“The proof is in the pudding steak”

Halal food consumption, responsibility, moral overtones and re-negotiation of categories among Muslim believers in Stockholm County

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Author’s note

I take full responsibility of what I am writing. Any excess, mistake, and lack in the structure and/or content is my own.
Abstract

The main objective of my thesis is showing how consumers who live in Stockholm County deal with the daily practice of halal food providing. I then analyse the main contradiction that emerges from my research, meaning the opposition between those who by ‘halal’ and those who do not. I propose an investigation of halal consumption or ‘non-consumption’ through the lens of economic processes, responsibility, (re)negotiation of food categories, gender roles, food morality, urban space and feedback systems.

My aim is to demonstrate how ‘halal’ does not configure as a single category, but a group of categories which is intimately connected to the idea of the consumer to do ‘the right thing’. This ‘right thing’ is not necessarily following all the rules ‘according to the cook book’, but rather interpret the rules in order to ensure the welfare of the loved ones, economically, spiritually and physically. Besides, I will observe the other side of the coin, analysing the role of the food seller, who is included in the moral system which requires him to do the right thing too (not deceive the customer, be a good Muslim, ensure a good quality of the food, keep the prices low).
## Contents

**Introduction and Background** ............................................................................................................ 1
- Arrival in Sweden: a change of perspectives .................................................................................. 1
- The quest for theory ......................................................................................................................... 5
- Objectives and main themes ............................................................................................................. 7
- Research questions .......................................................................................................................... 8
- Pre-fieldwork considerations and contacts .................................................................................... 8
- Are you sending us the thesis once is over? The anthropologist as moral actor ....................... 11
- A digression on terminology: what am I allowed to say? ............................................................... 13
- “Muslims”? Let's take people outside of the ‘box’! ........................................................................ 15
- Swedish halal market ....................................................................................................................... 17
- Outline ............................................................................................................................................... 18

**Chapter I - Methodological approaches** ...................................................................................... 20
- Introduction to the chapter .............................................................................................................. 20
  - 1.1 The importance of ‘reading between the lines’ ...................................................................... 21
  - 1.2 A language puzzle, more than a language barrier ................................................................. 21
  - 1.3 The web analysis .................................................................................................................... 23
  - 1.4 The questionnaires .................................................................................................................. 24
  - 1.5 The interviews ......................................................................................................................... 26
  - 1.6 The ‘tele-selling technique’ ..................................................................................................... 28

**Intermezzo: theme-divided empirical chapters and relevant theory** .............................................. 30

**Chapter II - ‘Being a Muslim’ and ‘eating like a Muslim’: not a linear concept at all...** 34
- Introduction to the chapter .............................................................................................................. 34
  - 2.1 Köttbullar .................................................................................................................................. 34

**Chapter III - Gender issues: the importance of the one who shops for and prepares the meals** .......................................................................................................................... 37
- Introduction to the chapter .............................................................................................................. 37
  - 3.1 Who buys food in your family? ............................................................................................... 37
  - 3.2 The cooking pot as womb ....................................................................................................... 41
  - 3.3 “Responsibility is something you feel in your belly” ............................................................. 42
Chapter IV – Honour and morality .......................................................... 44
  Introduction to the chapter .................................................................. 44
  4.1 “Responsibility is something that you feel in your soul” .................. 44
  4.2 Moral overtones ........................................................................... 46
  4.3 “Responsibility is something you feel in your pocket”: the “wallet triangle” .......... 48

Chapter V: Like the sounds in the Jungle .................................................. 54
  Introduction to the chapter .................................................................. 54
  How to create feedbacks ..................................................................... 54
  5.2 The “jungle drum phenomenon” ................................................... 55
  5.3 The online feedbacks ..................................................................... 56
  5.4 How the reliability of a food seller can be measured ......................... 59
      The honourable seller: Ali Ahmed .................................................... 60

Chapter VI - A place to pray, a place to eat, and a place to talk about what to eat ....62
  Introduction to the chapter .................................................................. 62
  6.1 Having a shop near a mosque .......................................................... 62
  6.2 The intimacy of the kitchen: where the veil is not on ......................... 63

Chapter VII- The *julbord* near the praying room ................................. 66
  Introduction to the chapter .................................................................. 66
  7.1 “Why do you care about godis?: halal *godis* and halal *ekologisk.*” .......... 66
  7.2 The home left behind ..................................................................... 68

Concluding remarks .............................................................................. 71
Bibliography ......................................................................................... 73
Websites ............................................................................................... 77
Attachments ......................................................................................... 78
  A.1 Pictures ....................................................................................... 78
  A.2 Theoretical/methological attachments ........................................... 84
  A.3 Interviews quotes ......................................................................... 88
Pictures index

Fig. 1: Field map.......................................................................................................................... 78
Fig. 2: Boucherie Djim and logo AVS. Paris, March 2013 ......................................................... 79
Fig. 3: “Business card” I used to leave to potential informants.............................................. 79
Fig. 4: Card containing names and codes of haram ingredients ............................................. 80
Fig. 5: Maria’s halal chicken ordered from England .................................................................. 80
Fig. 6: Conversation with Tohin, Kista Folkhögskola .............................................................. 81
Fig. 7: The “wallet triangle” ...................................................................................................... 81
Fig. 8: Lunch at Kista Garden .................................................................................................. 82
Fig. 9: Reflexive and hungry anthropologist. Food Court, Kista Galleria............................. 82
Fig. 10: Rinkeby Torg ................................................................................................................ 83
Fig. 12: Ali Ahmed’s list of customers, Märsta................................................................. 89

All pictures were produced by the author except for fig. 6; 9; (Credits: Najla; Mustafa).
“Everybody needs to eat”
Arrival in Sweden: a change of perspective

When I was a student in Italy I worked in a kebab shop in Bologna, which specialized in halal\textsuperscript{1} food, and everything sold there was prepared according to Qur'an prescriptions. The shop was in the ‘Bolognina’ quarter, a district largely inhabited by immigrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and North Africa (my boss and all my colleagues were from Pakistan too). I remember some customers originally from Egypt, who lived quite far from there (in the Stalingrado neighbourhood), and used to come on Tuesday and Thursdays to have dinner there. They would always complain about the shop not delivering to their houses, since they were too far away, and then they had to walk so far to reach the shop because: ‘Only you have good food’.

I have to confess that this situation was what inspired my first master’s thesis. Besides the simple fact that I was working there every day, I started thinking about the food we were actually selling in the shop: where it was from, how it tasted, and why we had so many customers from different parts of Bologna, even if we were not at all the only kebab shop. In August 2012, during the second week of Ramadan, a customer came in to buy some kebab. He was carrying a bag with a couple of bottles of beer, but when he came to me to pay for his order he accidentally dropped the bag. The beers crashed to the floor, pouring the liquid everywhere, while a strong smell spread through the air. I remember the look my boss gave me. He was horrified, and all he could do was whisper: ‘Pia...’. Three seconds later and I thought I was in an emergency room, with people running around to clean up, anxiously trying not to touch the alcohol on the floor, while the other customers still at the tables tried to avoid the view of the beer and pretend they couldn’t notice the intense smell.

The episode was definitely awkward. I knew that alcohol was a non-topic in my workplace, and none of the usual customers ever asked for a beer, because they knew perfectly well we would never sell it. If J.G. Frazer could have seen my kebab shop, he would have definitely said that we were ‘avoiding contamination’ from impure ingredients.

\textsuperscript{1}Lit. “allowed”. All the terms from Classical Arabic have been translated with Mannân 'Omar A. \textit{The Dictionary of the Holy Qur'an} (Arabic Words with English Meaning with Notes).
The customers knew how careful we were about contamination, just as they also knew I was not a Muslim. But every day when my shift started, I used to wash my hands from the fingers to the elbows.²

By the time I was ready to select the courses for the second year of my master’s in Bologna, I had my thesis project clearly in mind. I was very interested in studying the meaning that Muslims in a European country attribute to halal food, so I decided to do a comparative study on three different nations that had different sizes of Muslim communities. In January 2013 I started my fieldwork in Bologna, now ‘officially’, and then continued in Paris and Berlin for two more months.

I was led by different questions when I started researching halal food. First, how important is it for a consumer to eat halal food, in a Muslim-minority country? Why would people go to the other side of the city to buy something ‘good’? Wouldn’t it be easier to just go to the shop next to their house? What kind of symbolic value does halal food have for people who have migrated to a new country, leaving their home and their food habits behind? And finally, how is this ‘quest for halal’ inscribed in the social and urban structure? As I continued my research continued I found different answers to my questions.

Not all people who declare themselves as Muslim believers perceive the concept of halal in the same way. Some do not eat pork, but eat everything else, and consider that ‘being halal’. Some drink beer, but eat only ritually slaughtered meat, and consider that halal. Some eat pork, drink beer, buy the meat at a ‘regular supermarket’, but feast during the Ramadan and slaughter dozens of lambs on Eid-Al-Adha,³ and still consider that halal.

Here, I won’t delve much into the results of my previous thesis; at the moment I only wanted to explain how my research interests emerged and how it led to the present study. End of the story; now let's start another ‘chapter’.

Sweden is thus the fourth European country where I have conducted fieldwork. In this case I had to build a new set of interpretive models for various aspects of my research. The first factor to influence my perspectives was the numerical one: in carrying out research in France and Germany I was dealing with countries with Muslim populations of respectively 6 and 4.3

² My daily shift was from 7:00 to 9:30 in the evening. Every day my boss used to ask me, in front of the customers, what I had eaten for lunch. If my answer was: ‘pork’, he would ask me to wash my hands with dish-soap. But I always washed my hands, no matter what I had for lunch.
³ Eid-Al-Adha (عيد الأضحى), also called the ‘Sacrifice Feast’ or Bakr-Eid, is one of two religious holidays celebrated by Muslims, worldwide. It honors the willingness of Abraham (Ibrahim) to sacrifice his son, as an act of submission to God's command, before God then intervened through his angel Jibrail and informed him that his sacrifice has already been accepted. The preferred practice is to divide the meat from the sacrificed animals in three parts. The family retains one third; another third is given to relatives, friends and neighbors, and the remaining third is given to the needy and poor.
Swedish Muslims are numerically similar to Italian Muslims, but do not always deal with the ‘halal issue’ in the same way. The response of Italian and Swedish halal food market is similar in terms of availability and certification (Italy has no more than three or four small certification organizations as well as Sweden), whether in France or Germany it responds to a huge demand and gives the consumer the chance to choose the product within a competitive system. For a researcher that is used to deal with such topics, it is easier to perceive how all these fields are both “convergent’ and “divergent’, because he/she can grasp all the peculiarity in each of them (e.g. An expert eye would immediately look at the piece of meat in a shop to see if the blood has been properly drained, and then he/she would observe the reaction of the customers).

The unicity of Stockholm in terms of field lies in many aspect of Muslim’s everyday life, like the division of the urban space, the different welfare system (which, for example, gives many immigrants the chance to enter in to the school system, or to leave the kids at kindergarten while the mothers are buying food, affecting their daily routine), and most of all, the different approach to food categories. What I tried to avoid during the whole research was a mere confirmation of my previous studies, in favour of the use of pre-existing interpretive models (as well as the creation of new ones), fieldwork experience and theoretical background framed in a completely new field with different methodological approaches and a deeper level of “engagement with the field’.

Having investigated food habits in countries where the Muslim population has reached the third generation, and the halal food market is as well established and recognised as any other kind of food market, forced me to reflect on the true meaning of ‘transnational’, ‘immigrant’ and ‘Muslim background’. Working in the Swedish context brought about the realisation that these terms can be applied in unequal contexts, and that it is necessary to avoid a ‘switching mechanism’ that would trick the reader, suggesting an overly uniform vision of national contexts that are definitely heterogeneous.

As Schiller, Basch and Blanch state: ‘Contemporary immigrants cannot be characterized as the ‘uprooted’. Many are trans-migrants, becoming firmly rooted in their new Country but maintaining multiple linkages to their homeland’ (Schiller, Basch, Blanch 1995:48). Here, ‘rooted’ could be substituted with the long-avoided term ‘integrated’. In addition, the phenomenon of the conversion of European-born people to Islam adds a further element,

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4 Counting both Muslim believers and persons of Muslim background
making the understanding of the overall concept of ‘Muslims in Europe’ even more complicated. Collecting the life stories of my informants helped a lot in solving this problem. By identifying the level of the informants’ generational processes, reconstructing the story of their families and marriages, and investigating their jobs and levels of education, I was able to apply a terminology that could describe their backgrounds, and how the dietary habits were a fluid element which contributed to a narrative of self as ‘immigrants’, ‘Muslims’ and ‘European’.

Sweden was a challenging field. Given the lack of official statistics on the Muslim population in Stockholm, it was necessary to collect information from a variety of sources and triangulate the data in order to approximate the overall situation as precisely as possible. In addition, government policies on immigration and in regulation of food and ritual slaughter suggested new perspectives concerning the study of the access to halal food in Sweden, and the mechanisms of adaptation by Muslims resulting from the current situations of supply and demand for specific products.

On deciding to conduct a study in Stockholm, I would begin from a new perspective. Although I had pre-existing interpretive models, I had no information on halal food in Sweden, so I would begin my research with the innocence of a newcomer to a northern European country. My interpretive models evolved greatly during my fieldwork, and I discovered a number of aspects within this broad topic that I had not at all imagined. In conducting my research I was able to reconnect to my pre-established theoretical background, but was also able to expand it substantially thanks to the many themes that emerged in the field. My research thus developed a broader theoretical framework, and I also applied a broad methodological approach, blending the classical tools of ethnographic research with less common techniques such as questionnaires, and leaving space for new approaches derived from continuing observation and improvisation.

The fieldwork was conducted over eight weeks in February and March 2015 in specific locales of Stockholm County, particularly Kista and Rinkeby. I had the benefit of being able to draw on a number of informants from Kista Folkhögskola, established during my previous work for a course on research methods, included in the Master’s programme. Following the advice of my informants in Kista I was able to gradually expand the research area, ultimately covering a zone from approximately Märsta to Botkyrka.

5 Kista Folkhögskola is a ‘Folk High School’ with a strong emphasis on adult education for people of Muslim background. www.kistafolkhogskola.se
The information I found in the field made me focus my research on halal food shops mostly in the zones of Rinkeby, Husby, Kista, Skärholmen, Bredäng, Märsta, Tensta and Fittja (See Fig. 1). Each shop was named by my informants at least once, even the shops I had found on the web before talking to them. During all my research I used to identify a municipality as the place where a certain shop was, making a food-oriented field mapping. The research was intended to deal with the meaning of food in both public and private life, so I inquired into how people deal with the ‘halal issue’ in shops, schools, mosques and the urban landscape in general, as well as in their kitchens.

An important note is that the thesis does not at all enter into any discussion of who is or is not a ‘real Muslim’, nor does it inquire into any theological aspects within Islam, such as the pluralism of the religious system or any other aspect. It does not in any way analyse or critique the number of times my informants pray, or whether the women cover their heads or faces sufficiently to be considered ‘Muslim enough’ for my research. The thesis does not claim that all the people concerned perceive halal food in the same way. Indeed it does the exact opposite, focusing on what my informants consider halal and how they deal with it in their everyday practices. As such, the thesis respects my personal view that ‘avoiding generalisations is a way of life’.

The quest for theory

The problem with the theory of halal in Sweden is that indeed there is no specific theory of halal in Sweden. For a student of anthropology, required to anchor the empirical part of her thesis to theory that could represent a little obstacle. The more contemporary studies on halal in Europe are suitable too, but do not reflect specifically the Swedish reality and must be re-elaborated in a smaller scale. The most recent publications on the issue of halal in a European context include the work of Florence Bergeaud-Blackler that will be used as paradigm.

I will not spend too many words on the difficulties of writing a thesis without specific literature, but I will mostly focus on the advantages of ‘producing literature’ that does not exist. Besides, I will take in to account the existent literature on the relation between anthropology of nutrition and Islamic studies, to demonstrate how the coexistence and cooperation of the two disciplines can be used as theoretical framework for my research.

The literature in the fields of Islamic studies and anthropology is in part devoted to the analytical study of the religious group, but it is defines the entire subject in a broad theoretical
framework, where the religious theme is only one element. The definition of the theoretical framework in turn serves in constructing the concepts of Islam and nutrition. A historical analysis of the ways that anthropology has dealt with food studies and Muslim religion is revealing of how the contemporary studies in these issues have originated from different theoretical backgrounds.

So, when did anthropology start caring about Islamic dietary prescriptions? Probably right after it started caring about Islam.

In 1986 Talal Asad returned to the classical concept of Orientalism, highlighting how academia was still focused on the comparison of Christianity and Islam, each broadly conceived as differing historical configurations of power and belief, one essentially located in Europe, the other in the Middle East (Asad 1986: 2). From his discussion of the ‘post Edward Said’ relations between anthropology and Islam, we can deduce how the anthropological view of Islamic dietary prescriptions has developed along two lines. On the one hand, nutritional anthropology took inspiration from the classics, which were oriented towards the identification of dietary rules within distinct ‘religious systems’. On the other hand ‘the religious system’ was itself growing as an autonomous anthropological sub discipline, in which the anthropology of food and nutrition was only one element.

The social sciences have seen a remarkable production of knowledge on Islamic dietary prescriptions, as have the fields of food ethics and morality. The Encyclopedia of Food and Agricultural Ethics dedicates a substantial section to the relations between Islam and food. The analyses take into account both the anthropological perspective, on the social and symbolic role of food within ceremonies and rituals, and the exegetical view, analysing the role of the holy Qur’an in determining what is edible and non-edible for a Muslim believer. The study includes an interesting digression on the legal aspects of ‘halalness’ and ‘haramness’ of meals, considering what scholars in Islamic studies refer to as ‘secondary sources’, such as the hadith6 (Kassam, Robinson, 2014:2-11).

Again taking a historic perspective, Ersilia Francesca returns to the ancient religions as a key to decoding contemporary dietary prohibitions in Islam, Judaism and Christianity, applying an anthropological approach and focusing on the issues of purity, impurity and danger (Francesca 1995:6).

Marvin Harris proposes his own unique anthropological view on Islamic dietary practices, stating that Muslims were desert tribes, and that pigs were forest animals, competing

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6 The *hadith* are the collections of the reports claiming to quote what the prophet Muhammad said verbatim on any matter. The term comes from the Arabic meaning ‘report’, ‘account’ or ‘narrative’.
with humans for water and food. In addition, pigs are omnivorous scavengers, and so were banned for both practical and hygienic reasons (Harris 1974:40). Clearly, food is an important element in the relation of any human individual with their god and their environment, and this relation is materially expressed in everyday life in one or more social groups. From this, we can see that a knowledge of the basic prescriptions of Islamic diet is fundamental to the current study (see Attachments A.2).

**Objectives and main themes**

The main objective of my thesis is showing how consumers who declare to be Muslims and live in Stockholm County deal with the daily practice of food providing. I then analyse the main contradiction that emerges from my research, meaning the opposition between those who by ‘halal’ and those who do not. I propose an investigation of halal consumption or ‘non-consumption’ through the lens of economic processes, responsibility, (re)negotiation of food categories, gender roles, food morality, urban space and feedback systems.

My aim is to demonstrate how ‘halal’ does not configure as a category, but a group of categories which is intimately connected to the idea of the consumer to do ‘the right thing’. This ‘right thing’ is not necessarily following all the rules ‘according to the cook book’, but rather interpret the rules in order to ensure the welfare of the loved ones, economically, spiritually and physically. Besides, I will observe the other side of the coin, analysing the role of the food seller, who is included in the moral system which requires him to do the right thing too (not deceive the customer, be a good Muslim, ensure a good quality of the food, keep the prices low).

