to the magazine.
- 5 In *Kamraten* from 1901, there is another picture of small children playing in snow, entitled “De små Bernadottarne i snöbollskrig” – The Small Bernadottes (members of the Swedish royal family) in snowball war (no. 3:41).
- 6 Lappvik, or Lappohja in Finnish, is a small town at the very south-west corner of Finland. The other places in this paragraph are written in their Swedish forms; the Finnish names are respectively Oulu, Helsinki, Turku, Vaasa, Viipuri.
- 7 The Finnish cities of Åbo and Helsingfors (Turku and Helsinki in Finnish respectively) are both surrounded by archipelagos, clusters of islands, important both economically and culturally.
- 8 See Axel Gallen Kallella’s *The Aino Myth or Joukahainen’s Revenge* (Okkonen 1948); Robert Wilhem Ekman’s *Väinämöinen Plays Kantele* (Ervamaa 1981:54–61).
- 9 He was later murdered for his efforts by Eugen Shauman in June 1904; see for example Jensen 2018.

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