The market hall revisited

Cultures of consumption in urban food retail during the long twentieth century

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At the Faculty of Arts and Science at Linköpings universitet, research and doctoral studies are carried out within broad problem areas. Research is organized in interdisciplinary research environments and doctoral studies mainly in graduate schools. Jointly, they publish the series Linköping Studies in Arts and Science. This thesis comes from the Department of Culture Studies (Tema Q) at the Department for Studies of Social Change and Culture (ISAK).

At the Department of Culture Studies (Tema kultur och samhälle, Tema Q), culture is studied as a dynamic field of practices, including agency as well as structure, and cultural products as well as the way they are produced, consumed, communicated and used. Tema Q is part of the larger Department for Studies of Social Change and Culture (ISAK).

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Stockholm, November 2009
Introduction

Purpose and research questions
Every consumption space has its own logic. To enter a market hall in the beginning of the twenty-first century entails expectations of certain comportments rather than others. Vendors and consumers enact a form of market hall sociability, a form of socialization connected to a web of expectations and obligations. What you are supposed to say and do in a market hall promotes a specific sociality among the vendors and the consumers. If consumption spaces cater to certain sensibilities and tastes, this is in no way unintended or arbitrary. Instead it is a story of inclusion and exclusion, a story about the logic of a specific spatial setting with its social and cultural codes.

If we are to understand how the foodscapes of today’s cities evolved, the paths of regulation and control taken by authorities are of central importance. However, we also need to look at how the market for the retail and distribution of the cities’ food provisioning developed over time, to examine the spatial expressions of the many forms of urban food dis-

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In other words, we need to explore the institutional arrangements of food distribution in the city.

This is a study of the consumption spaces engendered by the market hall system in Stockholm. More specifically, it is a study of how the links between production, distribution, and consumption of food have been organized in time and space over the past hundred and fifty years. On one hand, it is a story about food distribution in Stockholm. On the other hand, it also explores how the cultures of consumption have evolved in this context. The time period roughly corresponds to the long twentieth century described by economic historian Giovanni Arrighi, which will serve as a backdrop to this study. As for the spatial dimension, this story takes the market hall as its focal point. The market hall was chosen because it offers an instructive example of the shifting mores and historical trends regarding food production, distribution, and management, as well as the overall cultures of consumption.

The market hall has been shaped by its history, and is shaped by the present social and cultural landscape it is situated in. To explore the formation of this particular spatial setting, the market hall, and trace how it has changed since the 1870s up to the present, different methods and different materials have been deployed. The first part of the investigation focuses on the period from 1863-1933, and is mainly based on archival material. The consumer in this part of the investigation remains an obscure persona, always illusive to define. In this period, the predominant view of the authorities was that the consumer needed always to be instructed and educated in order to be able to properly navigate the new consumption landscapes that were imagined and planned by an administrative apparatus, the Stockholm City Council.

4. The term ‘market hall’ in Swedish is ‘saluhall’. This does not readily translate into English. Sometimes the terms ‘public market’, ‘covered market’ and ‘food hall’ are used instead. I have chosen to use ‘market hall’ owing to the seminal work on market halls in Great Britain, See Schmiechen, J. A. & Carls, K., *The British market hall.* What a market hall is and what counts as a market hall will be explored in the course of the dissertation.
5. The year 1863 was chosen because this is the first year the Stockholm City Council reports were published in printed form. During the 1860s, there were some discussions about a market hall system for Stockholm, but it was not until 1873 that a market hall was first constructed. The year 1933 was chosen because in this year the first market hall devoted entirely to wholesale was inaugurated. This marks a change in the focus and scope of the market halls in Stockholm.
To study the market hall during the second part of the investigation, 1933-1973, is a question of studying what Axel calls the shadows of the “non-eventful”. The ambitious, all-encompassing market hall project of the first period had receded into near oblivion. Instead, a very different vision had emerged, where the city officials were responsible for managing the wholesale side of the city food provisioning, but where the retail aspects were left to other actors. To understand why the idea of the retail market hall diminished in importance, it is instructive to look at what turned out to be its replacement, a system of private and cooperative retail stores located all over Stockholm. The second part is thus based on existing literature about the retail revolution, the self-service stores, and the reformulation of the retail landscape, rather than just the market halls themselves.