In order to fulfil these objectives, I will investigate the relation between halal and Sweden, focusing on the actual market offer. I will point out that the halal consumer in Stockholm lies in a situation of vulnerability, due to the configuration of halal food as an elitist product of consumption. I will also analyse the mechanisms of adaptation which derive from this situation of vulnerability, which can be seen as an over-stretched vision of food insecurity.

I will highlight how the halal food providing within a consumer’s everyday life is influenced by the economic resources, the relation of trust with the food seller (supported by online and off-line feedbacks), the relations of power between genders, the moral structure within the food system and its moral actors, the connections between the believer and the urban space, and the never ended contact with a homeland far away, which leads to a mechanism of
adaptation, (re)negotiation, hybridization and preservation of food categories. A further analysis of interpretive models and methodological choices will be proposed.

**Research questions**

How do Muslim consumers in Stockholm deal with the need for halal food, when ‘halal’ is a concept subject to different interpretations?

Sub questions:

- How do they manage the opposition between availability and affordability of halal food?
- How do they contextualize the food behaviour in relation to a moral structure (more halal or more affordable)?
- How do they perceive the responsibility of being a “provider”?
- How do gender roles affect the mechanism of food selection (feedback, reputation, preservation of the family's spiritual and bodily health and financial welfare)?
- How can we frame the research within urban studies, in order to analyse the effects of halal food consumption on the urban tissue (how the places where people buy, consume and talk about halal food become social magnets where Muslim consumers aggregate)?
- How can we analyse, on the one hand, the processes of hybridization of food traditions for non-Swedish born and Swedish Muslims, and, on the other hand, the processes of preservation of food traditions from far away Countries as a way to reconnect with a home left behind

**Pre-fieldwork considerations and contacts**

*In Wildfire and Community: Facilitating Preparedness and Resilience*, Douglas Paton and Petra Buergelt examine how people actively and constantly interpret stimuli from the environment while interacting with that environment, and integrate the interpretations through a process of reflection with pre-existing mental models, making the experience fit with the actual process of interaction (Paton and Buergelt 2012: 243). I never faced wildfires during my
research, but I often ended up in situations that were most certainly awkward. I often felt that the experience gained through previous research had provided me with certain tools to cope with very difficult situations, such as clearly revealed lack of trust. However, such pre-existing interpretive models can be both useful and misleading. On the one hand, having conducted previous research on halal food in Europe, with studies of the principles of Islamic dietary prescriptions, helped me to establish contact with some of my informants. On the other hand I could have been limited by some of my convictions, and I felt the need to renegotiate and transcend the limits of my previous mental dispositions.

Indeed my position in the field was greatly redefined due to the fact that in Sweden I was no longer physically and geographically ‘at home’, and due to conscious attempts to not to feel too much at home, and to avoid generalisations and over-confidence. Sometimes my fieldwork would stimulate strong reconnections to my previous experiences with informants in France, Germany and Italy. Indeed I began to feel like Lila Abu-Lughod among the Bedouins, as she struggled with the role of the anthropologist who feels too much ‘at home’(Abu-Lughod:1999).

At other times I felt I like I was unsuccessfully comparing my research in different contexts, as if I were looking for something similar which could indeed could not be found in Sweden.

Many times when I was in the field in Stockholm, I faced people who initially did not want to talk to me, for different reasons. The most frequent motive for their reluctance was that they did not believe I was interested in halal food, or did not understand why I would be interested, as if no non-Muslim could ever be objectively interest in such a subject. The occasion of my first meeting with the headmaster of Kista Folkhögskola provides an example. The headmaster was sitting in the staff kitchen with Shiraf Sebaie, the head of the Zidni Islamic culture centre, as I asked for permission to start research in the school. I explained that I wanted to study the students’ food habits, since this was a school with a Muslim orientation and most of the students were Muslims. As I explained my research, the two men seemed not to listen to me. I had the feeling they simply did not believe me, and they thought I was seeking to find out something else about the school’s Muslim students. At a certain point the headmaster looked at me and said: ‘We think you are trying to do research about ‘honour killing’, not about food’. At first I had no idea how to respond to such a thought. Then I remembered I had a pdf of my previous master’s thesis in my tablet. I got the tablet out of my bag, opened the appendix and started to show them pictures of my fieldwork in Paris, especially a picture of a butcher shop with the AVS\(^7\) logo hanging on the wall, certifying that that shop sold food with official halal recognition (Figure 2). The headmaster’s expression changed completely, as he exclaimed:

\(^7\) AVS is a French system for certification of abattoirs, butchers, suppliers and restaurants. [http://avs.fr/](http://avs.fr/)
‘They have official certification in France? We don’t have that in Sweden, but we should!’ And in that moment the idea that I was interested in ‘honour killing’ disappeared completely from the conversation.

Although I officially began my fieldwork in February 2015, I made my first useful contact about six months earlier. While conducting online research into the Islamic culture centres of Stockholm I found the Salam Project\(^8\) website, coordinated by Max Dahlstrand. This contact led me in turn to a meeting with Fazeela Selberg Zahib, project leader for Kista Folkhögskola. After the meeting I began work with the school, in accordance with the requirements of the methodology course for the Uppsala University master’s, which obligated first selecting a field for the thesis research and carrying out applied practice, before actually beginning the fieldwork.

Thanks to this contact I was able to conduct a large part of my fieldwork in the school. An important practical consideration was that my own offices were also near the classrooms used for SFI education,\(^9\) thus this was another place where I could readily obtain contacts, and advice from the students about places I should go and people I should talk to. In addition to working with the Kista Folkhögskola school and the students of the SFI classes, I also carried out intensive field mapping, to gain a better understanding of the scope of the phenomena under study, as well as to obtain statistical data.

Identifying the extent of the Muslim presence in Stockholm was a fundamental step in deciding which zones to research, since there was not enough time to create a strong network in all the municipalities. In my previous research I had encountered situations of very neighbourhood-oriented structures, such as the Paris *arrondissements*, and the Turkish, Palestinian and Lebanese districts of Berlin. A first important discovery was that there are no proper ‘Muslim neighbourhoods’ in Stockholm, but only places where the concentration of Muslims is higher, such as Rinkeby, Kista and Botkyrka.

Another fundamental step of my research was building a network broad enough to cover all the areas of field research. For this, the initial contact with Kista school was crucial. It was very important that the headmaster assigned me an office for my work. A second essential point of assistance was that the students helped me completed a full 102 questionnaires. Finally, the school also led me to the majority of my further contents, permitting me to move beyond this single institution and to orient myself in the urban space.

My informants were located in the geographical area between Märsta and Botkyrka.

\(^8\) [http://www.dn.se/insidan/max-fran-taby-blev-muslim/](http://www.dn.se/insidan/max-fran-taby-blev-muslim/)

\(^9\) Swedish For Immigrants (SFI, *Svenskundervisning for invandrare*) is the national free Swedish language course offered to most categories of immigrants.
Although most of them originated from my contact with Kista Folkhögskola and the Rinkeby Torg district, I made concerted efforts to expand my network in the southern parts of Stockholm. I did not apply gender or age criteria in choosing the informants, nor in the application of questionnaires. I simply selected my sample based on my knowledge that the students of Kista Folkhögskola were mostly Muslims, and then attempted to talk to further potential contacts that ‘seemed to be a Muslim’, in this case focusing on veiled women. I obtained both ‘responsive respondents’ and ‘informed informants’ (Bernard 2011:187). Although I established the large part of my contacts within Kista Folkhögskola, I also obtained recurrent informants outside the school, particularly shop owners and their regular customers. My ‘informed informants’ will be quoted repeatedly in the thesis.

Are you sending us your thesis once is over? The anthropologist as a moral actor

I was about to submit the first set of questionnaires in the blue group\textsuperscript{10} of Kista Folkhögskola when Nom, one of the students asked me: ‘When can we see the results?’.

Sharing the results of the fieldwork is a recurrent topic in contemporary anthropology. In Fieldwork, Participation and Practice: Ethics and Dilemmas in Qualitative Research, Marlene deLaine discusses the multiple roles of the researcher and the relationship with the study participant as an example of where the contemporary fieldworker may encounter ethical dilemmas. Still she highlights how findings are shared and used. Some researchers would argue that participants share information and consequently deserve to benefit from the research process. This may include writing in a way that is accessible to those most affected by the issue being explored (deLaine 2000:45). The questionnaires I submitted to the students of Kista Folkhögskola were the result of a negotiation with both the students and the teachers, which required to see the results once I had finished to process the data. Besides, the importance of negotiation was involved in the preservation of my informant’s privacy, not only within the questionnaires (which have been pre-approved by Kista Folhögskhola’s headmaster),\textsuperscript{11} but also in the collection of their life stories and the representation of their everyday life. My attempt during the research was not compromising the privacy of my informants to support my analysis and interpretation (deLaine: 120), but at the same time, respectfully taking as much as I could

\textsuperscript{10}The learning system in Kista Folkhögskola is divided in green, blue and orange group, which have different levels of education.

\textsuperscript{11}The issue was connected to one of the preliminary questions in the survey, which asked to declare the religious faith. I had to specify many times that it was helpful, but not mandatory to fill that space.
from their life stories and the experience of their daily practices. Thus the research should not be affected by the purpose to share its results, the direct request from the informants to access the results is legitimate and must be managed in one way or another. Besides, being in a school, as well as in a mosque or a private house made me deal with a sort of “protected environments’, where the rules of sociality are different and must be respected in different ways. Within these protected environments my gender, my behaviour and my personal background were a fundamental part of the engagement with the field.

Women in the Field (1986) is touted as the first book to acknowledge how gender influences data collection and analysis, and to recognize the personal, subjective impact of fieldwork immersion. A new self-consciousness and disclosure of fieldwork processes has emerged, and this includes the recognition of how gender and fieldwork methods intersect. My self-consciousness of fieldwork processes was on the one hand, intimately connected to my never-ending struggle for ethical behaviour, and on the other hand, connected to my personal way to be in this world as Italian, woman, anthropologist.

When I was in the field I found myself talking to a Somalian man who lived in Italy for five years and spoke Italian; he was with a friend (Italian speaker too) and his wife was talking to her friends. Since we both used to live in Bologna, we started talking about the city laughing together, when his friend came to me and said: ‘Don't speak to him too much or his wife is going to cut his throat when they go home’, mimicking the gesture of the knife on his throat. He was joking, of course, but still, he made me think about whether my behaviour could have been seen as inappropriate for my informants.

My fieldwork is then characterized by a strong (re)negotiation of my gender, in a sort of switching technique, which saw me changing my behaviour and my aspect from more feminine to more masculine. I started to analyse in which kind of situations it would have been more appropriate cover myself up, bind my hair, or not shaking people’s hands. On the one hand, since most of my informants were women, I had the freedom to approach them on the train or in a shop, without being awkward. On the other hand, I regret I had not the freedom to sit in the men section of the mosque and listen to their personal ways to spread feedbacks in that space.

There are many ethnographic examples within my research that can describe the ‘problem’ of my physical presence in the field and the moral issues connected to it. As previously stated, the multi-sited connotation of my fieldwork led me to many different

12 It is not permissible for a man who believes in Allah and His Messenger put his hand in that of a woman who is not one of his relatives. Tabarani in Al- Kabir , No. 486.
‘protected environments’ as well as more public places, like shops and squares. The most
delicate fields (mosques, private kitchens and the classes of Kista Folkhögskola) required both
a gender oriented and a moral process of self-reflexivity, especially in those situations which
implied dealing with the actual praying time in the mosque. Indeed, as woman and as researcher
I was allowed in to the women department in the praying room, but still, I had to wear a veil
while the other women were praying.

The first time I actually participated to Friday prayer in Kista (it was around mid-
March), I arrived quite early, so the room was still empty. I put my veil on, took away my shoes
and sat on the floor, while I was waiting for the other women. A woman came asking me who
I was because she had never seen me before, then I tried to explain to her who I was in my poor
Swedish, but she did not get it, so she simply thought I was there to convert to Islam, and
decided to teach me how to pray. I felt she could have been offended seeing me not praying
with her, so I took a blanket, put it on the floor near her and ‘prayed’.

My reflexivity as turning back and on myself in a process of self-reference (Aull Davies
2007: 4) took in to account both my personal history and the disciplinary and sociocultural
circumstances under which I worked. Praying in the mosque with that woman was not only
something I could do because of my background in Islamic studies, but also because of my
personal history. Every moment I looked at her, indeed, I could not avoid to think about how
my grandmother used to do exactly the same thing when I was a child.13 Even though episodes
like this have been one of the first steps to an ‘intrinsic multi-layered reflexivity’ (Aull Davies:
25), my effort concerned also avoiding a process of self-absorption, which could have led me
to misinterpreting results.

A digression on terminology: What am I allowed to say?

We begin with a combination of four terminological statements: there are those who declare
themselves as ‘Muslim’ and eat halal; there are those who declare themselves ‘Muslim’ but do
not eat halal; there are those with a ‘Muslim background’ who eat halal, and those who have a
‘Muslim background’ but do not eat halal.

In order to define the field of research in a ‘doable’ manner, I take into account the people
who declare themselves as ‘Muslim believers’, as belonging to a religious group and
considering themselves as Muslims, but not people who have a ‘Muslim background’ due to

13 Every Thursday at 5 pm, my grandmother used to bring me to the church and teach me the vespers prayers.
their families. This decision eliminated many months of research and pages of analysis. In a
certain sense it seems easier to explain how a Jew can be Jewish but not eat kosher, rather than
explaining how a Muslim can be Muslim but not eat halal. Throughout the research process I
have attempted to avoid the controversies and contradictions of any specific religious group, as
well avoid the risk of generalisation.

In this thesis, terms such as ‘immigrant’, ‘Muslim background’ and ‘Muslim believer’
arise just as often as ‘food’ and ‘halal’. Over the years, given the extremely varied backgrounds
of my informants, I have always tried to avoid generalisations. I have learned how not to
confuse the different terms I apply, even if I am not yet able to specifically define all the
differences. Some could think that my terminology is ‘not politically correct’ and that perhaps
I could have found words to more appropriate describe my informants, such as ‘halal food
consumers’.

This is the key to judging what is really politically correct, whether in speech or in action:
‘Is anyone being hurt because of what I say?’; ‘Who is being hurt?’; ‘Who is doing the
hurting?’; ‘Who is hurting the most?’ In the chapter on methodology, I will make a brief
comment on the languages involved in my research (Italian, Somali, English, Swedish and more
rarely Arabic). I will describe my fieldwork as a young Italian woman, dealing with Somalis
who at times spoke the colonial Italian language,\textsuperscript{14} and how the multiple translations affected
my work. Every time I recount information from my informants, I try to use terminology which
is both ‘appropriate’ and which reflects the ways my informants defined themselves. The
selected terms are:

1) Muslim believer = Term used by my informants while they were speaking English. It refers
to people who identify themselves as devoted (and practicing) Muslims.
2) Muslim background = Term used by my informants while they were speaking English. It
refers to people who have Muslim believers within their families, but do not identify themselves
as Muslim believers.
3) Immigrant = Term used by my informants while they were speaking English. It refers to
people who moved to Sweden in the past
4) Halal food consumer = Term I use to describe people who declare to buy halal.
5) Musulmano = Term used by my informants while they were speaking Italian. It means
‘Muslim’ and can be used with the same meaning of ‘Muslim believer’.

\textsuperscript{14} Italian Somalia was a colony of the Kingdom of Italy from the 1880s until 1941.
6) *Muslimsk troende* = Term used by my informants while they were speaking Swedish. It means ‘Muslim believer’.

7) *Credente ma non praticante* = term used by my informants while they were speaking Italian. It means: ‘Non practicing believer’.

8) *M-s-l-m* = Term used by my informants while they were speaking Somalian or Arabic. It means ‘Muslim’.

9) *Muslim* = Term used by my informants while they were speaking English. It can be used with the same meaning of ‘Muslim believer’.

10) *Converted Muslim* = Term used by my informants while they were speaking English. It refers to people who were born in Sweden and converted to Islam in the past.

**“Muslims”? Let's take people outside of the ‘box’!**

Since Swedish Government does not register the religion of citizens, it relies on statistics submitted by religious organizations when they apply for annual state funds. The literature concerning the number of Muslims in Sweden accounts both the statistics of Islamic organizations and the data provided from the Commission for State Grants to Religious communities (SST). The first Muslim group to arrive in Sweden was the Russian-Baltic Tartars who came as refugees during 1940s. Most tartars went to Finland, where the Tartars had had an organization for decades, but a few families made their way to Stockholm. These Muslims formed the first Islamic community in 1949. Eventually their initiative merged with other Turkic groups arriving as labour migrants. The Tartar group came at a time when Swedish emigration was lower than immigration for the first time in decades due to the decrease of the large emigration of Swedes primarily to the US. Today, a result of a continuous immigration is that 19.5% of the population (of 9.5 million) were not born in Sweden, or have parents who were both born outside the country (Statistic Sweden 2013).

As of 2007 there were an estimated 250,000 to 350,000 Muslims in Sweden, representing from 1.8% to 4.4% of the Swedish population of 9 million persons. This statistic is inferred primarily from the nationalities of the immigrant populations. Most of the Muslim populations live in large cities, with more than 60% residing in the three major urban areas of Stockholm, Göteborg, and Malmö.

The Muslim population of Sweden is quite diverse, originating from over forty different

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15 [http://www.sst.a.se/inenglish.4.7f968fc211eeec933de800011945.html](http://www.sst.a.se/inenglish.4.7f968fc211eeec933de800011945.html)
countries, including Turkey, Bosnia, Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and other African, Asian, and European states. Persons of Turkish origin compose an important share of the Muslim population. In the 1980s, the Turkish population represented the majority of Muslims in Sweden, but is now reduced to about a 10% share of the total. However the Turkish population remains the predominant source of Muslim political influence, due to its well established and unified lobby groups. Persons of Iranian origin make up the second largest subgroup of Muslims (52,000). Most Iranians arrived as refugees in the years after 1985, and although many members of this population are more secular, one sixth of are considered to be religiously Muslim. Other large populations include those of Iraqi origin (52,000), many of whom are Kurds who fled the Iran-Iraq war and Saddam Hussein’s ethnic cleansing policies. There are also sizable populations of Lebanese (21,000), as well as a total of 90,000 Moroccans, Syrians, Tunisians, and Palestinians. Major populations from Africa include Somalis (16,000) and Ethiopians (12,000). There is also a large number of refugees who arrived from ex-Yugoslavia during the civil war, of which about 40,000 are Muslims from Bosnia.

Most of the Muslims in Sweden are Sunnis, though there is also a sizable population of Shias, estimated at about 60,000 in the 1990s (Anwar, Blaschke, Sander: 203-374). In addition to the numbers cited above, Anne Sofie Roald indicates that since 1960, about 3500 people of long-standing Swedish origins have converted to Islam (Roald 2012:347). Islam is now the Sweden’s second most-populous religion, after Christianity. There are six purpose-built mosques in the country, of which four are Sunni Muslim mosques in Stockholm, Malmö, Uppsala and Västerås, one is a Shia Mosque in Trollhättan, and one is an Ahmadiyya mosque in Göteborg.

While their ethnicity does not necessarily mirror their citizenship, they are likely to be, for example, Kurdish, Palestinian or Kosovo-Albanian. As is clear from the above, the

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16 Sunni Muslims and Shia Muslims (also known as Shiites) comprise the two main sects within Islam. Sunni and Shia identities first formed around a dispute over leadership succession soon after the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632 A.D. Over time the divide between the two groups broadened to include theological distinctions and differences in religious practices. The two sects remain similar, but differ in areas such as the conceptions of religious authority and interpretation, and the role of the Prophet Muhammad’s descendants. Sunnis include followers of the Hanafi, Shafi, Maliki and Hanbali schools of Islamic jurisprudence as well as the Wahhabi or Salafi movement. Shias include Ithna Asharis (Twelvers), Ismail, Zaydis, Alevi and Alawites. A small number of Muslim groups are difficult to classify as Sunni or Shia. These include Kharijites of Oman, the Nation of Islam movement in the United States, and the Druze, located primarily in and around Lebanon. Most Shias (estimated from 68% to 80%) live in four countries: Iran, Pakistan, India and Iraq. Iran has 66 million to 70 million Shias, representing 37-40% of the global population. Iraq, India and Pakistan are each home to at least 16 million Shias. Sizeable numbers of Shias (1 million or more) also reside in Turkey, Yemen, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Nigeria and Tanzania. Elsewhere, Shias constitute a relatively small percentage of Muslim populations. About 300,000 Shias are estimated to be live in the U.S. and Canada, constituting about 10% of the total Muslim population for the region (Hazleton 2009:47).
immigration to Sweden is a continuous process. The exceptions are the results of political crises in the different countries. It might be added that return migration is substantially smaller, seldom more than 100 persons and often much less. The exceptions are Iran (130 to 330 migrants a year) and Iraq from 2003 onwards (120 to 470 returnees a year) (Schmidt, Otterbeck 2014: 395). Currently, there is no ethnic or national group in particular which dominates by mere size in Sweden. SST gives each community some financial support that is calculated based on the size of the community.

Since Muslim immigration to Sweden has not been predominantly labour based, but rather asylum-based, most migrants have not been very well prepared for the adjustment. A lack of language skills and little knowledge of the country have led to long adjustment periods. The Swedish welfare system extends to newcomers to the country who are not citizens. Housing and housing costs, food, clothes and other necessities are provided through welfare benefits by the state (Triandafyllidou 2001: 105-108).

The issue of Swedish welfare system will become extremely important in the empirical part, when I will argue on those informants who are under the care of social services and have to deal with a limited monthly income. However, before going in to details, an overview on the food market adaptation to the Muslim migration processes is required.

**Swedish halal market**

While many Muslim consumer's lives are defined by dietary, lifestyle and financial rules of the Islamic faith, they are far from homogeneous. Pakistani and Bangladeshi Muslims, for example, speak different languages, wear different clothes and eat different foods. Turkish and Kurdish Muslims in Germany have little in common, except for their faith, as well as they have a few in common with Moroccan and Algerian Muslims in France, or Somalian and Middle-Eastern Muslims in Sweden. Any nationality and ethnicity has a particular food tradition, which is not only connected to the concept of halal, but implies a broad range of recipes which are both culturally and geographically determined. Thus many ingredients may change within this regional and local process of culinary self-identification, other ingredients (meat for example) are generally shared by the majority of the members of Muslim groups. This shared need of certain ingredients leads to a digression on the actual size of halal Swedish market, intended as both meat and other foods consumption.
Sweden, has banned the religious slaughtering of animals since 1937. The Muslim Association of Sweden (SMF) is demanding that halal slaughter practices be legalized. In the meantime, Latvia represents one of the major halal meat exporters in Sweden, after England, Germany and New Zealand.\textsuperscript{17} Due to the small numbers of Swedish Muslim community (respect to other European countries like France and Germany), halal food market is still at its early stage, and is not able to impose its presence on Swedish food market as well as other products of consumption (like organic, vegan, gluten free or fair trade food). As result of its small presence on the market, halal food is still seen as a group of niche products, which provides no official data about the actual consumption, not in Stockholm County, nor in the rest of Sweden.

The only resources which can give an idea of the actual situation of the market among Stockholm’s Muslims (besides the ethnographic material I produced), can be found in the websites of the Swedish companies which certify some of the products that are commonly found within Stockholm’s halal shops. According to halalcertifiering.se,\textsuperscript{18} mawlanahalal.se\textsuperscript{19} and quibblahalal.se:\textsuperscript{20} ‘There are about 1.3 billion Muslims worldwide, of which 50 million live in Europe. The majority of Muslims are interested to buy food and other products that are allowed according to Islamic sharia, a fairly large customer potential that many Swedish companies to date, unfortunately disregarded’.

In order to support my thesis, I had to integrate my overview on the Swedish halal market with my own ethnographic material. I was not able to produce statistic on a big scale, due to both a limited sample for the questionnaires and to a more qualitative oriented fieldwork, whose purpose was not to produce a market analysis. Through the interviews, the participant observation and the questionnaires I could produce data about the weekly consumption of meat, the halal food shopping frequency, the number of small and big shops which sell halal food and their disposition within Stockholm County.

\textbf{Outline}

My arguments will include the problems of the non-competitiveness of Swedish halal market seen as an element that puts the Muslim consumer in a situation of vulnerability. Besides, I will focus on the element which affect the consumption as responsibility, gender, economy,

\textsuperscript{17} See Yearbook of Muslims in Europe, Volume 4.
\textsuperscript{18} http://www.halalcertifiering.se/
\textsuperscript{19} http://www.mawlanahalal.se/?dil=3
\textsuperscript{20} http://www.qibblahalal.se/
feedbacks, food morality and division of urban space. I tried to make the reader know where theory, methodology and ethnography are located in the thesis, even though I had not put black lines between one chapter and another.

CHAPTER ONE will mostly describe the methodological choices, highlighting how the qualitative and quantitative research methods have been mixed and used within my fieldwork. I will then present the results of the questionnaires I did in Kista Folkhögskola and the more ‘classical’ qualitative research methods (interviews, participant observation, etc...), together with a digression on web analysis.

CHAPTER TWO will present the main opposition within my research, the one between who buys ‘halal’ and who does not. It will argue on what is considered ‘good to eat’ for a Muslim believer in Stockholm, and what are the usual ambiguous substitutes of halal food used to keep the balance in the family economy.

CHAPTER THREE will concern the gender roles within the Muslim families, highlighting the relation of powers connected to the role of the provider. Besides, it will analyse maternal role of the provider who has the responsibility to nurture the family and take care of the loved ones.

CHAPTER FOUR will focus on the importance of the honour as a concept connected to both the buyer and the seller. It will also account the issue of responsibility intended as the responsibility to provide for the soul and for the wallet.

CHAPTER FIVE will highlight the importance of the feedback in both online and offline life. It will also focus on the measurable reliability of the food seller and on the trusting chain.

CHAPTER SIX will focus on the social magnets, the places where Muslim believers in Stockholm aggregate and talk about and consume halal food and provide feedback.

CHAPTER SEVEN will highlight the concept of (re)negotiation of food categories, focusing on the processes of hybridization and preservation of food traditions.
Chapter I – Methodological approaches

Introduction to the chapter

In keeping with the classical qualitative research methods in anthropology (Bernard: 2011), I conducted my fieldwork using a mix of methods: interviews, participant observation, and collection of life stories. Since I had the opportunity of drawing on the students of Kista Folkhögskola as informants, I decided to also use my time there to submit questionnaires and process them through contingency tables testing (Agresti, Finley: 2010). I also gave great scope to improvisation. For example, I began to observe the people I met every day on the train from Märsta to Stockholm, chatting mostly with veiled women and leaving them my number in case they wanted to talk or might simply need help when out making purchase (what I call ‘tele-selling’ technique). For some time I was unsure about the advisability of using questionnaires as part of the methodology, since quantitative analysis is not something which is specifically required for a thesis on cultural anthropology. Still, I recognised the unique opportunity of having an entire high school willing to contribute to my research, and so following the advice of Michael Chibnik in The Use of Statistics in Sociocultural Anthropology (1985), I developed a survey that could fit within an anthropological thesis, and at the same time be processed through application of social statistics testing for reliability (Agresti, Finley: 2010).

In this chapter I describe how I carried out my fieldwork in Stockholm County. The chapter begins with a brief description of my informants and the ways that I obtained them. I then provide an in-depth analysis of the research methodologies, highlighting the importance of both a well-defined approach and the opportunity for improvisation and casualness.

I first describe the online aspect of the fieldwork, specifically the analysis of web tools used by Muslim consumers to obtain information and feedback on places for the purchase of halal food in Stockholm. Then I will explain the introduction of a quantitative aspect to my research, describing the mechanisms for sample selection, the purpose and structure of the questionnaires, and verifying three preliminary hypotheses through contingency table testing.

In addition I will describe my interview work, participant observation, and different ‘ways of following’, in keeping with Marcus’s instruction for ‘multi-sited ethnography’ (Marcus: 1995). Finally I will discuss the moments when the methodological approach permits the possibility of casualness and improvisation.
1.1 The importance of ‘reading between the lines’

I have always agreed with what Olivier de Sardan says about the impossibility of the anthropologist learning their work from a book. Thus, as he suggests, for this thesis, I have proceeded in part with intuition, improvisation and ‘bricolage’ (Olivier de Sardan 1995:5), but at the same time without forgetting that my research is supposed to be ‘methodologically reliable’, producing results based on different techniques.

I have attempted to keep in mind that luck and casualness are equally as important as methodological rigour, so as to take advantage of all the gifts afforded me through the people who accept to become my informants. I have attempted to collect the data in a way that makes it reliable for thesis work. Sometimes I had the feeling that my research was becoming too mechanical, so for a time I abandoned the camera and recorder and simply enjoyed the time with my informants.

This ‘researching between the lines’ was invested with mixed emotions, ranging from affection for my informants to the mechanical feeling of collecting data through questionnaires.

1.2 A language puzzle, more than a language barrier

In Linguistic Fieldwork Larry Hyman talks about fieldwork as ‘a state of mind’, highlighting the importance of language in a field where the anthropologist is called on to act and interact in a language other than their own. His work as both Africanist and general linguist explores the practical issues of language in the context of informants with many different linguistic backgrounds, and the ways the researcher collects the data by switching from one language to the other. He stresses that the application of each language is a different tool to grasp the complexity of the field (Hyman 2001:15).

My own fieldwork was in no way restricted to a single language. Many of the interviews and informal conversations were carried out in English; some in Swedish with the help of an interpreter; some in Somali and Turkish (in these cases always with an interpreter); and others in Italian.

The linguistic aspect of my research was extremely important in terms of ‘engagement with the field’. I experienced feelings of exclusion when I was not able to speak in Swedish with my informants, however I was very pleasantly surprised to discover how many people were able to speak Italian. In this case, there was almost a sense of comfort and belonging, in
part due to the personal aspects of the stories linked to this language, learned during their childhood.

The multiplicity of linguistic keys is present in every piece of my research: the interviews, the participant observation and informal conversations, as well the documents collected during research (journals, flyers, prayer books). My basic knowledge of classical Arabic was extremely useful when talking to older men at the mosque, because it created a connection where at first these individuals only saw a young woman posing questions. My use of some recurrent terms from the Qur’an made them take me more seriously. They were surprised to see that a young Italian woman knew how to pronounce some verses of Al’ Maida.21

In the case of my work with the Kista Folkhögskola, the teachers at times encouraged me to use English in my visits and in obtaining answers to the questionnaires, considering that the students would draw advantage from this practice rather than through their more typical work in Swedish. In the case of the SFI classes, the situation was reversed, since here the teachers preferred that the students answer the questionnaires in Swedish. This agreement with the teachers was part of a process of negotiation finalized to have their help submitting the questionnaires to the students.

My fieldwork was often conducted alone, with no interpreter. One day in Rinkeby I met Farunt, a young woman who did not speak any English, but apparently only Swedish and Somali. I was enthusiastic to follow her, since she was shopping for food at M********r. I started exploring the research topics in my very poor Swedish, when she suddenly pronounced ‘Italienska’ or ‘Italian language’. This surprised and startled me, since by that time I had spent twenty minutes trying to communicate with her and now she was offering to interact with me in my first language. As my research progressed I was very lucky to find many other Italian speakers, since although I have a basic knowledge of modern standard Arabic, an interview or an entire conversation was beyond my competence. Given my lack of Swedish, direct interaction in that language or in the first languages of my informants would have been impossible.

Analysing the linguistic aspects of the methodological approach is a good way to reflect on the figure of the interpreter as the ‘second ethnographer’ in fieldwork. In Lost in Translation? The Use of Interpreters in Fieldwork, Desai and Potter reflect on situations such as short-term research or settings with multiple languages, where it is impossible to know the languages of all the informants. In these cases, local assistants can double up as both translators

21 ‘The Table’: the fifth sura of the Qur’an.
and ethnographic informants. However, translators make personal judgements about what to translate and in which manner, so the terms of this service must be negotiated. Choosing a translator requires attention to the social dynamics between researcher, interpreter and respondents. All research culminates in multiple modes of translation as the researcher not only has to make sense of the social group or phenomenon under study but then to communicate this understanding by reframing it conceptually and analytically for an academic audience (Desai, Potter 2006:35).

During my research I often felt that the action of the translator's judgment was indeed present, however I think this situation was not completely a negative. The anthropologist must attempt to separate what the informant says from what the translator says, based in part on the attitude that the interpreter's perspective is not a completely negative effect.

1.3 The web analysis

My fieldwork began from Kista Folkhögskola, with which I was already very familiar due to my course in research methodology. Several of the students became my first informants, leading me through the field and helping me to expand my network in different municipalities.

However prior to literally ‘entering the field’, I researched as much as possible using web resources. The websites I located were important sources of information on Muslims in Stockholm. The web analysis contributed to the methodological conceptualisation of the fieldwork, since it gave me the chance to rethink my research plan and see the Muslim believer as a consumer who uses digital tools to better orient the way he or she spends their money.

I began by concentrating my analysis on three websites: Zabhiha.com, Tripadvisor and Irhal.com.22 I followed the methodological approaches of Christine Hine (Hine: 2013) and Miller & Slater (Miller and Slater: 2000) as potential models of how ethnographic research can be performed online. In this case I was particularly concerned with determining how the informants used web tools to gather information on places for purchase of food. The web analysis was a tool for understanding how the Muslim believer in Stockholm acts as an ‘online consumer’, motivated by specific needs but at the same time with the same requirements as any other consumer. I was also able to examine the online feedback system, which functions as a parallel version of the ‘offline’ feedback system in effect in other social spaces.

In *Virtual Ethnography*, Christine Hine examines the ways in which the ethnographer is at times no longer in a face-to-face environment with the participants under investigation, and instead interacts with them through electronic communications (Hine 2012:14). Researching the way Stockholm Muslims offer and search for feedback in an online environment permitted extension beyond the perspective of the ‘offline’ comments on shop or restaurant environments. The online research permitted a better understanding of how Muslim believers implement their daily practices of buying and eating food following the rules of a ‘consumer’. Online contact with informants (who indeed were unaware of serving as informants) was possible through the analysis of comments they left in the web pages, remarking on whether a shop or restaurant is indeed halal or not. The data collected through the web analysis were then verified through conversations with my ‘offline’ informants, permitting a sort of ‘triangulation’ between the online and offline information.

### 1.4 The questionnaires

I did not plan a quantitative parenthesis within my research, but I realized that Kista Folkhögskola had a great potential, even from the numerical point of view, so I decided to write a questionnaire that presented both the quantitative element and a qualitative part (open questions). As Bernard says: “The most asked question about survey research is whether fixed choice (also called closed-ended) or open ended items are better. The answer is that the two formats produce two different kinds of data, and it’s your call when to use what’ (Bernard: 199). So, my questionnaire was structured in order to collect preliminary information about gender, religion, age, spoken languages and country of birth of the informants. The selected sample included the students from General studies, SFI, and Zidni Centre. The multiple choice questions concerned the knowledge and the consumption of halal food, in order to collect statistic data about this phenomenon in Stockholm County. Besides, the open questions were the qualitative part within the quantitative analysis, and concerned the different habits connected to the food research and selection.

Obviously, the selection of the sample is linked to my previous knowledge of the school. Since I knew that the biggest part of the students was formed by Muslim believers of Muslim-background people, I could, on the one hand, extract a big quantity of data about the *halal* food, and, on the other hand, analyse all the different cultural variables (gender, age, religion, etc…), in order to catch every single detail within the sample.
I wrote the questionnaire in English, and then I realized that almost nobody wanted an English version, so I made a translation in Swedish and I found help to correct it. Then I submitted it to the headmaster and, once he approved the form, I started booking appointments with the teachers, in order to submit it to the students and I reached a sample of 102 participants. The sample included men and women from 18 to 65. The questionnaires were submitted during the school hours in Kista.

Since I got 102 participants (and this is what in the social statistics is called “small sample’’), I decided to use these questionnaires as much as I could to get information on the customs connected to halal food consumption. During the research I went through the open answers in order to get new clues about the way I had to continue my fieldwork. It is thanks to some information I got there that I decided to conduct my research that way. Besides, I decided to use the data I got to verify some hypotheses I formulated before the beginning if the fieldwork, so I coded the data in an excel page and I performed a contingency table test in order to verify three specific hypotheses:

- 1: The Muslims within Stockholm County are halal food consumers.
- 2: Halal consumers have a relation of trust with the food seller.
- 3: Halal consumers receive external feedbacks on the places where to buy food.

I used six different variables for three hypotheses: Stockholm and halalfreq, halalfreq and trust, and finally, halalfreq and advice. Then I inserted the codified data in RStudio, I got the contingency tables and converted the table’s results in percentages. Then I took the results and confronted them with a control group on the impact on eating habits of temporary translocation from a Mediterranean to a Northern European environment, due to their similar topic, sample size, procedure and results (see Attachments A.2) The aim of my questionnaires was to highlight how Muslim believers in Stockholm select and buy food according to principles of availability and reliability. The limits of these surveys lie in the impossibility to distinguish what exactly the members of the sample perceive as ‘halal’, if they intend it as a mere respect of the rules inscribed in the Qur’an, or they have their own interpretation of what is halal and what is not.
1.5 The interviews

As a fundamental part of ethnographic research, interviews require a certain kind of organisation. In keeping with the advice of Russel Bernard and Mariano Pavanello, I structured my interviews according to the situation faced in the given moment, with the realisation that a proper ‘ethnographic interview’ requires an understanding of my positionality and the immediate context of the contact (Pavanello 2009: 216). The interviews were sometimes blended with the process of collecting life stories, which gave me the chance to analyse the food habits of my informants through the reconstructed transitions of their lives.

As Sigridur Duna Kristmundsdottir states: ‘For biography to be anthropology, a critical examination of the culture in question is essential. Anthropology has of course, a rich store of theoretical insights and ethnographic knowledge which lend themselves readily and productively to such an undertaking in biographical description and analysis’ (Duna Kristmundsdottir 2007: 166).

I carried out 15 semi-structured and unstructured interviews and one focus-group interview. I decided against structured interviews, since I had already obtained answers to more than 100 questionnaires, thus already obtaining a great amount of data through submission of closed questions to the informants. All interviews were recorded with an iPod and transcribed without the aid of software, due to the mixture of languages in any given interview.