A critical component of this study is the fieldwork conducted in the three market halls in Stockholm from September 2005 to August 2006. The fieldwork enables a hands-on study of consumption practices in the market halls of the early twenty-first century, the way inclusion and exclusion works, as well as how cultural capital is acquired and distinctions made. In addition, the period 1973 to 2005 was examined with the help of archival material and existing literature. The archival material provided a means to situate the fieldwork in a social and cultural context.

Production, distribution and consumption take place within historically, culturally, and socially situated frames of reference. The constant interaction between the cultural interpretations and the material foundations makes it impossible to distinguish what are discursive practices and what are material predispositions. The market hall can be interpreted as an economic phenomenon, a distribution format, but it is also embedded in a mental framework imbued with social and cultural values. The periodization departs from the empirical material investigated, where the archival sources guided the initial mapping out. That a story of other forms of retail would have generated a somewhat different periodization, as would another geographical scope, is hardly surprising. It merely reflects the fact that any periodization to some extent is arbitrary, and depends on the focus of the study at hand. Here it is the market halls in

6. The year 1973 is chosen as it is commonly used to mark the end of the golden years of post-war growth, with the oil crisis looming. Of course, it is impossible to pinpoint any exact years for this periodization. But it reflects an overall narrative of economic growth and expansion, which influences the historical development of the market hall. As mentioned before, this narrative draws on Arrighi.

Stockholm that were the focal point. Still, the development of the market hall is largely in line with the overall Swedish development of the retail landscape.

The main question in this study is how the market hall was recoded over the hundred fifty years investigated. The relevance of this question lies in what this can tell us about urban food retail and the associated cultures of consumption. In this recoding process, there is a movement from production, to distribution, and finally to consumption. The parts of the relationship between production, distribution, and consumption that were the most relevant evolved as time went on. In the first period from 1863 to 1933, the focus was on the production aspects. In the second period from 1933 to 1973, distribution took the foreground. In the third period from 1973 to 2006, consumption and the shopping experience were paramount.

The movement from production to distribution and then consumption is mirrored in a number of concepts, which reappear over the entire period investigated. The meaning ascribed to them, however, changes between the first, second, and third periods. The concepts are seen as processes in time: the same concepts reappear, but their meanings and their uses shift. Some concepts decline in importance, while some gain, but the process is more of a continuum, with parallel interpretations of the concepts living side by side, even after the meaning of a concept has started to shift. The over-arching concept is that of Quality. How is quality perceived and negotiated? What values are ascribed to quality? To explore the concept of quality, two companion concepts, Rationality and Authenticity, will be explored in relation to the market hall and the retail landscape in which it has evolved.

The origins of the Swedish market halls

Buildings of the basilica type, along with all sorts of food sheds, permanent food stalls, and fish markets, have indeed been used for the sale of provisions for a long time in urban areas. To pinpoint the exact date when it is appropriate to talk of a market hall in the Swedish context may be difficult. Instead the focus will be on the new context of increased urbanization and industrialization which altered the scale of the problem of urban food supply. This is the stand taken by Schmiechen and Carls in their groundbreaking work on the British market hall. They claim that the idea

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8. The actual word “market hall”, “saluhall” in Swedish was first noted in 1865, when it was used to describe international circumstances. See Ordbok över svenska språket. S. Samordig, H. 254-258.
of buying the majority of their food provisioning in a market hall was a foreign idea to most urban dwellers in Britain in the 1830s. Fifty years later this became commonplace. The industrial and urban development in Sweden was much slower in comparison, which explains why the boom in market hall construction occurred much later. However, many of the fundamental features of the British history also hold true in the Swedish scenario, even if there are important differences as well.

Between the 1870s and the 1950s, market halls were built in over thirty towns in Sweden. This time period also corresponds to a groundbreaking period in Swedish society, during which it was transformed from a poor agrarian country to a successful industrial nation. The transition was rapid. As an example, it is worth mentioning that Sweden had a production growth of 3.3 percent from 1890 to 1910 and the GDP increased dramatically during the same period. Small networks of business people took advantage of this growth, as well as the relative stability and predictability of the business climate, to expand business and trade in particular.