The semi-structured interviews were the most important part of this particular methodological approach. This was the technique generally used with the food-sellers, since the use of a structure seemed most respectful in requesting interview time from people engaged in working. I followed Bernard’s indication: ‘Semi structured interviewing is based on the use of an interview guide. This is a written list of questions and topics that need to be covered in a particular order’ (Bernard: 158). On the other hand, unstructured interviews were based on a path I had in mind, but with minimum control over the subject’s responses. The unstructured interviews still included an element of organisation, represented by fixing an appointment or other agreement with the informant to carry out the interview, but at the same time allowing the informant to respond to the direction of questioning as they wished.

The single focus-group interview was carried out with an SFI class in Rinkeby. Although interviewing a class made almost completely of Somali speakers could seem dispersive and difficult, this approach permitted the extraction of various kinds of information from the answers, comments and questions posed by the group of informants. As Bernard states
(Bernard: 160), ‘The power of a focus group lies in its contradictions and in the questions that many opposite perspectives generate’.

The interview process dealt with both food sellers and buyers. I conducted interviews with the shop-owners of Ahmed Kött (in Märsta), Salam Kurda (in Husby) and Nabil Livs (Rinkeby). Since my target group was Muslim consumers involved in everyday behaviour in Stockholm County, I also interviewed students at Kista school and other informants I met either through the students’ help or on my own. The opportunity to approach my informants within the structure of the Muslim-focused school offered my informants a ‘safe space’, however the interviews conducted with informants outside the school space should have equal value.

From the interview work, it emerged that the interviews could be categorised in six groups, which would served as a useful research tool for the main themes of the remaining fieldwork and the overall thesis.

These are the categories of interviewees:
- Food buyers
- Food-sellers
- Women buyers
- Men buyers
- Female agents and users within feedback systems
- Male agents and users within feedback systems.

Every interview permitted the exploration of specific themes, which I expanded further during other fieldwork events. The semi-structured interviews clearly offered the opportunity to analyse a specific, pre-identified theme, however the unstructured ones gave the informant the chance to develop their own theme. The use of focus-group interviews instead presents a mix of themes raised by different people, within which there are always elements of particular interest to the anthropologist.

After the first two or three interviews I was practiced enough to be able to orient and structure the questions, in order to concentrate on the themes of gender, urban space, food consumption, food morality and availability versus affordability, without pushing so much that the informants lost their spontaneity.
1.6 The ‘tele-selling technique’

The issue then arises on whether multi-sited ethnography is possible without attenuating the kinds of knowledges and competencies that are expected from fieldwork. In other words, is multi-sited fieldwork practical? (Marcus 1995:100)

As a first step in conducting a study in the Stockholm urban context, I mapped and analysed the spaces. This assisted me to reflect on how my research could be framed within the different municipalities. Considering Lee and Ingold’s theory of ‘Fieldwork on foot’, I began walking and travelling through Stockholm County, pursuing ‘the thing’ (halal food) and ‘the people and places’ concerned by my research, namely those who consume this product and the shops where they buy it (Marcus: 1995).

Indeed ‘ethnography on foot’ does not quite describe my work, since I also conducted ‘ethnography by bus and train’. In this technique, I followed the people who were going to make purchases and left my contacts with them, asking them to call me if they would be willing to talk about halal food, or simply offering to help to carry their shopping bags. On trains and buses I experimented with a new technique in which I would observe the people and leave my contacts with women who were wearing a niqab or a hijab, briefly explaining my research. I did this because I remembered what my team leader instructed us when I worked in an Italian call centre: ‘For every hundred people you contact, if you describe our offer and leave your number, at least five will call you back and one will buy the products’. Considering this, I spread my contact information as much as possible, asking the women to invite me along when they were going out for food shopping. From these contacts I received two calls, with one of them leading to an acceptance for an interview, and another one for participant observation.

During the ‘act of participating’, I observed how those who declare to be a Muslim believer procure food for their family and select different shops. I also studied the ways people construct the feedback system, talking about food within mosques, homes, on the street, and in other meeting places. This kind of work gave me the chance to gain experience in participant observation, and to enter within the private spaces of a Muslim home, specifically the kitchen, alternation among the roles of ‘complete participant’, ‘participant observer’ and ‘complete observer’ (Bernard: 2011).

I also conducted participant observation during food shopping trips, primarily in Rinkeby and Kista, but also with some informants in Fittja, Tensta, Skärholmen and Bredäng. Finally, I dedicated a large share of time to informal conversations, as the first step in earning trust from my informants, who were mainly women. This process in particular assisted me to consider the
role of my gender in the fieldwork, in a process of self-reflection.

The processes of participant observation also permitted me to consider urban space analysis. The act of following women as they made their purchases was a way to observe how the space for aggregation and socialisation was extremely important, connecting their processes of food provision with the urban structure.

One thing I discovered being extremely productive was taking the bus from Kista Centrum to Rinkeby Torg and trying to find my informants among those who were going to Rinkeby to pray or doing food shopping. This is how I met Rama, the first person who called me back after I left her my number, and invited me to do food shopping together. She is a Somalian woman who lives in Rinkeby together with her husband and two girls and was the first one showing me how difficult it is finding halal organic meat without ordering it online. I when she called me the first time she invited me to follow her doing food shopping. We spent a whole afternoon together and visited four different shops between Rinkeby and Tensta, without finding anything both halal and organic. The only thing we found was frozen lamb from New Zealand, which was halal and organic, but was extremely expensive and not well looking. She also kept calling me every time she was doing food shopping and was always available to meet me when I needed to hang out to talk about things I saw during the research and were not completely clear to me.

The ‘tele selling technique’ was definitely successful, even though the numerical response was not high. Qualitatively talking, the informants provided by this technique were some of the most collaborative ‘informed informants’ of the whole research. Still, the success of this technique was intimately connected to my gender. Many times, indeed, I heard from my informants: ‘If you were a man, approaching women on the train and leaving them your number, they would have probably called somebody to make you go away’.
Intermezzo: theme-divided empirical chapters and relevant theory

The processes involved in selecting a certain consumer product can be studied through market analyses, as well as analyses investigating the ways the social group shapes the idea of the product and its appropriate consumption. The research process addressed a highly very heterogeneous group of consumers, with varying economic resources but sharing the same religion. In addition to the variability of resources, these consumers were constantly renegotiating the terms of their nutritional behaviour, dealing with many other factor beyond the religious prescriptions laid down in ‘the cookbook’. What I discovered was an extremely articulated mix of food behaviours, which has as much to do with religion as it does with economics, social relations, gender, ecology and even love. Indeed love was so much involved, understood as expressions of the food-purchaser’s will to protect, nurture, and protect the people they were providing for away from any financial, nutritional and spiritual risks. The one thing that emerged more than anything else was that there is a struggle to ‘do the right thing’, when ‘the right thing’ does not only mean: ‘Buy halal, no matter what’. Every one of my informants felt they were doing the right thing, even when they were not at all buying the prescribed foods. This could seem contradictory, but it's exactly what my research brought out. Indeed there are an amazing series of contradictions, all executed ‘in good faith’. But let's be more clear.

Some consumers might say that everything printed with a ‘halal’ label is halal. A more demanding individual could argue with this, citing the many contemporary reports of frauds in agriculture and foods, at times involving products intended to meet religious prescriptions.23 The ideal option for a demanding consumer would be to ‘meet your meat’, meaning to personally see how the animal is raised and slaughtered, but this is not always possible.24 Not everybody has the chance to raise a lamb in Stockholm, providing only organic feeds, and then slaughtering it with proper ceremony, so the ‘best choice’ for consumption must be made in another manner.

The category of halal consumption can be seen as similar to vegetarian or vegan consumption, or to ‘fair trade’ food. It is a specific branch of the market, which develops in a

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24 A Muslim butcher in Märsta reported to me that he raised animals in a farm near the city, where his customers could go to choose products. However he admitted to killing the animals without stunning them, so then would not tell me the exact location of the farm.
manner similar to those for other products that are required to follow a certain scheme and respect certain rules. Just as in a vegan meal there will be no animal ingredients, in a halal meal there will again be no forbidden ingredients. Not all that is described as vegan is vegan, and not all that is described as halal is indeed halal. This is why Stockholm’s Muslim believers do not refer only to the label, but instead engage in a constant process of developing categories and building trust, which can be attributed to a single human being (the seller), to a group of human beings (the people who provide feedback), to a particular member of the family, or to a known brand.

Sometimes the senses are the best advisors, since food must have a good appearance, smell and taste. The Muslim consumer examines meat to see if the colour is good and it is free of traces of blood, and if the shop is clean and seems free from contaminating foods. Sometimes, to be confident about the meals they are purchasing, the consumer meticulously checks the lists of ingredients, and compares these with the codes cards that are readily available from the mosques.25

Sometimes, as my reporter Fatima stated, ‘the wallet decides’26 whether the individual will be a ‘money-saver’ or a religiously demanding consumer. Her statement introduces the main contradiction revealed in my research, which is the opposition between halal and economical. I explored this opposition, trying to understand whether my informants were indeed guided more by religious or economic influences. I obviously ended up with different answers, however from these we can still derive an overall understanding.

There is not ‘one way’ to buy halal food in Stockholm, but rather what the consumer perceives as ‘the right way’. This can be related to what Coveney calls ‘the pleasure and the anxiety of eating’ (Coveney: 2000), where the consumer constantly tries to fill that gap that separates them from the idea of doing something good. Not ‘meeting the meat’ generates a feeling of anxiety, which can be resolved in different ways, by experimenting, selecting and trusting. On the other hand, the anxiety of eating also clearly arises from the issue of the individual’s or family’s financial resources, meaning that the person (or persons) responsible for obtaining the food must confront their roles as both provider and money-saver.

What my informants perceived as ‘the right thing to do’ emerged in many different shades. In my fieldwork, I attempted to analyse how my contacts attributed the category of ‘halal’ to one food and not another.

What was it that would stimulate a person who lives in Fittja to go all the way Rinkeby

25 Figure 4
26 Cfr. p.49.
Torg to buy food, instead of purchasing in their own neighbourhood? What would stimulate a young Moroccan woman to buy 10 kilograms of lamb in Rinkeby, and then freeze it for personal delivery to her sister in Oslo? Why would a person buy Kötbullar (Swedish meatballs) or falukorv (mixed-meat sausage) for their family, and still consider themselves as a ‘good Muslim’?

I began to reason out why Stockholm’s Muslim food consumers sometimes behave in a manner so similar to Italian Muslims, and ultimately determined that the similarity is due to factors of dimension. In France or Germany the halal market is very large and well-developed, and the offer of products is almost as vast as for the vegetarian, organic, vegan, or fair trade markets. A strong market means competition, and competition means higher quality and low prices. The specificity of the Swedish and Italian halal markets is that they are still growing, and in the area of price, the halal product often cannot compete with other industrial food production. In the larger markets, the anthropologist has the opportunity to study the processes by which the Muslim believers chooses food in the case of greater overall purchasing power. In the smaller markets, the anthropologist can study the processes by which a Muslim believer deals with the ‘need for halal’, in the situation of a market which does not reach the same competitive levels of offer and price. In nations where halal and non-halal sectors are equal in scope, there is the opportunity for state regulation of certification (see France and AVS). The area of halal food does not significantly distinguish Muslim consumers from others within the social tissue, since the mechanisms of food supply work similarly for all consumers. However in Sweden the area of halal food creates a distinct category of consumer, a segregated form of consumption, which puts the Muslim in a position of disadvantage with respect to the consumers of more common food products.

I often reflected on this social asymmetry during my research. It seems to imply a sort of ‘nutritional vulnerability’ of the minority religious group. It also stimulates consideration of the way minority Muslims deal with food systems that are intrinsically developed for a non-Muslim community, and in this context attempt to reproduce their ‘foreign’ food traditions in their new everyday lives. Further, there seemed to be a sort of process of ‘hybridisation’ of food practices. Why do Swedish Muslims want ekologisk halal? What is the point of looking for ingredients for Christmas dishes if a Muslim technically does not celebrate Christmas? (The people of Kista Folkhögskola prepared a julbord in December – a Christmas ‘feast table’.)

As my research continued, I had to examine and deconstruct these contradictions, one by one. On the one hand, the Muslim consumer in Stockholm clearly holds power, in the sense of having ‘agency’ within the food system. A woman who decides where to buy food has power,
and a man who pays for the food has power. A man who slaughters animals in *bismillah* manner as power. And men and women who spread feedback have power.

On the other hand, the Muslim consumer is also vulnerable, constantly struggling within a stretched concept of food insecurity, within which cultural variables determine what can be considered good, edible, healthy and affordable.
Chapter II

‘Being a Muslim’ and ‘eating like a Muslim’: not a linear concept at all

Introduction to the chapter

When I started doing research in Stockholm I was determined to discover the places for halal food shops, meaning the ‘real places’. It is quite easy to go to big Swedish supermarkets and find products with ‘halal’ printed on them. But is that what a Muslim believer considers ‘truly halal’? Halal food is a consumer product which has become quite common in recent decades, due to the market rule that as demand increases, supply will also increase. But which kind of supply are we talking about?

2.1 Köttbullar

It emerged that one interesting contrast which I could examine in my research would be the difference between what my informers referred to as små butiker and stora livsmedel, or ‘small shops’ and ‘big groceries’.27 The halal products in the two types of shops would theoretically appear the same, but frequently look different and have different prices. The prices of halal food in the larger shop can be either less than or the same as those of the smaller shops. Sometimes halal meat costs 20-30 kronor (per kg.) more, compared to the same non-halal cut, whereas sometimes buying halal lamb in a small shop is cheaper than buying non-halal lövbif in a big store. Clear differences are not immediately perceptible. So why would a Muslim consumer select one place over another for their shopping? How can we perceive the differences between one piece of meat and another? Does the buyer take into account price; or the quality of the food, including its appearance, taste and odours; or the sense of reliability offered by the shop; or the relation of trust with the seller; or all those other social processes that take place beyond the shop, yet which led the purchaser to that place instead of another?

When I went to Bredäng for the second time (around mid-March), I was curious to go at one of the big chain shops. I heard from many informants that M*****r is a place where they try to not go too much, since ‘They put pork near halal’. While I was about to get in, I saw this

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27 The exact definition for big shops should be stora livsmedelsbutiker, but my informants have almost always accounted the big shops as stora livsmedel.
veiled woman carrying an empty bag from Nabil Livs in Rinkeby Torg, and walking to M******r. I stopped her before she got in, and asked her if she spoke English and could help me buying halal meat for a dinner. She looked at me and said: ‘Don’t go there if you want to buy halal meat, go to Rinkeby’. I stopped for a minute, and then I asked her: ‘Are you a Muslim?’ and she replied: ‘Yes!’. Then I asked her: ‘So, why do you buy food here?’ She rolled her eyes, and indicated the banners with the discounted prices hanged outside the shop. I apologized for my question that could have seemed rude and disrespectful, she smiled at me and said that I was right, she should not buy food there, but she had to. I went in to the shop with her, saying I would have carried her bags to apologize. She went to packaged meat department and bought three bags of Köttbullar, saying: ‘the only thing with more pork fat than these is an actual pork, but at least they taste better than L**l ones’, and she put them in her basket. When I saw this scene, I told her that in Italy we use to say: ‘Del maiale non si butta via nulla!’ (Transl.: ‘Of the pig nothing goes to waste!’), she started laughing and told me: ‘That’s why pork is so cheap’.

This episode came up to my mind the week later, when I was in Rinkeby, submitting questionnaires. After the questionnaires, the students agreed for a focus interview, so I started asking them about their principle of food selection, and the argument went in to discussion about money.\textsuperscript{28} At a certain point, one of the students exclaimed: ‘halal is not extremely expensive, is the non halal that is cheap!’

I have to confess that, without the episode at the M******r I would have not get what she meant. I saw with my eyes Ifza (this was her name) ‘picking’ those köttbullar and put them in her basket. But at that point I was not sure I saw her ‘making a choice’.

In 1998, deCerteau, Giard and Mayol published \textit{The Practice of Everyday Life, Vol.2: Cooking and Living}, a work on how food habits offer a key to decoding the active, individualised and creative appropriation of consumption, in which people are not only the passive consumers of received products. So, not being a passive consumer means ‘have a choice’. The question is: ‘Is it possible to call Ifza’s choice, a choice?’.

For a Muslim in Stockholm, eating is a contradictory issue, confronting the individual consumer with food choices where they must take into account the ‘value’ they attribute to food. When we eat, what is evaluable and what is not? What matters when we select, buy, prepare and consume a meal? Do our religious beliefs guide our choice? Or is it the amount of money we have in the wallets? Or is it maybe our way to reproduce the culinary traditions we assimilated when we were kids? Or our desire to please family members with lovingly

\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Cfr.} P. 57.
prepared, good food? Or our concerns about health and the environment? Or is it perhaps practical reasons, such as lack of time, which make us select a shop that is closer than another one? Where is ‘the choice’?

A little help to answer these questions comes from Warde. In *Consumption, food and taste: culinary antinomies and commodity culture*, he applies Bourdieu's distinctions in explaining the mechanisms by which food consumption becomes a central practice of everyday life. Bourdieu, indeed, offers a nuanced and complex description of everyday practice, with the objective of mapping the differences between social groups in terms of their distinctive social practices, and their capacities to appreciate those differences. His concept of ‘habitus’ is used to explain the link between a person's social and economic position and their corresponding position in the ‘universe of lifestyles’. This approach ‘makes it possible to account both for classifiable practices and products and for the judgments, themselves classified, which make these practices and works into a system of distinctive signs’. This suggests that people's own practices, and their capacity to appreciate and judge their own practices, as well as their ability to do the same for others' practices, are indissolubly linked (Warde 1997:9).

When it comes to halal food consumption, the issues become more complicated. One could argue that Muslims eat what the Qur'an tells them to eat, and everybody is happy, but reducing everything to a ‘cookbook’ structure would be extremely naïve. In contemporary debates on the food choices of Muslims in Europe, scholars have argued about whether a Muslim believer is more concerned about the ‘halalness’ of a meal or about other characteristics that meat must have to be considered ‘good’. The Muslim believer is, on the one hand, the person who acts as agent within his/her food system, and, on the other hand, the one who has to deal with external factors which affect the deep structure of this system.
Chapter -III

Gender issues: the importance of the one who shops for and prepares the meals

Introduction to the chapter

The act of provide, buy and prepare meals for the family has often been invested by different meanings connected to the idea of feeding as a way to nurture the loved ones. Within my research, the gender roles in Stockholm’s Muslim families have had a fundamental role in the definition of the relations of power, distribution of responsibility and concept of morality, connected to the figure of the woman as a moral actor which ensures that the family receives the ‘best’ possible meals, where ‘best’ is a concept which is subject to different interpretations.

3.1 Who buys food in your family?

One of the first statements I heard during my fieldwork was ‘Women do the food shopping!’ , as if this were obviously the natural way, and only a fool would ask about such practices. On 9 February 2015, I was sitting at one of the tables used by Kista Folkhögskola students for their lunch. Here I met Mariam, a student, who reported to me that her husband in fact worked at Kista G****n, one of the most important halal food shops in Kista. After a while some of her fellow students (all women) joined us, and began talking about the shops where they purchase their food, providing feedback and offering advice for my research. When I asked who was the one who selected and bought the food for their families, everyone said: ‘Me!’, as if it were the only natural way. Mariam told me: ‘I’m going to call my husband, so he can describe to you how the women make purchases at Kista G****n!’ The discussion was in Arabic and so difficult for me to follow, however I could see that Mariam was telling her husband in very strong tones to take the time to speak with me. After a few minutes, she terminated the call and told me: ‘You can go the shop and ask for Ali. And tell him I’m coming later, to buy meat’. I indeed went to the shop (only three minutes from the school) and I asked to speak to Ali. The shop manager stopped me, asking me what I wanted, so I explained my intentions and was eventually allowed to speak with his employee. Ali told me that for permission to observe the customers doing their shopping I would need to ask the manager. However, after explaining
my research once again, the manager would not give permission, saying that everybody asks for something for the university and they had no time to help in all these situations. I returned to the school, and sadly reported to Mariam that I was not allowed to observe the customers at Kista G****n. She apologised before leaving, however one of her friends approached and whispered: ‘Don’t worry, I’m going to Rinkeby next week, and you can come and see how we buy halal food’. I often reflected on what happened that day. Clearly Mariam was exercising her influence as wife of a Kista G****n employee; but her friend too was also exercising her power as a family food provider and direct consumer.

The issue of gender role division within food supplying is something intimately linked to the relations of power within the family, which can be analysed through the Foucaultian theoretical perspective of the relations between power, gender and body, to thus analyse the links between power, gender and food, where the food becomes the key through which decode the transmission of responsibility and power through a gender oriented system of supplying.

In *Muslim Women and Halal Meat Markets in France* Bergeaud-Blackler highlights two different perspectives concerning halal food consumption. On the one hand, she reveals the importance of women-oriented food supply systems in the redefinitions of relations of power. She illustrates how women compose as a fundamental element in a ‘horizontal chain of trust’, in their role as consumers who contribute to the reputation of the food-seller. On the other hand, she says that in the context of transnational processes of self-identification, traditional cuisine requires ingredients relevant to the culinary heritage of the consumers, thus shifting their attention from ‘halal’ to ‘traditional’ and ‘practical’.

When it comes to the issue of the relations between food and gender, there is a broad literature, within which I concentrate on research directly connected to my fieldwork. A general theoretical framework can be established by examining studies on the way the food is related to gender theory and how definitions of masculinity and femininity are shaped by the act of providing and consuming food.

Florence Bergeaud-Blackler argues on the prominent role of women in the Muslim immigrant community of France, in the context of ambivalent relations of power between the genders in the halal food trade and the domestic sphere.

One consideration is that the developing practices of halal involve women, those generally responsible for buying the family groceries, in mechanisms where they are both agents and subjects. Since they have the power to determine the standard of product quality, they are the first agents within both the supply mechanisms and feedback systems. On the other
hand, in limiting the ‘purchasing field’ to halal products, there are implications of lesser possibilities to share meals beyond the domestic sphere, thus de facto affecting the women’s choices concerning free time and the social sphere.

As Bergeaud-Blackler states: ‘Food practices that women immigrants bring with them serve as both a dynamic element of exchange and mutual obligation between migrant families, and a means of gaining entry in to the local host society's social and economic life.’ She illustrates the importance of the women’s role in preparing halal meals for those men confined to ‘workers' lodgings’, who then consume these meals socially. Women’s preparation of food in the home is also a chance for social exchange between families, and for familiarisation with strangers enter the domestic threshold.

Thus, through the food system, women not only ensure the best possible quality for the family's meals (where ‘best’ is a concept subject to different interpretations), but also play a fundamental role in creating opportunities for social interaction between Muslim families (Bergeaud-Blackler 2005: 111). Bergeaud-Blackler’s work reveals the significant power held by women. While men are at work, women are in charge of the food supply, and have the power to select. The power to select leads to power over determining the quality of a product. The power to determine the quality of a product leads to the power to spread feedback. The power to spread feedback leads to the process of reputation building for food sellers. In addition, once the food is in the house, the power to prepare halal meals leads to social opportunities in both the domestic and working spheres. We must be clear that men are involved in all these mechanisms, but they participate in this structure of powers in a different way, and in particular are less involved in food purchasing and more in the aspects of food production and trade (besides obviously being part of the feedback system).

On the other hand, considering that ‘good’ represents a concept having more to do with ‘being cheap’ rather than being halal, women's role in the food supplying is also vitally connected to the act of managing the household finances. In The Anthropology of Food and Body, Carole M. Counihan links anthropological perspectives on food practices with feminist concerns about gender roles and power relations. Counihan’s volume offers a critical exploration of the ways in which men and women define their identities and their relationships relative to one another through such diverse food practices as commensalism, exchange, production and distribution, symbolic systems and narratives about food. Counihan (1999:3) ‘asks from a variety of perspectives how food ways reinforce or challenge social and economic inequality in family and society’, and draws on her own field research in the United States and two Italian communities (Florence; Bosa, in Sardinia), as well on published research regarding
New Guinea, the Amazon basin, and the issues of food practices in general.

Working in a similar vein, Margarita Jankauskait presents a useful theoretical approach to the issue of food and gender. In her important work, *Food, Gender and Representation*, she highlights how the ways of eating and providing meals are connected to the construction of images of masculinity and femininity. She states that:

As a cultural signifier, food carries different weight in constructing the values of masculinity and femininity, everyday experiences of men and women, and performs different roles in the process of their representation and self-representation. Food also occupies a peculiar place in art. The aim of this article is to analyse how modern Lithuanian women artists use food to express feminine identity, what meanings they attach to it and how, in polemics with cultural stereotypes, feminine identity is articulated in their oeuvre (Jankauskait 2003: 73).

The roles of men and women in supplying food are perceived as an intimate, fundamental part of everyday practice, which also relates to the surrounding environment. Hovorka, Zeeuw and Njenga provide an interesting work in this line, about gender theory in the role of woman in urban realities. They illustrate how women literally ‘feed the city’, playing a crucial role in household food provision, with ‘vital’ contribution to the management of household finances (Hovorka, Zeeuw, Njenga, 2003: 1).

The work of Hovorka, Zeeuw and Njenga suggests the consideration of another fundamental aspect in the relations between food and gender, that of who actually has the responsibility to ‘bring’ the meals into the home, including the economic aspects of the function.

Though the stages of slaughtering, controlling, certifying, selling (and often paying for halal food) are part of a strictly male mechanism, the stage of physically ‘bringing’ the halal food into the house is more a part of the feminine sphere, in which women technically have the last word. The responsibility of buying for, preparing and offering a meal identified as ‘good’ becomes an imperative intimately connected to the maternal role of the women in the family. The act of ‘bringing the halal food’ is an in-between stage, where the practical and the spiritual converge with the maternal

**3.2 The cooking pot as womb**

Perhaps that is exactly what I am seeking in my culinary joys: the reconstruction, through gestures, tastes, and combinations, of a silent legend as if, by dint of merely living in it with my hands and body, I would
succeed in restoring the alchemy of such a history, in meriting its secret of language, as if, from this stubborn stomping around on Mother Earth, the truth of the word would come back to me one day. (Michel de Certeau, The practice of everyday life Vol 2)

One of the last days in the field, I was wondering about how the act of feeding the family was something intimately connected to a maternal vision of the cooking pot as a womb to nurture people we love. I was at Kista Folkhögskola, saying goodbye to everybody and I met Fida, one of the employees of Khadija centre who was going out to have lunch at Kista Galleria and asked me to join her. She told me: ‘I want a steak, I have been thinking about it all day, I need to eat a steak’. I was like: ‘Ok, let's go there’, and she replied: ‘No, I have to buy my food from that guy, because it's better, and it's surely halal’. There was something in her eyes, something different I could not identify at that moment.

When we sat together to eat our meals, we started talking about buying food, what is halal, what is not, and she told me she had a very spiritual vision of the act of eating, because she believed that foods which are not halal are not only bad for your body, but also for your spirit. She told me her body completely refused non-halal foods, making her throwing up if she accidentally had something not allowed.

I kept looking at her while she was talking about how important it was for her feeding her kids with ‘good’ meals, how she felt she was ensuring their health in every possible way. I observed the way she was eating her steak, slowly and carefully, with no rush, even if a steak seemed the only thing she wanted in her whole life. Then I got it; I smiled to her and I said: ‘Fida, are you pregnant?’, and she replied: ‘Yes, how do you know?’.

In recent decades, the sociological and cultural studies literature has suggested that men and women cook differently. Women's cooking is seen to be largely an ‘other-oriented responsibility’. They cook to please others and to care for the health and well-being of loved ones. Consequently, they experience pleasure but also anxiety about what they prepare. Men's cooking, on the other hand, is seen as self-oriented leisure. Men cook when they feel like it, such as on special occasions, on weekends, or over a barbecue. Their cooking is a hobby, a display of culinary artistry, or a strategy for seduction. The body of work dichotomizing men's and women's cooking has been important for our understanding of gender inequality and the gendered division of labour. It highlights the interconnectedness of women's and men's traditionally different roles, experiences, and subjectivities.

‘Foodwork’ and women's primary responsibility for foodwork have long been interpreted by feminist scholars as areas of gender oppression, yet when we attempt to take issues of race, diaspora and ethnic identity into account, the gendered meanings of foodwork seem much more
complicated. Pierre Bourdieu’s (1986) notion of cultural capital suggests that non-monetary assets, such as the cultural knowledge that allows one to move smoothly within a given social arena, can be resources in social mobility. Certain social and cultural assets become valued and sought after in particular social contexts. Acquiring such cultural knowledge and resources can then confer power and status. However the value of a form of cultural capital is always dependent on the field or social arena of context. Extending this concept, LeBesco and Naccarato (2008) have coined the term ‘culinary capital’. Though specifically referring to class mobility, or the illusion of class mobility through adoption of food practices derived from the upper classes, the term has potential value for understanding the contradictory relationship women may have to food and foodwork in transnational and diasporic communities. The same practices that constitute gender oppression for women can simultaneously confer ‘culinary capital’ within the social arena of their own ethnic community (D’Sylva, Began 2011:281).

The concept of culinary capital is particularly important to my research, though my focus is not oppression, rather the relations of power between genders in Stockholm's Muslim families. The ideal of cooking as a way to nurture is demonstrated in two perspectives. First, the women in my study provide and prepare food for the ‘biological needs’ of the family. Second (but not necessarily in importance), they are ‘picky’ about selecting and preparing good halal food, to feed the family in a spiritual way.

3.3 “Responsibility is something you feel in your belly”

The day Fida told me that she was able to feel if a particular food was halal or not, because if it were not, her body would reject it, she was indeed stressing how to her, the responsibility of finding real halal meals was something that concerned the health of her family. In this case, I considered the effects of religion on health and the ways the body is influenced through spirituality (Koenig, McCullon, Larson 2003:35). In Fida’s experience, the body can be interpreted as a key to understanding the perception of responsibility within food supplying.

A few weeks later, I interviewed Viola, an employee of Kista Folkhögskola. She is a Swedish born woman, who converted to Islam in 1985. Through the years, Viola developed a strong concern for the environment and the respect of the creatures created by God. Her way to see maternal care is not only for the love of the family, but also for the love of the nature. She has this idea of halal as something that respects the environment and is organic, in order to be good in the eyes of God, not only because we respect nature, but also because we introduce
healthy foods in our body. Viola’s concept of responsibility, then, does not concern only God, her and her family, but is extended to all the creatures of the nature. Thus she eats meat, she believes that only the animals that have been raised in a healthy environment are really halal.

Viola told me about the feast of Sacrifice they celebrated the year before, and about how the lambs who her friends ordered from abroad arrived half dead because of the bad conditions they were treated on the cargo. She was concerned about how that could have possibly been halal, if there was no respect for the animals’ suffering and how her body as well as her mind were aware that those animals were not treated in the ‘grace of God’.

Being good with God’s creations is a form of responsibility that on the one hand, includes the concept of care of loved persons who do not eat animals that have been maltreated or raised in an unhealthy environment. On the other hand, it relies to a personal vision of organic, healthy and responsible, which made me reflect on the way Viola was applying the category of her personal background as Swedish woman to the category of halal.
Chapter IV – Honour and morality

Introduction to the chapter

Talking about food consumption as a matter of morality and honour can be risky. One could indeed argue on the exact meaning of the words ‘ethics’, ‘morals’ and ‘honour’, arguing on whether apply a western or a non-western category to these concepts. To better understand what honour and morality mean in Islam and in halal food consumption, it becomes fundamental to introduce the concept of akhlaq, and apply it to my ethnographic examples.

4.1 “Responsibility is something that you feel in your soul”

At the beginning of March 2015, I was invited to a two days seminar organized by Citizens Sweden. During the seminar, I met Tohin, a young man from Bangladesh who moved to Sweden years ago with his wife and now he has a baby girl. Tohin introduced himself as somebody who is still in a process of ‘culinary transition’, and has to deal with the everyday quest for halal in Sweden. Despite many of my informants, Tohin also deals with a concept of responsibility which lies on the fact that a good Muslim would never sell him something that is not halal, so his only concern is about being careful picking the person that is spiritually good, instead of spending hours looking at the ingredients of the meals. His individual responsibility ends in the moment he finds somebody who is reliable and reputable.

A good theoretical insight for this ethnographic example comes from Bergeaud-Blackler. She states that:

The inability of local religious authorities to control the halal meat production chain arises from differing theological interpretations of the requirements for meat’s lawfulness. Establishing halal meat as acceptable is dependent upon a series of negotiations through interpersonal relationships based on trust. These relationships could be represented as a horizontal chain. Those buying halal fresh meat place their trust in their butcher and delegate responsibility to him in the event of error. (Bergeaud Blackler 2005: 12).

29 Citizens Sweden is a non-profit organization that aims to spread the tools of social organization and work on citizen's rights. https://www.facebook.com/citizensssweden?ref=ts
Here she analyses the concept of responsibility in two different aspects of food selection, *la responsabilité individuelle* (individual responsibility) and *la chaîne de responsabilités* (the chain of responsibility). Though a Muslim consumer approaches food in different ways, the relation with the seller becomes fundamental in the analysis of the attribution of responsibility. The responsibility of the individual who selects the shop and trusts the food-seller is intimately connected to a broader chain which involves a relation of trust that starts with the person who kills the animal *bismillah* (le sacrificateur), the one who sells the food (*le boucher*) and the customer (*le client*) (Bergeaud-Blackler 2001:7-9). Within this chain, the role of feedback becomes fundamental. Through the power of the customer to attribute a certain level of quality to a product he or she is buying, their role as both purchaser and feedback-provider can determine whether a food-seller will attain a good reputation or not. Indeed in *Comprendre le Halal*, Bergeaud-Blackler and Bernard argue that the reputation of the food-seller is built through a careful selection process, and ensures the consumer that what they are buying is halal. The authors state that the system depends on the consumer’s personal conviction that they are entitled to revoke their trust from the butcher in case of error or fraud. Bergeaud-Blackler’s article titled ‘*La viande halal peut-elle financer le culte musulman?*’ (Bergeaud-Blackler 2001:10) poses a further interesting question, namely: is the relation of trust between the buyer and the seller a matter of honour? Indeed, if we go back to the chain of responsibility and put the consumer on top, we can see how on the one hand the customer has power over the seller, due to their role in providing feedback. On the other hand the seller maintains power as an ‘expert’ on the topic, which counterbalances that of the customer. As Bergeaud-Blackler states:

The power of the customer is limited, because of encountering the capacities of the butcher to in turn render the customer responsible. The buyer ultimately only has resort to the accusation of fault against the butcher, which risks damage to himself through the object (meat), then defiled by the absence of proper moral behaviour on the part of the butcher. Still, one can consider that the customer controls an important area of incertitude, which affects the butcher’s management of his orders and stocks, for example through simply deciding to decrease his purchases, or to visit the butcher less frequently, or simply to never return. The customer on his part is subject to a different incertitude: that of not being sure, given the exacting standards which he holds, of the reputation of the butcher to which he would then turn if he abandoned the first one. The customer’s exacting suspicions render him on the one hand more hesitant, and on the other hand the prisoner of his choice. For the customer, the psychological cost of suspicion is high, and for them it could thus be worthwhile to be more forgiving towards their butcher ... (Bergeaud-Blackler 2001:10). 31

30 Classical Arabic ‘In the name of God’.
31 All the translations from French are mine.
Both the customers and the sellers are subject to a ‘grey area’, the former as they deal with the ‘anxiety of eating’, and the latter who depend on their good reputation, based on their customers’ feedback (Coveney: 2000). The successful resolution lies in a relation of honour, where both buyer and seller are expected to ‘do the right thing’. Appreciation and judgement are intimately linked to a deep moral argument on whether the behaviour of both the food seller and the food buyer is moral or not. Judgements on each other’s food practices and feelings of responsibility for being the one who ensure the delivering of “good food” go hand in hand and can be framed in a moral overtone concerning the role of the seller as morality keeper and the role of the buyer who trusts the seller’s ethical behaviour and takes the responsibility to pick those who are less likely to err.

4.2 Moral overtones

In the month of February 2015 I attended a seminar on ‘Ethics and Morality in the Family’, held at Zidni Center. The event dealt with all aspects of everyday life faced by a Muslim believer in Sweden, with the aim of clarifying how the concept of akhlaq could be achieved in practice both within and beyond the home, including some of the more difficult situations of public life, involving dress code, interpersonal relationships and food provision. I had the opportunity to speak with many of the participants, and ask their opinions on the issue of halal versus economy in food choices. Once again, there were definitely contrasting points of among the informants. Another very revelatory observation was that in expressing such divergent opinions, the informants would also make moral judgement on the practices of ‘others’ in selecting the food for their families. This was an observation that I had also seen in informal conversations with informants, during the processes of their food shopping. But this leads us to another question: ‘For a Muslim, what concept of honour can be applied to the act of selling and consuming food?’ Within Bergeaud-Blackler's work the concept of honour is also described as ‘bonne moralité’ (proper morality), choice that makes us reflect on what ‘good morality’ means for a Muslim believer. When it comes to the separation between Islam and morality, the process becomes tricky. In Islam all is connected and related to the Scriptures, and every segment of the human behaviour is supposed to follow the Qur’an guidelines.

The comparable word for ethics in Islam is akhlaq, and this is construed as morality. The problem arises when we study akhlaq vis-d-vis ethics. In western vocabulary the terms ‘ethics’ and ‘morality’ have different origins; one derived from the Greek ethos, ‘ethics’, and the other
derived from the Latin *mores* or ‘morals’. Both mean habits or customs, but the distinction in European thought and language has been maintained. One is what is ‘commonly felt and done’ (morals) as opposed to what is ‘appropriate and rational’ (ethics). In Islamic thought, the predominant feature is knowledge of morality (*ilm-ul-Akhlq*), i.e. what we could call the ‘science of ethics’ (Al-Kaysi 1986:35).

Issues relating to ethics and morals in the contemporary world have been raised both in the Muslim world and also by the Muslims living as minorities in Europe, America and Asia. Since Islam prescribes a code of conduct for both private and public life, for a majority-minority situation, we find discussions which pertain to living in a minority situation are taking some precedence. Issues of nationality, citizenship and loyalty, on one hand, and religious rituals, funerals, food, dress, marriage and relationships, work and business transactions, as well as social relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims, on the other hand, are hotly debated. Discussions on such matters are pursued at various educational and religious forums, organisations and institutions, especially in Europe.