The spectacular economic and industrial expansion was mirrored in a similar expansion of the Swedish market halls. The geographical diffusion of the market halls generally followed the patterns of industrial and commercial development in Sweden. We see that market halls were constructed in much the same areas that experienced the most intensive growth and/or were the most densely populated. In these areas, we also find transportation infrastructure in the forms of waterways and ports, railways, and roads. There is a direct correlation between the expansion of market halls and the promotion by active agricultural societies of new practices more adapted to modern food production and consumption patterns. If we look at the location of the market halls at the town level, we find that they were frequently constructed in the center of the town, next to the traditional open air markets, with the intent of completely replacing the open air markets.

The main problem for municipalities and towns in Sweden was to solve the challenges of food distribution in a satisfactory manner. The old open air markets were seen as problematic, and the market hall was regarded as the solution to this conundrum. The issue was subject to long debates, and committees were also appointed in towns that eventu-

ally never did opt for either public or private halls. The positive regard for market halls continued into the 1920s.

In 1927, the first signs of a reversal of the positive view of the market hall received attention in the Journal of Swedish Towns and Municipalities (Svenska stadsförbundets tidskrift. Organ för Sveriges städer, köpingar & municipalensamhällen). Up until then, the journal had reported rather uncritically of the progressive market hall projects around Sweden. A couple of years later, the journal reported that public responsibility and action were unnecessary, and, if left to itself, private enterprise would solve the issue. The journal also pointed to the fact that the occupancy rate in market halls always declined after a while, when private and cooperative stores drove the market halls out of business. Modern stores were clearly superior to the outmoded market halls, the journal concluded. By 1957, the market hall was declared unhygienic and ill-suited to the demands of the modern consumer, who had become accustomed to decentralized distribution formats such as the pervasive self-service, all-purpose stores now established almost everywhere.\(^\text{12}\)

During what is here defined as the period of decline for the market hall, from 1933 to 1973, market halls were still constructed in five new towns. Five towns decided to build a second market hall, and Stockholm replaced the old Hötorget market hall with a brand new one. In comparison, approximately fifty market halls had been built during the previous period of 1863 to 1933. By 1933, the meaning of the market hall had changed, however. The existing market halls were rundown and in need of repair. In fact, market halls were already being shut down as early as in 1914, when one smaller market hall was closed down in Stockholm. From this time, a few market halls were closed every decade, but new ones were being built in greater numbers. The worst decade for the market halls was the 1960s, when the majority of all the market halls disappeared in the wake of the urban renewal of the town centers. The development in Stockholm was somewhat different from the rest of the country. In the capital, the retail market halls lost ground at around the same time as the focus shifted towards wholesale markets.

A number of market halls have been opened in various places in Sweden from the 1970s, and there are continuous discussions on opening new market halls in different towns, generally as part of an urban renewal project. In addition, the etiquette “market hall” is used in a wider sense,

to infer added value to a supermarket. This is the case with the department store NK in Stockholm, where the ICA supermarket is in fact called the NK market hall in advertisement campaigns. Another example is the department store Åhléns City, where the Hemköp store is also referred to as a “market hall”.

Why Stockholm?

Stockholm in many respects stands out in the Swedish context, and there are a number of factors that contribute to making it a particularly edifying case. First of all, Stockholm was, and continues to be, the biggest city in Sweden, which means that it was most exposed to the problems of adequate provisioning. The population growth in Stockholm was important already at the beginning of the period studied. In 1890, only 5.3 percent of the total population lived in the capital. By 1910, this had risen to 7.4 percent of the total population in Sweden. If the surrounding hinterlands are included, as much as 20 percent of the Swedish population was living in the Stockholm region by this time.13

Secondly, Stockholm is also the capital. This usually means that a city retains most of the administrative functions in a country. In the case of Stockholm, the city has historically been prone to growth and expansion, and trade was one of the most important aspects behind the sensational expansion around the turn of the century 1900. The expansion of trade and industry in the late nineteenth century lead to an improved infrastructure not only in the capital, but also across the country. However, the capital was a forerunner in the field of trade, which makes it an interesting case when considering the development of the food retail system.14

Thirdly, there was a widespread debate among the contemporary decision makers in nineteenth century Stockholm over how the city was not keeping up with the modern civilized world it so wanted to be part of. There was an importation of ideas from other European cities to the Stockholm context. The impulses and influences from the international examples can be found in many documents, from accounts of study tours undertaken by different officials, to influences in architecture, and even more so in the regulations and the actual physical and legal structure of the urban food supply. Regulations emerged from a combination of public and private interests. It is in these alliances that we can trace the roots of the subsequent structure of the Swedish food industry, with its rapid

modernization and uniform rationalizations which affected the production, distribution, and sales conditions.\textsuperscript{15}

The rapid modernization process of Sweden has been observed by several scholars, among them Alan Pred, who in his \textit{Recognizing European Modernities} calls it “an extreme case” of modernity.\textsuperscript{16} This particularity of the Swedish example may in part explain some of the developments in Sweden, such as the rapid transition to self-service, with its standardized food supply nearly presented in standardized packages. Like a well-oiled modernity machine, Sweden and its capital soared into the future.