Although we have the specific term to describe of *akhlq* to refer to morality within Islam, there is no specific way to apply it to food behaviours without entering into the heated debates about what is really considered ‘moral’. On the one hand, one could argue that buying food according to the ‘cookbook’ is the right thing to do. On the other hand, the Qur’an also says: ‘And why should you not eat of that (meat) on which Allah’s Name has been pronounced [at the time of slaughtering the animal], while He has explained to you in detail what is forbidden to you, except under compulsion of necessity?’ (*al-An'am* 6:119).32 ‘Necessity’ in this case could imply a situation which sees the Muslim consumer choosing between something that is halal and something ambiguous and extremely cheap. Thus *akhlq* expresses the concept of morality, one could still argue on what exactly this concept means. For Bergeaud-Blackler *bonne moralité* expresses a concept which is connected to the honesty of the *boucher*, and in this case can be included in the meaning of “*akhlq* as honesty”. On the other hand, the use of the term of “morality” within when it comes to food consumption cannot exclude the behaviour of the buyer as well as the seller. *Akhlq*, when applied to food morality, has now taken on three different meanings. First, the term ‘moral’ arises in connection to the behaviour of the food-seller, who has the ‘moral duty’ to provide Muslim believers only with halal food. Second, the consideration of ‘morality’ also applies to the behaviour of a Muslim consumer, who must carefully choose only those foods that are clearly allowed. Yet there can still be ‘moral’

behaviour in the case of a Muslim believer who sees it as a ‘necessity’ to choose the purchase of ambiguous or non-halal foods. Honour and morality are also both framed in the context of caring for the family, in the provision of ‘good food’ for loved ones. Additionally, the honourable reputation of the food-seller also depends on his perception as a ‘good Muslim’, implying a close connection with other spaces in which the piety of a seller is measured by his customers.

The relation between food and morality within Islam is extremely tricky. Technically, the rules that determine the prohibition of haram food are contextualized in the Qur’an within those called “material impediments”. On the other hand, the behaviour of the food seller who is supposed to not cheat on the “halalness” of the products is contextualized in those called “moral impediments” (Morgan 2011:40). When the process of food consumption sees both the buyer and the seller deal with a ‘moral structure’, it could be analysed through two different perspectives. On the one hand, the akhlaq intended as a duty for the seller sees the person who gives food to a Muslim family as a ‘morality keeper’, whose reliability is often measured through his/her level of religious devotion. On the other hand, going to Bourdieu's concept of economic position, the food buyer is the one who decided whether is more moral or not taking into account the family's economic resources and buy cheap ambiguous foods, or buy only halal food, which could endanger the family's monthly budget.

4.3 “Responsibility is something you feel in your pocket”: the “wallet triangle”

‘It’s not that Halal is so very expensive, it's that non-halal is so cheap!’ This was one of the most revelatory sentences of my entire fieldwork process. What I observed was that some of my informants who identified themselves as ‘Muslim’ were not buying exclusively halal foods, but were also selecting ‘ambiguous’ choices. That seemed a problem to me initially. What was the benefit to them of not buying halal?

The problem was revealed more fully during a focus interview with an SFI class in Rinkeby. As I collected the questionnaires I had submitted to the students, I began asking questions about their food habits, following a previously-prepared scheme. The questions were about the reasons that would make a Muslim consumer select one place over another, and the problem of the food-seller’s reliability. The ten people in the focus group (nine women, one man) had quite divergent opinions about the shops available in their district. Some preferred Nabil Livs, some Orient L**s, and some J&D S*****l. Others reported that the M*****r
offered cheaper halal products, and some did not at all select a shop for halal, instead going only to the Lidl supermarket chain.

As the discussion became more detailed, an argument arose between those who criticized the way some shops were not run by good Muslims, against others who said that some shops were too expensive compared to others. One of the students began to comment on the great differences in prices between the smaller halal shops and Lidl supermarket. She argued that even if the meat at Lidl was not certified in any way, the price was so low as to make it ‘impossible not to buy there’. She expounded not on the ‘halalness’ of the products, but on the low price of the Lidl offer. Another student pointed out that such food clearly was not as good as that from the small shops, and surely was full of genetically modified materials and animal fats, and not as healthy.

The discussion was becoming somewhat heated, so I took the marker from the teacher and on the blackboard drew a triangle, with ‘halal and good quality’ (organic) at the top, and at the bottom corners: ‘halal’ (labelled or certified) and ‘halal?’ (ambiguous, or not at all halal). Having briefly discussed the meaning intended by the three terms, I asked the focus group: ‘When it comes to deciding what to buy, how do you choose’? One after the other, they looked at me and replied: ‘The wallet decides!’ The conflicts inherent in these answers struck me. Until this point, I had read and collected a great deal of information about the complicated relation of trust with the food-seller, as the system for ensuring the customer of the ‘halalness’ of the food. On the other hand, I was discovering the reality of a very different kind of anxiety, involved in the monthly struggle to have sufficient money for the necessary purchases.

Since foods with the ‘halal’ label are not hard to find in Stockholm, what is it that would make my informants select something ambiguous? The most obvious answer was ‘lower price’, however the solution was revealed as more complex. I received some help in fleshing out this seemingly simple equation several days later while talking with Kaysa, in the student kitchen of in Kista. Kaysa reported that she knew many people who would buy Köttbullar in supermarkets, because they were available in bulk packages at low prices, and were a good way to feed families with a lot of children. Base on this information I was able to understand that the act of selecting and buying food for the Muslim family does not only involve the ‘halalness’ of the meal, but instead depends on a deeper moral structure, where the Muslim consumer chooses between buying ‘halal’ or buying ‘economically’ based on a conceptualisation of morality as providing for the family for an entire month in a practical sense, as well as in a spiritual one.

The Muslim consumer must decide whether it is moral to decide against buying a meal
that prescribed ‘by the cookbook’, and to instead buy products that are cheaper and can provide the family the necessary food for a longer time. The consumer can understand the ‘right thing’ as being the best choice for the welfare of their family, going beyond religious prescriptions. The provider must accept the responsibility of acting ‘morally’, where ‘moral’ depends also on economic functionality. The meanings in terms of *akhlaq* (morality) become quite complex. Products that are non-halal can be ‘good’, because they are economical; products that are halal are clearly religiously good, but can be prohibitively expensive. In such cases, what is ‘right thing’ to do?

As Nemeroff and Stein state, we can understand that ‘You are what you eat’ (Nemeroff, Stein 1995: 481). The issue of moral judgement of other people’s food behaviours then becomes crucial in the analysis of halal consumer’s behaviour. Among my various informants, those who could afford organic halal food imported from New Zealand could be sure they were acting correctly in every sense. Those who were ‘demanding’ despite limited economic resources could be sure they act ‘spiritually correctly’. Those who bought economical but ambiguous food could still be sure they were acting ‘economically correctly’. In ‘Moral overtones of food: judgments of others based on what they eat’, Nemeroff and Stein examine how people make moral judgments of others based on the types of food they eat. They identify the concept of sympathetic magic (Frazer:1922), which attributes a certain symbolic value to the food a person eats, and then transmits these intrinsic properties to the person who consumes it (Nemeroff, Stein 1995: 482). The value attributed by members of the Muslim community to ‘good eaters’ and ‘bad eaters’ would become extremely important to the individual as they decide whether to buy foods belonging to different categories (halal and organic but expensive; halal; inexpensive). The moral judgments exercised by the social group become a potential lens of identification and self-identification as ‘good Muslims’, in which ‘good’ is not an unequivocal term, but instead presents a fluid structure, adapted by the subject applying the lens. This argument relates to Warde (1997) and his examination of people’s judgments on other’s food practices, as well as to Bergeaud-Blackler (2001) and her concept of *bonne moralité*.

However there are still further aspects of variability in the concept of two opposing perspectives: other factors creating further variability in the choices between ‘halal’ and ‘inexpensive’, which are intimately connected with issues such as daily time management, distances from home to the shops, the numbers of children in the family, and the fact that the consumer may even have to take the children with them during their food shopping. During fieldwork (especially in Rinkeby) I observed mothers with four children, who complained of
the impossibility of going to Kista G***n halal store, because it was ‘too far’. I also observed women who would travel as far as from Tensta to Fittja (30 kilometres) specifically to make purchase at Mawlana Supermarket (a relatively small halal market). In addition, as noted previously, Swedish Muslims must deal with the lack of competition in the nation’s small halal sector, which limits the consumer’s exercise of selection compared to the situation in countries with larger, more-established markets. This situation creates a condition of vulnerability for the halal consumer, who becomes part of minority category, not well established in the overall Swedish food market. Given the situation of vulnerability, both the roles of the family provider and the seller become more demanding. The family provider is morally obliged to do ‘the right thing’ in terms of the welfare of their loved ones. The seller is obliged to do ‘the right thing’ in terms of being an honest human being who does not deceive their customers. Here, we return to the concept of responsabilité individuelle and chaîne de responsabilités (Bergeaud-Blackler 2001).

An analysis of the motivations for this extreme sense of responsibility brings out some practical issues about gender role division, concerning the reasons for which women assume responsibility over the quality and purchase of food. About the 90% of my informants were woman, most of them unemployed. The male informants were mostly food-sellers interviewed at their workplace, or working students who could still attend morning classes in Kista. Indeed most men would be working during my research hours (8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.), so they could not be found in the school or shops.

Among my informants in Stockholm County, three women out of five had a husband, father or brother who was employed, but themselves had no regular job. The non-working men were mostly students in the adult education system, at times receiving assistance from the CSN. The organisation of Swedish pre-school system means that mothers generally have time to attend adult education classes or SFI language training, and to make purchase during the week. Given this context, the women of the family are the only ones who can take care of procuring food, while men are engaged during working hours. The female control over food provision recalled the model of my own Southern Italian background. As a child, my mother was engaged as a housewife during all my childhood, while my father arrived home only at dinner hour. I remember my mother going to the market, and my father on one occasions telling her to buy the meat at one place rather than another, because some of the butchers ‘didn’t know how to cut lamb’. I also recall her friends telling her to not buy oranges from one of the market

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33 State financial aid for students [http://www.csn.se/](http://www.csn.se/)
stands, because they were ‘dry as hell’, although she still insisted on buying them from the first stand because she did not like the operator of the other stand. Just as in my own family context, and even though the halal sector in Sweden does not attain the dimensions necessary for high levels of competition, my field observations demonstrated that the one who manages the selection of the food still exercises both power and responsibility. This kind of power is not absolute, since it is generated by processes implying the co-participation of different subjects within the feedback system.

The food provider exercises power as a ‘liminal’ actor, dealing with an extremely fluid role within and beyond the domestic space. Around mid-February, intuition and improvisation permitted an opportunity of participant observation on these issues. As I was walking through Fittja, I saw a veiled woman carrying three bags of clothing. I noticed she was going in the direction of Mawlana supermarket, and she seemed quite tired, so I offered to help. I introduced myself and explained that I was studying halal food. She smiled, and commented ‘Oh, that’s good, that’s good’, and then, ‘I’m on my way now to buy halal food at Mawlana’. Aisha, the informant, is from Palestine. She came to Sweden with her husband, ten years ago, and has three sons. At Mawlana, she met some of her friends and started chatting in Arabic. I was standing nearby, watching and listening as they gave blessings to each other, and trying to understand the conversation, when one of her friends looked at me and asked in Swedish: ‘Who are you?’. Aisha introduced me in English, saying that I was a student who was interested in halal food, and that they could all help by letting me observe how they did their food shopping, the ways they interacted with the food-seller and how selected their purchases. The first friend, Ala, bought half a lamb, while the second, her sister Vina, bought the other half. As I assisted to carry the bags, I could physically sense the weight of the purchases, and asked why they would buy such large quantities of meat. They reported that the previous day, their husbands, who both worked in a warehouse near Botkyrka, had received their pay. This meant that the current day was the one to ‘buy big quantities’ for their families. Again, my thoughts went back to my own family. When I was a child my grandfather received his pension on the 27th of every month, and on the 28th, my grandmother and I would go to the shopping mall. My grandmother had been a housewife for her entire life, so her own pension was very small. On his pension day, my grandfather ‘put the money in her hands’ to do the food shopping.

Though many of my informants were non-working women, I also had the chance to meet Muslim women who indeed contributed to the household incomes. Even in these cases the role of the woman as ‘provider’ was not limited to her monetary contribution, but extended to a more complicated structure, in which ‘provision’ does not mean refer only to earning money,
but also to literally ‘bringing’ the food to the home. The one who earns money to buy food is in some senses a provider, but the one who has the responsibility to bring the food to the home, deal with the monthly budget and take care of the family's wellness, must also be acknowledged as a ‘provider’. The term ‘provider’ essentially means ‘someone who provides the means of subsistence’. But working and bringing money to the family are no more meaningful than ensuring that the family is eating the ‘right food’. Within the chain of trust, nobody is excluded from being a provider.
Chapter V: Like the sounds in the Jungle

Introduction to the chapter

How is a feedback system created? How is it possible to overlap the powers of the customer who can interact with the seller reputation, with the power of the seller who is indeed the one who is holds the ‘power of experience?’

5.1 How to create feedbacks

When I started researching the importance of feedbacks, I was hanging out at Kista Galleria, observing people during their lunch break. It was one of my first days in the field, and the food court of Kista Galleria represented in that moment one of my ‘comfort-zone’ places where do research. A family sat near me. The man was with two veiled women and a kid, and was waiting for the food they ordered at one of the halal stands. The first woman was holding her little girl and talking to the man very loudly, when the other one was observing quietly. One could say they were definitely arguing, but they were speaking a language I could not identify (it was Pashtu), so I was not able to understand anything except for the names of the shops. Those words captured my attention. When the volume of the conversation became lower, I stepped in, introducing myself and asking about the object of their previous argument. They all spoke English, so the communication was quite easy. I asked them if they were talking about food shops, and he told me that his wife (the woman who was arguing with him) did not want to go at M******r in Rinkeby, because she heard from a friend that they used to store pork meat together with the halal one. She’d rather go at S*******l, but her husband did not agree with her because he did not like the owner. In the meantime, the other woman who was sitting with them (the man’s sister) stepped in the conversation and said that they should have gone to Kista G****n, since it was closer, cheap and good, and would have made them save time and money. Their food arrived and they started eating. After lunch was over, the man went back to work, leaving the two sisters in law arguing about where to go. I was sitting with them when one of the I-phones on the table started ringing. The woman with the little girl answered and talked for a few minutes. It was her sister, telling her she was going to Tensta Centrum with
her kids, and asking the two women to join her. I quickly collected my stuff and asked them: “Can I come with you? I can help you carrying the bags”. And then we went to Tensta.

Though the halal food consumer has the power to contribute to the seller reputation through the feedback system, the process through which these feedbacks are provided and spread is affected by different factors. During my research I could see how, on the one hand, my informants were aware of their power to give a feedback to a shop or a seller, and used this power to give advice to their friends/siblings. On the other hand, they were trapped themselves in the feedback system which constantly sent contradictory messages, due to the different factors which affected the formulation of feedbacks for each member of a group. The agency of the customer within the feedback system is then determined by his/her economic resources, the way he/she perceives the distance between one shop and another, the actual aspect of the seller and of the product and his/her role as provider in the family.

Within the role of the provider, gender becomes one of the most important elements of the feedback mechanism. Even if the women are those who practically bring the food home, the ways this food is selected is influenced by man different in different ways, which include of course the woman’s will, but, at the same time are also influenced by external advice. These advice provided in different ways and different places become part of a complicated feedback system which is one of the basic elements of food selection for Muslim believers in Stockholm County.

5.2 The “jungle drum phenomenon”

We cannot talk about feedbacks without focusing on the way the comments are spread. During an interview with Viola, I could start working on what she called “the jungle drum” describing how a comment on a shop or a shop owner is spread like the sound of the animals in the jungle, creating a repetitive sound. The jungle drum phenomenon is therefore directly reconnected to the feedback system. Once a comment on a shop or a food seller is provided, the people who need to find an object keep spreading them between their circle of friends and/or relatives. The jungle drum becomes a paradigm through which orient my research on feedbacks. It is not unusual that, if a shop owner shows up during the prayer time and leaves right after to go back in his shop, the men will start talking of him and his shop. Then they will appreciate that he left the shop to show up at the mosque and will make comments on his work, his food, and maybe decide to ask their wives to buy from him that day. At the same time, the women in the female
department will fix their veils after the prayer and start talking about their kids, the school, the work, the weather, and finally they will think about where to go making purchase, and talk about this with the other women. I could never join the men’s conversations, because I was overhearing them from a hidden corner of their department, but I could easily join the women who were standing on the carpets and chatting. This is the way I discovered that the feedbacks can develop on two parallel lines and become part of a process started from both men and women, but ended almost always by women. On the one hand, the man (husband, father, brother) hears about a shop, knows the owner, decides to give his trust to him, and tells his wife, sister, and daughter, to buy there. On the other hand, the woman chats in the mosque or at school, or at home with her friends, receives comments on a shop and decides to go and buy there. If the owner will be worthy of her trust she will repeat this procedure and provide feedbacks for other friends. At the same time, if the food bought from the wife in the shop the husband suggested is “good”, he will spread the comment on the shop and feed this never-ending cycle.

Therefore, even though the actual food buying is usually performed by women, the men have an active part in the jungle drum phenomena and in the building of food seller reputation. However, the system of feedbacks is not only something that concerns the vis a vis relation with the seller. Sometimes my informants are used to buy food in big shops, where the confrontation with the seller is not direct and more than ever, they feel the need to have a sort of feedback or insurance on the food they are buying. In this case, the trust they have in the person who is providing feedbacks is a complete substitute of the direct contact with the seller. Yet, the feedback system is not something which belongs to the “real life” only, but can be analysed through the lens of the difference between the online and offline life.

5.3 The online feedbacks

During my fieldwork, I often wondered: ‘And what about those people who have not an established offline feedback system? ‘One Friday I was in the mosque in Kista, chatting with the women before Jumu‘ah. All the smartphones started ringing five minutes before noon, and they all had the Azhan Adhan as ringtone. After the praying time I asked them if they had set an alarm with that special ringtone, and how could they possibly have set it exactly at

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34 It is a congregational prayer (ṣalāt) that Muslims hold every Friday.
35 “Call for praying”.
the same moment (because I supposed that not all the times set in the different smartphones could be the same). Khadija, one of the women who was sitting near me, told me that they downloaded this application called Muslim Pro, which was synchronized with Stockholm praying times and reminded them when it was time to go at the mosque. I asked her: “Are there other applications for Muslims? Like something for fasting?’”. She smiled, took her phone and showed me two more applications, one called Ramadan App, which was set with Mecca times, and Scan Halal, an app which scans barcodes and finds out if there are unlawful ingredients in a product somebody is buying. I was stunned. I mean, I knew that internet is a good tool to provide information about food, but I did not think about how much technology was involved in the process of selection. Then I started asking to young women and men how they used the web tools when they needed to find a place where to buy food. Some of them told me that TripAdvisor was the first website where they used to look if they were travelling and they were in need to find a place where to eat halal. Others told me that there was this website called Zhabiah.com which had a sort of system of certification for the restaurants and the shops, and they felt more comfortable using it, even because of the name which gave them a sense of security. One day, I was talking with the students in the blue group of Kista Folkhögskola, when Samira told me about this website called Irhal.com, which was the best Islamic travel guide in the world according to her. I thought: “Maybe the little stamp that says ‘halal certified’ on the webpage of a shop is a way for the Muslim consumer to have a ‘second opinion’ on a place he/she wants to buy food in’. What I discovered is that, many times younger Muslims in Stockholm use technology to find a restaurant or a shop, which is recommended online by other Muslims. It was incredible for me to read all the comments and the reviews of certain places, and see people argue online as well as I saw them doing in the real life, in a square, right after food shopping.