Stockholm in the beginning of the twenty-first century is still trying to keep up with international trends, and aspires to being part of the international network of fashionable cities. Stockholm also hosts a number of renowned restaurants. The culinary confidence of the Stockholm public may reasonably be expected to have risen, with a concentration of gastronomic snobs, or foodies, living in the capital.

Theoretical perspectives

In order to capture the spatial dimension of food distribution and the cultures of consumption linked to it in the example of the market hall, this study draws upon a broad field of what can be defined as culture studies. The nature of the research questions and the empirical material have been guiding the theoretical journey that will be presented below. Various approaches to food provisioning in cities, consumption, and the city will be discussed before we turn to the theoretical foundations for the concepts of quality, rationality, and authenticity.

**Food provisioning in cities**

We can approach food provisioning in cities in a number of ways. Several studies on the provisioning of cities have focused on the pre-industrial period of food. As regards the period after the industrial revolution, notably the English Victorian era has received a lot of attention. More recent research on food and cities has been inspired by a mounting critique of the current food system or has centered on cities outside the Western

context. The work of the International Commission for Research into European Food History (ICREFH) has resulted in a number of important publications discussing issues related to the provisioning of cities, which have informed the way this study views the history of market halls. Provisioning has also a sensory dimension. In a recent study, urban historians investigate the visual and the tactile, as well as the sound and smell, of cities in Europe from the Middle Ages to modern times, which resonates with the market hall history.

In looking at the history of retail and urban food supply in other Western countries, the background of the Swedish pattern of development becomes clearer. The development in Europe and North America was not homogenous of course, but in general we may note that the pioneer of the industrial revolution, Great Britain, not surprisingly took the lead also in respect to the evolution of the retail systems. Anglo-Saxon research shows that there was a system of shops in Great Britain, North America, and Germany by the mid-nineteenth century.

The evolution of the retail landscapes has been fruitfully investigated departing from an architectural point of view with a number of scholars focusing specifically on public markets and market halls. James Schmiechen and Kenneth Carls’ mapping of the rise and fall of the British market hall is perhaps the most significant. James Mayo’s early investigation of the development of the American grocery store has a section on public markets, as does Kathryn Morrison’s study of the architectural

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5. See especially J. Burnett & D. J. Oddy (eds.), The Origins and Development of Food Policies in Europe; M. Hietala & T. Vahtikari, (eds.), The Landscape of Food; and P. J. Atkins, P. Lummel & D. J. Oddy (eds.), Food and the City in Europe since 1800.
8. Longstreth, R. W., City center to regional mall; Longstreth, R. W., The drive-in, the supermarket, and the transformation of commercial space in Los Angeles, 1914-1941.
development of British shops.\textsuperscript{11} Helen Tangires’ study of civic culture in the public market,\textsuperscript{12} and her more recent study of the evolution of the public markets in the US\textsuperscript{13} are among the most thorough examinations. Victoria Thompson’s description of the Parisian market halls takes a less architectural approach.\textsuperscript{14} Thorsten Knoll’s dissertation on market halls in France, England and Germany\textsuperscript{15} is an interesting comparative study devoted entirely to market halls. An article by Andrew Lohmeier, “\textquote{Bürgerliche Gesellschaft and Consumer Interests: The Berlin Public Market Hall Reform, 1867-1891},” also holds significance for this dissertation, due to the impact of the British, French, and German contemporary debates on the Swedish debate.\textsuperscript{16} The article focuses on how technology and urban planning were used in order to achieve certain goals of transforming the city of Berlin into a well-functioning world-class city. The ambitions of establishing a well-functioning city where public order was maintained were shared by most city officials. The Stockholm City Council was anxiously observing the developments in other countries. This article thus provides a frame of reference for the international comparisons.