The online space of interaction was indeed another “social magnet” inside the urban structure in an abstract way (because it indeed helped the consumer being oriented in within urban spaces), but at the same time outside the “actual life’. Besides, the online tools are not for feedbacks only. Around the half of my fieldwork I was collecting the questionnaires in the orange group in Kista, when one of the students started talking about this blog called halalköket.se, where Muslims can either find traditional Mediterranean, Middle Eastern and Asian recipes adapted to the ingredients that can be found in Sweden, or search for reviewed shops and restaurants that sell halal products only. The use of technology to find halal food could seem definitely obvious for a Swedish reader. Almost everybody in this Country has easy access to devices that connect to internet, so, my feeling of surprise could be interpreted as
inappropriate, since ‘It is also, of course, the duty of anthropologists to ensure that their
descriptions of other, non-Western cultures, should always be laudatory, and avoid negative
stereotyping of ‘savagery’ at all costs’ (Hallpike 2011:7). What the Swedish reader does not
know, is that I had never faced this phenomenon in my previous research; when I was in France,
or Germany, or Italy, mobile devices as well as laptops were of course part of everyday life,
but their use as actual tool for the research of halal food was not so common. Online feedback
system, as well as the use of blogs to share traditional recipes and new recipes which are the
result of a process of adaptation to Swedish kitchen became an important subtopic within my
research. Even though I wanted to remain focused on the ‘offline life’, I started observing how
and when people used devices to do food shopping. What I discovered is that web and
technology are not used only to google ‘halal shops’ or ‘halal restaurants’, but also to build a
parallel communication line between people who talk about food, a sort of digital extension of
‘jungle drum’ phenomenon. Many times during my ‘ethnography on foot’, I observed how the
providers used their mobile devices to agree on a meeting place to do food shopping, or to argue
about a shop or another via phone call.

One day I was on the train for Bredäng, thinking about a shop I wanted to visit, when I
heard this young woman sitting next to me speaking Urdu at her phone. Even though my
knowledge of Urdu is very limited to kebab activities (my boss and my colleagues in Bologna
kept talking to me in Urdu for two years. Learning something was a matter of survival), I could
understand she was talking to her mom and saying something about Bredäng Livs, the shop I
wanted to visit. She kept repeating “Rinkeby’, ‘Bredäng’, and then I became more interested
in her conversation. When she hanged up, I went sitting near her and tried to start a
conversation. I asked her: “Are you from Pakistan?’, and she replied: “Yes, how do you know?’.
I kept talking to her for the whole journey (it takes a while to go from T-centralen to Bredäng,
so I was plenty of time). I introduced myself, telling her how I understood she was from
Pakistan, and asking her if she could tell me what she was talking about with her mom. She
said that her mother was sick and sent her doing food shopping alone. Her mom sent her to
Bredäng Livs, because it was the place she used to go habitually, but Salma (this is the name
of the girl), wanted to go in Rinkeby, to a shop that had a very good feedback on Zhabiah.com
(that turned out to be J&D S********). She told me that she did not understand why her mother
used to go do far from home (they lived near Rinkeby Vârdcentral), to do food shopping, when
there was a shop so good near their house. I asked her: “Do you trust a website more than your
mom?’ . She kept quiet for a few seconds, then she looked and me and said that she trusted her

36 She kept repeating ‘ammi’ that is the Urdu word for ‘mom’.
mother’s opinion, but J&D S***** had four stars on five, while Bredäng Livs was not even on the website.

5.4 How the reliability of a food seller can be measured

Mayson owns a little shop called Salam Kurda in Husby. Around mid-March, I got her contact from a teacher of Kista Folkhögskola I emailed her and scheduled an interview. The shop is right in front of subway stop “Husby”, next to the Centrum. I entered the shop and asked about her to the cashier. She sent me to the back of the shop where Mayson and her husband have their offices. To reach the offices, one is required to walk through the shop’s big storage room, where all the food is conserved. I was fixing the recorder while walking, when I saw a bird. A living bird walking through the storage room. I started following it to see if there were more around, but Mayson came out of her office, inviting me in, so I could not see where it was going. The first thing I asked her after introducing myself was: “Did I just see a bird walking around?” Mayson smiled. When it came to the questions about why a customer should choose her shop instead of another, she told me that her meat was more expensive than some of her competitors, but still, she had customers who would not buy from others, not even for a cheaper price. She told me the story of how she moved to Sweden with her family when she was a child, started attending the mosque near her house, met her husband, married him, and started their own business. She told me how many of her customers grew up with her in the mosque and trusted her, not only because of their shared memories, but especially because they knew which kind of religious woman she was, how often she prayed, how concerned she was with respecting religious prescriptions (fasting, making charity, praying, etc…). Even though I met only male food sellers until that moment, I could see how the religious devotion of Mayson classified her at the same level of a male seller, giving her an importance within the chain of trust that was directly connected to her constant presence in the mosque during praying times. I started reflecting on how the seller is seen and judged as a devote Muslim. A couple of days after the interview with Mayson, I went to Skärholmen, since one of my informants in Kista told me about this shop near Skärholmen Centrum. There were indeed two halal shops close to subway stop. One was owned by a Tunisian guy, Faruq, the other one from an Armenian couple, Sabina and Ian. I entered the first shop, and I saw it was full of customers. It took a while to be able to talk to the butcher and to ask him if he was the owner, or an employee. He told me he was the owner, but had to time to talk to me, so I walked in the shop for a while, and then I left to visit
the other one. The Armenian shop was empty. Sabina was at the counter, chatting with her smartphone. Ian was at the meat department, cleaning a machine. I talked to them for a while, trying to avoid the question: “Why is your shop empty? It seems way cleaner than the other one and the prices are basically the same”. They seemed completely fine with the fact nobody was buying anything, so I thought that was simply a dead moment with no customers. I bought some minced meat to make hamburgers, and left the shop. I did not “leave” in a literal sense, but I sat in a corner observing the people passing by the Armenian shop and going to the Tunisian one. I took my bag, put away my diary and started stopping the people who were going out from the Tunisian shop, to ask them why they went there instead of the other one. I stopped five people in total. One woman told me her husband was a friend of Faruq, so it was completely normal for her to buy from that shop. Two women told me that they did not like the fact that Sabine was too uncovered (she was wearing jeans and a shirt), so they just did not like her. Another woman who was doing food shopping with her sister told me that Ian had no beard, so how could he possibly be a “real” Muslim? I went back to Rinkeby, wondering about that answer while I was sitting on the train. Then I called Rama, asking her if she had time to have a coffee with me and talk a little bit about what I had just witnessed. When we met, I told her what I saw, asking for her opinion. She told me she understood why people did not like the shop owned from those who did not look like “real Muslims”. If she could choose, she would have always chosen somebody with a reassuring aspect, in her case a seller who seemed clean and devote. I asked her: "What do you mean for 'devote'?", and she said:" Somebody who knows the rules of the Qur'an, that makes me believe he's really good in what he is doing, that behaves like a good Muslim not giving me stuff with pork inside, somebody who does not drink alcohol and that prays Allah for His mercy".

The honourable seller: Ali Ahmed

During my fieldwork I used to live in Märsta, next to Valsta Centrum. As many shopping centers in Sweden, it has a quite big Ica, then a Pressbyrån, a Vårdcentral and different shops (clothes, mobile phones, flowers, etc…). I walked through Valsta Centrum maybe a hundred times before I noticed that there was another floor downstairs. On this floor there is a halal shop. It seems completely impossible to notice the shop without sitting and observing people disappear downstairs and re-emerge after a while with shopping bags. The first time I went to the shop, I was surprised to see how many people were queueing, waiting to be served by the
butcher. It was like discovering a hidden treasure nobody could see from the surface. While I was queuing to reach the butcher and talk to him, I kept wondering about how people could possibly know how to find the shop, since there is nothing in the whole Centre indicating that there is a Muslim butcher downstairs. When my turn came, I told him I wanted to talk, so he asked me to wait for him to serve the last customer of the queue and then to follow him in the back of the shop.

Ali Ahmed is from Jordan. He moved to Sweden twelve years ago, and started his activity as butcher around 2007. He is not the owner of the whole activity, but a butcher who rented the meat stand and works independently from the rest of the shop. Since I was not prepared to interview him (I was at Valsta Centrum to do food shopping for myself), I asked him to schedule an interview for the week after and he agreed.

The following Wednesday I was sitting in his “office”, asking him to tell me about his work and his customers, especially how they could find him in that kind of basement he was working in. He told me that many of his customers know him because they saw him praying at Märska mosque, and others were siblings of his usual customers who lived far from Märska and used to order meat from him only. He showed me a list of customers from the north of Sweden, who used to drive to Märska to buy great quantities of halal meat solely from him. He calls the customers from the list, to make them come to Märska and buy the fresh meat.

*Akhlaq* and *bonne moralité* are then intimately connected, not only because they belong to the sphere concerning the honesty of the food seller, but also because they include the buyer within this moral system. In the next chapter, I will analyse how the reliability of the food seller intended as moral and ethical behaviour can be ‘measured’ through the verification of his level of piety and his devotion as good Muslim, thus analysing the importance of the mosque as a space where the seller is observed and tested.
Introduction to the chapter

If reputation is a matter of devotion, the mosque becomes one of the most important places where a food seller can prove his value as a good Muslim. Since Exploring the City (Hannerz: 1980), many scholars have dealt with the issue of ethnography and urban space, highlighting the importance of urban anthropology in the empirical study of migration, multiculturalism and transnationalism (Berg, Sigona: 2013). One of the aims of my research was indeed the identification of the "social magnets" (mosques, shops, squares, restaurants) where Muslim believers use to talk about, buy and consume food, framed in the study of urban space seen as a lens through which the “practice” can be read as something intimately connected to determined places.

6.1 Having a shop near a mosque

Warsame is the owner of Nabil Livs in Rinkeby. He was the first to talk about the feedback system within the mosques (there were one no more than five meters from the mosque to the shop), and about the reliability of the seller proportional to his level of piety. As a shop owner, he was very concerned about the fact that his shop was very close to one of Rinkeby Torget mosques, and that most of his customers were redirected from their friends after the praying time. I remember he told me that having a shop near a mosque is a fortune, since its position gave it a sort of "reliability point", like if the mosque aura was, in a certain way, impressed on his shop. I heard of him even when I was in Tensta, where a group of Somalian women were talking in the square opposite to Tensta Centrum. It was interesting for me to see how his reputation was spreading to different districts through the simple act of talking. He had no advertisement, no publicity, but everybody knew him. The mosque is indeed one of the first places where feedbacks are spread after praying time. The comments on the
shops become part of every day’s conversations among Muslim believers who meet and start chatting about ordinary topics, like the family, the work, the studies and the food. It is not unusual going out for food shopping right after Salat al-Zuhr\textsuperscript{37} and before, chatting in the ‘after praying moment’ in both male and female sections in the mosque. The space of the praying room becomes a place where sociality transcends religious beliefs and converges with food practices, as well as a shop, a square or a restaurant (e.g. Kista Garden, the halal restaurant within the Folkhögskola) can be. A shop and a restaurant are social magnets because they are the places where Muslims buy and eat food. A square is a place where they socialize before and after these activities, play with their kids and complain about one shop or one product they just bought.

Bergeaud-Blackler points out how the mosque is one of the most important places where food is discussed and advices on food behaviour are provided. As she states:

Dans les mosquées de France, les questions relatives à la consommation de nourriture et boisson, les manières de table, les rythmes alimentaires sont avec celles du mariage, de la sexualité et des façons de se vêtir parmi les plus souvent posées aux imams, en particulier par les fidèles nés ou scolarisés en France.

Within the mosques of France, the issues about the consumption of food and drinks, table manners, eating rhythms together with those of marriage, sexuality and dress code are the mostly asked questions to imams, especially for those believers born or educated in France.

The mosque seen as ‘social magnet’ is something that transcends the limits of the religious practice and becomes a place of interaction where the feedback system is at its peak. Squares, shops and restaurants as well are all part of the magnet within the urban structure, which act as the ‘drums’ that spread the sound.

\section*{6.2 The intimacy of the kitchen: where the veil is not on}

It was around Mid-February. I was on the bus for Rinkeby, when I saw this woman with a niqab and two huge blue eyes flashing in the middle of all that black. She was sitting with her husband and four kids, and then I thought: ‘I must follow her, discover where she is going’. I got out of the bus and started being after her and her husband. Two of the older kids left and she remained with the younger ones. They did not notice me, so I just waited for them stopping for a second to fix the bags on the stroller, and I approached her, introducing myself. Her husband started

\footnote{Noon Prayer.}
looking at me and smile. They were both proficient in English, so I had no communication problems; she told me they just finished doing food shopping in Kista and they were going back home, so I picked one of my cards from the log and left it to her, asking to call me if she was going out for food shopping again.

The morning after, around 8am I was still more than asleep. My phone started ringing, I woke up, while in my mind, I thought: “Who died?” On the other side of the phone I heard this super excited woman saying: “It’s me! I just got halal chicken from England! Come home to see my chicken!” In that moment “It’s me!” gave me no clue at all. I had to make up my mind before getting who I was talking to, then I got it. The kind light blue-eyed woman I met the day before was inviting me to her place to show me her last food purchase. She texted me her address in Rinkeby, so I ran to catch the first train to Stockholm and arrived to her house around 10am. I barely recognized her when she opened the door, and, if it weren’t for her eyes, I would have never guessed who she was. She looked completely different, while she was wearing a white large t-shirt, a long blue skirt and no veil at all, leaving her long hair loose. Her house surprised me even more. There was no furniture, nothing except a stove and a little cabinet in the kitchen, a huge refrigerator and some curtains and mattresses on the floor. She saw my surprised face and explained me that they were following the Prophet’s lifestyle. Since he had no furniture in his house and used to sleep on the floor, they just did the same thing. I entered in to her kitchen, and I saw there was a chair in the middle of the room, then she told me she borrowed it from her neighbour to not make me sit on the floor. I had no much time to prepare the questions for a semi-structured interview, so I simply let her talk about her life, occasionally trying to lead the discussion to food habits.

Maria is from Latvia. When she moved to Sweden, ten years ago, she met her husband Mammu, who is from Bangladesh. She converted to Islam one year later and married him. Maria told me that she had many problems with her family in Latvia when she told them about her conversion. All her siblings are Orthodox Christians, who were not happy at all with her conversion, but they accepted it after a few years (she thinks it was because of her four kids). After ten seconds of awkward silence, she moved to refrigerator, opened it and proudly showed me this frozen chicken with the stamp “halal England” (see fig. 5) on it. I asked her why she was buying meat from England, and she told me that her husband and she started looking online for the best halal certification organizations when they had the first kid, and this one came up as the best in Europe. She told me she was so happy about her decision to convert, because her husband was the sweetest man she ever met. Since they had four kids, she decided to not work and staying home to take care of her family, while Mammu was running his own typography.
in Rinkeby. Maria does not like going out alone. The week before we met she was on the train, going home from clothes shopping in Kista, while a man threw a plastic bottle on her yelling something about his disgust for a woman wearing a niqab. She told me it was not the first time this thing happened to her, so she tries to avoid outdoor activities without her husband or her friends. When it comes to food shopping, she orders the meat online when she finds special discounts, or goes to different shops between Rinkeby and Kista. To my question about how she selects the places to buy food, she told me that she goes where Mammu says, since he is the one who is pickier and knows the shops best, since he collaborates with many of them due to his job. When her husband is not with her, Maria helps herself picking allowed food only, with a little card her husband printed, which contains all the forbidden ingredients and the codes of the non-allowed additives often present in packed food (see fig.4). One thing Maria loves is organizing dinners with other families with kids. She told me that the month before, there were eighteen people in her living room, and her kids were so happy, because they could play with all their friends. She has a big family in Latvia too, so she is used to cook for many people, and loves the atmosphere she has in her kitchen when her friends are cooking with her, bringing new recipes she did not know, and learning revisited Latvian dishes she could realize with halal meat and spices.

Maria’s experience is a valid example of how the kitchen is the ultimate social magnet, the more protected and the more intimate place where Muslims aggregate through the shared practice of food consumption. This statement is important not only because reconnects to the issue of the protected environments and the anthropologist ethical behaviour (see Introduction), but also because represents the final process, the conclusion of the mechanism of providing, the last place where food stays after it has been bought and prepared through a mechanism of selection which has involved all the social processes above.
Chapter VII- The *julbord* near the praying room

Introduction to the chapter

The Muslim provider and his/her family in Stockholm deals with many issues that are the result of a process of hybridization of food habits. On the one hand, the category of halal seems to be a way to reconnect with a homeland where halal was not even a category at all and the recipes of traditional foods were transmitted through generations. On the other hand, “halal’ becomes a concept included in many other categories, like healthy, organic and “traditional’, intended as “traditional Swedish’ and not “traditional Somalian’, for example. There is a very small space between what is perceived as culinary hybridization, and what is the result of an imposition that comes from the non including halal within the category of Swedish food. To be more clear: within the food behaviour, a Muslim consumer in Stockholm has different ways to both preserve culinary traditions and adapt to the non-Muslim majority Country he/she is living in. On the one hand, the category of halal becomes extremely important to reconnect with a homeland far away, so, the preservation of traditional recipes which include halal ingredients only, is a way to reconnect to that home. On the other hand, the generational distance between current Muslim parents and their kids, the embodiment of new categories which belong to Swedish food systems, makes them rethink about food choices, including what is perceived as “good’ in Sweden.

7.1 “Why do you care about *godis*?*: *halal godis* and *halal ekologisk*.

When I was in Kista Folkhögskola, before the actual start of the official fieldwork, I was invited to the celebration for the end of the term, that ended up as an actual Julbord. I spent two hours making up *Norgesalen*\(^{38}\) with Fida, lighting candles and fixing the food on the tables. We had salmon, salad, potatoes, sausages, *köttbullar*, and glogg, lussekatter and *pepparkakor* for dessert. That would have seemed a regular Christmas table in a Swedish family, if it weren’t

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\(^{38}\) It’s Kista Folkhögskola’s Aula Magna.
for the fact that we were in a Muslim school, with Muslim people, and that all the foods and drinks were halal. A more careful observer would have noticed the red sausages, which recipe was not Swedish, but Moroccan, the Ethiopian *sambusa* mixed with potatoes and the *köttbullar* made with halal lamb meat only. That episode seemed weird and normal at the same time. We were having Christmas meals in a room made up with silk tablecloths and perfumed candles, and this made me think about how food traditions can be resilient and still adapt to a context different from the one they were created. And yet, I could not grasp the real meaning of it until I started the interviews for the thesis. The category of ‘Christmas food’ is Swedish, the category of ‘organic food’ is Swedish. When I interviewed Viola in Kista, she told me she would like to find a shop that sells both halal and ekologisk, to avoid ordering meat from Latvia (since it can be really expensive). I wrote the questionnaires right after that interview, keeping in my mind what she said about organic food. She is Swedish, so the category of “organic” is well established in her mind due to the huge tendency of Swedes to prefer organic and healthy foods. I started asking to myself: “What about those Muslims who are not Swedish? Will they perceive ‘organic’ the same way Viola does? A couple of weeks later, in Rinkeby, I had just finished my questionnaires stuff, when the students started talking about their principles of food selection. As I previously stated, money is a big issue, but still, it is not all. In the open questions section there was this one: “Do you eat halal organic food? And Why?”. Many people answered: ‘No, I cannot find it’. Others wrote: “No, it’s too expensive’. Others wrote: “Yes, because it’s healthy, but expensive’. These different shades went a bit lost during the codification of the answers, so I decided to keep focusing especially on that question, to better understand how the category of *halal*, that is not originally Swedish, and the more Swedish category of *ekologisk* could be mixed together. In *Cooking, Food Consumption, and Globalization: Ethical Considerations*, Greg deSaint Maurice analyzes the Globalization’s impact on food production, marketing, distribution, preparation, and consumption abounds with ethical implications, and reconnects to the issue of unequal food distribution among migrants (deSaint Maurice 2014:2), and reconnects to the work of Elaine Power which highlights how household income is the most important factor influencing the food that individuals and families eat. Income has both direct and indirect effects on the food people eat. Income affects eating practices directly either by putting economic limits on what a household can afford to eat or by allowing the ease and freedom to eat whatever is desired. It affects eating practices indirectly because of its influence on our tastes, preferences, and desires, which appear to be individual but are shaped by class positions shared with others. This entry considers the impact of income, and especially inadequate income, on food practices in rich,
developed countries and the particular case of food insecurity, where financial resources are inadequate for a safe, healthy diet that meets personal, cultural, and religious preferences. Besides, she analyzes Bourdieu's *Distinction* to understand the relationship between income, class and food practices (Power 2014:2). This theoretical background becomes extremely useful to understand how the category of *ekologisk* entered in contact with halal Swedish consumption. Again it is pebble analyze how the unequal distribution of resources do not allow many halal consumers to buy organic and healthy, but is a specific characteristic of those who have the possibility to afford it.

One particular mention goes to the candies. Before I moved to Sweden, I had no idea of the ‘culture of *godis*’ in this Country. I was not used to see candies sold everywhere, nor I was used to eat them so often. Once I found myself talking to a student in Kista who has five kids. She told me her children would eat the candies they see everywhere, because they saw other kids doing it, so, she had to find a way to make her kids happy giving them candies, but at the same time give them something that was still halal.39 Kids become then the bridge between the food traditions of their parents and Swedish food habits. As well as it happened for the *ekologisk* category, which was seen as a way to take care of the kids giving them something healthy, the halal *godis* category represents one of the most important forms of culinary hybridization among Swedish Muslims.

7.2 The home left behind

Food and place are linked at a basic level, for food must be produced somewhere, and consumed in the same place, or circulated for consumption elsewhere. However, this basic process becomes entangled in judgments about whether it was produced in the appropriate location and manner, if it is being consumed in a culturally sanctioned way, and whether the ‘right’ inhabitants of a place are consuming it (Sternsdorff, Cisterna 2014:1).

One day I was on the train for Märsta when I met Aaliya, a Muslim girl from Malaysia. She was sitting near me while I was looking at the pictures I just took in Skärholmen, She stared at me for a while, and then she asked: ‘I am sorry, are you a Muslim?’ I looked at her and said no, since I was only a student of anthropology who was doing research on halal food. She seemed extremely surprised. One has some difficulties sometimes trying to understand why an Italian

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39 Many times candies have gelatin, made from pork fat.
student comes to Sweden to make questions about halal food, so I was used to that kind of reaction. Besides, it was the first time somebody actually approached me on the train and not the other way round.

Aaliya’s family moved to Sweden in 2006. Thus she identify herself as Swedish she thinks about her as Malaysian too, and takes in to extreme consideration her mixed culinary heritage. Aaliya loves tuna *sambusa* as well as köttbullar, but she does not tell her mother when she eats those, since they are technically ‘unallowed’. Her mother, as she told me, become more and more concerned about food the moment they moved to Sweden. Thus in Malaysia halal food is not an elitist way of consuming food, but is part of the food economy ‘As well as water and air’, the contact with a food system which was not ‘halal shaped’, made her being more attached to the category of halal as a way to be reconnected to her homeland.

Bergeaud-Blackler and Bonne (2006) described how eating halal is part of a Muslim or Islamic identity among Muslim emigrants. In general, identity may be a critical issue where individuals or communities feel a threat to significant cultural symbols (Burton, 2004). Most researchers hold that Islam refers to a religious identity, especially in situations of ‘foreignness’. Consequently, the extent to which individuals consider themselves as Muslim could influence the decision-making process concerning halal meat. In Western cultures, meaning more individualistic contexts, people perceive themselves as autonomous and independent of the group, and so prioritise personal goals over collective goals. This leads to greater application of personal attitudes versus social norms in behavioural decisions. On the other hand in Islamic cultures, which would be more collectivistic, people tend to perceive themselves as interdependent with their group and are more likely to strive for in-group rather than personal goals. As they state:

> The majority of five million Muslims who live in France are Maghribi immigrants from Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia; they belong to the Maliki branch of Sunni Islam. Maghribi women’s daily needs and particular requirements for their cuisine are demonstrably more important than paying great attention to the rumours about false *halal* meat. They are concerned with other matters, including managing their household food budgets, being able to reproduce traditional dishes in a new Country, and adapting dishes to the new health and taste demands of younger family members (Bergeaud-Blackler2005: 112).

Their quotation reveals that the Muslim immigrants in France are surely concerned about the reliability of the products they are buying, but at the same time, they struggle to manage their household incomes, as well as to preserve their culinary traditions. So going back to our first question: ‘When we eat, what is evaluable and what is not?’, we see how the focus shifts from an absolute concept of ‘halal’ to a broader range of meanings attributed to food, where
‘halal’ is a category subject to different interpretations. What is ‘good to eat’ for a Muslim is not only halal (here restricted to the meaning of ‘allowed’), but should be affordable, tasty, healthy and recall the homeland, with every bite.

This theoretical framework is easily applicable to the case of Aaliya’s family. Thus on, the one hand the traditional recipes prepared with halal food could have seemed a characteristic of the previous generation, on the other hand, these recipes become part of a process of self-formation and identification as Muslim who understands both Swedish and non-Swedish food categories and uses food as key to decode processes of hybridization.
Concluding remarks

When I was studying for my first exams at bachelor degree, I had a rule: “If you don’t understand why the author gave that title to the book, read it again’. At this point, I really hope the reader has a clear idea of why I chose this title, but, in case there are still doubts, I will remind him/her the story of Fida and her steak.

Fida is a working woman, a mom, a wife, a Muslim, a provider and a consumer. She lives in Stockholm and goes out for food shopping every weekend. Sometimes her husband goes with her, and they bring their daughters. Fida is extremely meticulous, because she thinks that the spiritual care of loved ones is as important as their healthcare, so she does not buy ambiguous foods, but she knows that some of her friends go in big stores and buy köttbullar. Fida does not judge them, but she knows there are people who do it because köttbullar are very cheap. She wishes the prices of halal food to be lower. Fida has two or three shops she prefers, but she does not always have time to go there, so she picks a shop near her house that sells halal food, and gives her trust to a person who seems to be reliable. And she believes he is reliable because she has seen him praying at the mosque many times. When she does not cook at home, Fida goes out and meets her friends at the restaurant, and talks about her family in Malaysia. She likes to reproduce some Malaysian recipes, but she also likes Swedish dishes that she prepares with halal foods only. Fida is pregnant. According to her way to perceive halal food, she decides where to eat, what to eat, how to eat. Her decision is based on different factors: first, she needs to eat. Then, she needs to eat something good for her and for her baby. “Good’ for her means halal. Halal for her means ritually slaughtered, consecrated, not too expensive and healthy. To fulfil all these requests, Fida asks for advices to her friend sitting near her in the mosque, who tells her that the restaurant at Kista Galleria is really good and has halal food only. She checks online, finds the place and reads the reviews. Fida is about to go at the restaurant to have lunch, since she is extremely hungry. She meets an Italian girl who is doing research on halal food in her workplace and invites her to have lunch together. They go at the restaurant and she looks at the menu. She wants a steak. Fida stares in front of the stand. She orders her food, and waits for it while she is talking to the Italian girl. The moment she sits and eats her steak, she knows she is doing the right thing.

My aim has been to understand what Fida could feel the moment she was eating her steak, what meaning it had for her. Understand how a halal consumer deals with the need of finding food that is both allowed by his/her religion, but is also “good’, where good means available, affordable, tasty and healthy. Going back to my questions, halal consumers in Stockholm deal
with halal food in a contradictory way. They perceive the concept of halal differently and connect all their food behaviours to this concept. Within their process of food selection, they decide what is halal and what is not, and deal with the fact that their concept of halal could not meet the actual food offer in Sweden, as well as their possibility to afford it. Once this first contradiction is managed, other factors intervene in the food selection. The consumer must find somebody who is reliable and trustworthy, somebody that can be part of the “chain of responsibility” (see Bergeaud-Blackler 2005). To find this person, the consumer adds more rings to this chain, involving people from his/her group which can give him/her advices, and, at the same time, he/she build his/her own feedback system, which has the power to include or remove a seller from the chain. To find out how the feedback system works, I followed the consumer in the places where the feedbacks are spread, that are not necessarily places where people eat or buy food. These places become fundamental for those who are in charge to provide for the family, who in Stockholm are mostly women. This means that women and men have different roles and different powers within the Muslim family in Stockholm.

Once I had identified the relations of power and the role of the provider, I could analyse in depth how this provider behaves, who the provider trusts and why. Besides, I took in to consideration the background of the provider and his/her family, in order to understand how much the pre-existing background of the halal consumer affected his/her way to behave in a food system, discovering that the food categories of a Muslim in Stockholm are in a constant process of re-negotiations.

The truth is that, through the years, I rather gave up trying to conclude a thesis on halal food. It becomes more and more difficult to take a picture of Muslims food behaviour in Europe, and this is not only because of never-ending migration processes, or the actual evolution of halal food market, but also because of a constant process of redefining categories (where ‘good’ means everting and nothing) Muslims in Europe are going through, even in this moment, while I'm writing.

I had no good metaphor in my mind to explain the constant mobility and fluidity within halal selection and consumption, until I moved to Sweden and I saw the northern lights for the first time. As northern lights are constantly moving, the food behaviour is moving as well. We can take pictures of people buying, cooking and eating, as well as we can take pictures of the lights, but there is no point in crystallizing them in one image. Their beauty lies in the movement.
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Attachments

A.1 Pictures

![Map of Stockholm and surroundings]

Fig. 1
Fig. 2

Fig. 3
Från kalv (ej Halal Zabhiha):
Löpe, Ostlöpe, Rennet,
Rennin

Innehåller alkohol:
Rusdryck, Likör, Vin, Sprit,
Cognac, Öl, Brandy

Övriga:
Rommarsipan
Romrusin
Glycine, Leucine
Spermacetin
Glycerol
Polyoxitylen
(20)sorbitantrioleat
Mono/di-glyceride

Fig. 4

Fig. 5
Halal and good quality (*ekologisk*)

Fig. 6

Fig. 7
Fig. 8

Fig. 9
Fig. 11

Fig. 12
A.2 Theoretical/methodological attachments

What is halal food?

‘There is not upon those who believe and do righteousness [any] blame concerning what they have eaten [in the past] if they [now] fear Allah and believe and do righteous deeds, and then fear Allah and believe, and then fear Allah and do good; and Allah loves the doers of good.’ (Qur'an 5:93)

For Muslims, eating is an action that must be carried out according to the grace of God, just like religious rituals and prayers, so all the things that are consumed must be those that are allowed. Halal food is part of religious experience for a Muslim, and observing dietary rules is also something that transcends geographical and ethnic borders.

In attempting to understand Islamic dietary prescriptions, we must first realise that they cannot be reduced to a formalistic, legal level. Being religious rules, they are integrated within a global religious perspective, comprehending the entire life of the halal consumer. Dietary prescriptions do not concern simply the material approach to food, but also relate to other fundamental elements, such as faith, prayer, piety and fear of God.

The basic rules of halal are written in the Qur'an, as revealed by God to Muhammad, for all believers. These rules are integrated with further norms, derived from the different schools of law. The Qur'an assigns great importance to the act of eating: food is a gift of God, one of the proofs of God's mercy. Every human has the right to receive the portion of food necessary for survival, and poverty or lack of food are not God's fault, but the result of man's actions (Benkheira 2007:34).

There are five terms describing which foods are forbidden and which are allowed for a Muslim:

1) Halal means ‘allowed and permitted’. The term concerns not only meat, but also other foods, cosmetics and personal care products. The meaning can also be expanded to refer to principles of interaction within the community of Muslim believers.
2) Haram means ‘forbidden’, the opposite of halal.
3) Mushthabihah refers to something ‘ambiguous and questionable’, determined by the inclusion of food ingredients that are not clearly halal.
4) Makruh is something which is not clearly haram, but still considered unpleasant for Muslims.
5) Dhabiha is a term often used to refer to meat from animals slaughtered by non-Muslims, but still by a ‘people of the book’ (Ahl al-Kitab) (Riaz M. N., Chaudry M. M
There are also eleven principles defining how to behave regarding halal and haram foods, to be applied to the selection of all foods consumed by a Muslim believer.

The foods specified by the Qur'anic verses as not halal are:

- Pork
- Blood
- Alcohol
- Animals killed without the consecration Allah
- Animals slaughtered in the name of anyone but Allah
- Carcasses of dead animals
- Animals that died in non-halal ways or were not healthy before slaughter.

Ritual, or dabihah slaughter, is the prescribed method for all animals excluding fish and most sea-life. The method consists of a swift, deep cut to the throat with a sharp knife, cutting the jugular veins and both carotid arteries but leaving the spinal cord intact. The objective of the technique is to effectively drain the body of the animal's blood, resulting in more hygienic meat (Riaz M. N., Chaudry M. M 2004:8).

The dietary prescriptions for Sunni and Shia Muslims differ in the approaches to foods such as shrimp, crabs and insects, while maintaining the same rules about pork, alcohol and ritual slaughter. Many aspects are common to Jewish kosher rules. Further historical study of the schism within Islam would be useful to better understanding of the differences between Sunni and Shia, but from the nutritional point of view, any divergences seem more related to issues concerning the reliability of food sellers, rather than true differences in diet. Indeed a more productive approach to study, with relevance to the contemporary era, would be to more deeply examine the divergence and parallelism of Muslim experiences in Europe, rather than concentrating on experiences in the era ‘after death of the Prophet’.
Questionnaire: Food selection and consumption of students of Kista Folkhögskola

Objective: To understand the mechanism of halal food selection and consumption of Muslim believers in Stockholm County and verify the three hypotheses below.

Hypotheses:

- 1: The Muslims within Stockholm County are halal food consumers.
- 2: Halal consumers have a relation of trust with the food seller.
- 3: Halal consumers receive external feedbacks on the places where to buy food.

Design: Cross-sectional survey of eating habits of students belonging to a Muslim background school.

Setting: Kista Folkhögskola

Subjects: One hundred Folkhögskola and SFI students, two teachers.

Interventions: A self-administered questionnaire comprising of three major sections: (1) Preliminary information on gender, age, religion and homeland; (2) Multiple choice questions on family, food providing and food choices; (3) open questions on feedbacks, seller preferences and social interaction in the shops.

Results: The 88, 7% of people of the sample who live in Stockholm County are frequent halal food consumers. There is a correlation between people living in Stockholm County, Muslims and consumption of halal food. We cannot say that they are all halal food consumer, but the test result says that if you are a Muslim living in Stockholm County it is very probable you are a frequent halal food consumer. The 74, 7% of halal food consumers in Stockholm County in this sample has a relation of trust with the food seller. As in the first hypothesis, we can see that not all the Muslims in Stockholm have this relation of trust, but if you are Muslim and live in Stockholm is very probable you have it. The 29, 9% of the sample receives external feedbacks from friends, the 39, 1% has feedbacks from the people in the mosque and the 14, 9% gets advices from the family. As result, the 83, 9% of the sample declared to receive external feedbacks about the places where to buy halal food. So, if you are a Muslim and live in Stockholm County, is again, very probable that you receive external feedbacks.

Conclusions: This test aimed to use the quantitative and qualititative data in a more functional way. Through the verification of the three hypotheses, I could state that the consumption of halal food is a common trait of Stockholm Muslims and that the relation of trust with the seller is a dominant idea within the act of buying. Finally, I could prove that the system of feedback
is a successful theory and that the different sources are relevant in the final process of food selection.

**Control Group: The impact on eating habits of temporary translocation from a Mediterranean to a Northern European environment**

**Objective:** To assess the effect of temporary translocation from a Mediterranean to a Northern European environment on the eating habits of a group of foreign students.

**Design:** Cross-sectional survey of eating habits before and after moving from Greece to Glasgow, Scotland.

**Setting:** University of Glasgow.

**Subjects:** Eighty post-graduate Greek students.

**Interventions:** A self-administered questionnaire comprising of three major sections: (1) general eating habits; (2) frequency of eating selected food items; (3) opinion of food availability in Glasgow.

**Results:** After moving to Glasgow, significant decreases were reported in the frequency of consuming fresh fruit, raw vegetables, fish, legumes, meat, poultry and fresh fruit juice. The frequency of eating biscuits, savoury snacks, soft/fizzy drinks, alcoholic drinks and mayonnaise, dips and sauces increased. The estimated median daily consumption of fruit and vegetables decreased from 363 g in Greece to just 124 g in Glasgow, well below the Scottish and WHO dietary target of 400 g/day. The main perceived barriers to maintaining customary eating habits were the price of food, the lack of familiar tastes, the greater availability of convenience food and the limited variety of food available in Glasgow, when compared to Greece.

**Conclusions:** These findings highlight the difficulties that migrant populations face in retaining traditional, often healthier, eating habits when migrating to a foreign country. Barriers of high cost, limited availability and poor quality of familiar foods, need to be addressed in order for migrants to maintain their customary eating patterns. Furthermore, these barriers need to be addressed before nutritionists can expect to see the widespread adoption of the Mediterranean diet by Western populations less familiar with this eating pattern (Papadaki, Scott:2014).

**A. 3 Interviews quotes**
'Sometimes we would like to buy halal *ekologisk* meat for the kids, but it's too expensive, because you have to order it from Latvia or buy the Australian one. My family is under the care of social services, so, many times we buy big packs of meat at the supermarket, without checking if it's halal or not. We just check if there is pork inside. If we are too picky we can buy halal *ekologisk* food for one week, and then starve for the rest of the month. Sometimes the wallet decides’. (Fatima, Rinkeby)

‘You have no idea how many people I know that buy *köttbullar* at W****s or L**l. They don't care to check if there is pork inside, because the meatballs are so cheap... It's so cheap, what else can they do?’ (Kaysa, Kista )

‘My customers come to my shop because they have seen me praying at the mosque since I was eight. They know I am a good Muslim, they know I would never sell them something not halal’ (Mayson, Salam Kurda, Husby)

‘When school is over I go with my friends to Kista G****n or Nabil Livs, in Rinkeby. I try to not go to M******r, if I can help it. But I do go. My husband works and I have to go there. That’s the way it is: the women have to buy the food’. (Samira, Kista)

‘When I was in Malaysia the men used to buy the food for the family, but here I mostly feel responsible for my husband and kids, because for me food is something extremely connected to spirituality. If I eat something is not halal, I feel it and I get so sick that I have to throw up.’ (Fida, Kista Galleria)

‘Many of my customers come here because somebody in the mosque told them I have good halal meat. It's a very good thing for me having a shop five meters from a mosque’ (Warsame, Nabil Livs, Rinkeby)
‘When we find a new shop that has good halal food, we start tell to our friends what we found. In Sweden we call it <<the jungle drum>>, that means you spread a voice that resounds like the sound of the animals in the jungle’. (Viola, Kista)

‘My mom has become so much religious since we moved to Sweden. In Malaysia she was religious and careful about food, of course, but since we are here, she has become so attached to halal food; all is about halal food now’ (AAliya, somewhere on the train for Märsta)
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