The retail trade in Sweden evolved rapidly once the urbanization process had speeded up, as demonstrated by Peder Aléx in his dissertation on the cooperative movement.\textsuperscript{17} Hans Kjellberg\textsuperscript{18} and Anna Nyberg\textsuperscript{19} have also shown this in their respective dissertations on the development of the association of private retailers, the ICA-movement, as did Hugo Kylebäck's\textsuperscript{20} work on the development of distribution in Sweden. Another example of the research on the distribution of food is Tomas Svensson’s study of structural changes in the wholesaling and retailing of food and groceries in Swedish towns and cities.\textsuperscript{21} The focus of Svensson’s study is primarily on the technological and economical aspects of distribution in relation to city planning after the Second World War, and it thus provides insights for this dissertation about the evolution of the general re-

\textsuperscript{11} Morrison, K., \textit{English shops and shopping: an architectural history}
\textsuperscript{12} Tangires, H., \textit{Public Markets and Civic Culture in Nineteenth-Century America.}
\textsuperscript{13} Tangires, H., \textit{Public Markets.}
\textsuperscript{14} Thompson, V. E., \textit{The virtuous marketplace.}
\textsuperscript{15} Knoll, T., \textit{Markthallen in Frankreich, England und Deutschland.}
\textsuperscript{17} Alex, P. \textit{Den rationella konsumenten.}
\textsuperscript{18} Kjellberg, H., \textit{Organising distribution.}
\textsuperscript{19} Nyberg, A., \textit{Innovation in the distribution channels.}
\textsuperscript{20} Kylebäck, H., \textit{Varuhandeln i Sverige under 1900-talet.}
\textsuperscript{21} Svensson, T., \textit{Dagligvarudistributionens strukturomvandling.}
Retail landscape during the period of market hall decline. Eva Ossiansson’s study of the retail markets in Sweden in the 1990s also has relevance, primarily for my understanding of the general retail landscape in which the market hall is situated.22

The developments from the late nineteenth century have also received attention in the Swedish academic context. The economic historians Sven Geretz & Jan Ottoffson23 and Ulf Rämme24 have mapped out the expansion of the retail system in Stockholm, and how the number of independent stores, and later on cooperative stores and chain stores, eventually altered the way people did their food shopping. This gradual development has also been traced by the urban historian Bosse Bergman, who focuses on cities all over Sweden.25 Going to the open air market and the market hall had been the most evident source of provisioning. By the 1930s, the small stores on every block had replaced the central markets. To a great extent, this development follows the same pattern as the development in the US, the UK, and Germany.26

The ethnologist Lars Kaijser has written about another aspect of the changing retail trade: the situation of the country shopkeepers.27 Although his study concerns the rural context, it still has very interesting points for the study of the market hall, as well as of distribution in general. Much like the market hall, the country shop is portrayed as an anomaly in the modern, conventional food system. The country shop, which flourished from the mid-nineteenth century, has had to re-invent itself and find new ways of doing business. The sociologist Elin Kvist has studied the antithesis of the market hall, the modern supermarket. Her focus is primarily on how everyday work in the supermarket is affected by the new labor market’s working conditions, leading to both more autonomy with more interesting work tasks, and to increased work density due to longer opening hours, and higher staff turnover.28 Still, her study contributes to elucidate the general consumption landscape and why the supermarket arises as the antithesis of the market hall.

22. Ossiansson, E., Nätverk i förändring.
In the Swedish academic context, market halls have only been discussed in passing, and the studies undertaken on market halls in Sweden have mainly taken the form of popular history. Also, the study of open air markets and food is fairly meager. A study by historian Christine Bladh investigates the conditions of female hawkers, who sold food, among other things, and thus contributed to the urban food landscape. Bladh’s study also mentions the open air markets. An early example of the study of open air markets is the Swedish cultural geographer Christina Nordin’s study from 1977 on the periodic market trade in the Paris region. In 2009, Nordin published another study on the nature of the Stockholm food markets from the middle ages to 1918. This study has a focus on the open air markets, but also presents a survey of the private and public market halls in Stockholm. Another study from France, Les vendredis de Carpentras by Michèle de La Pradelle, also investigates the nature of open air markets and has provided important insights into the specificity of the cultures of consumption in the open air markets, which also has significance for the understanding of the cultures of consumption in the contemporary market halls. A fairly recent interesting comparative study by Rachel Eden Black on open air markets in France and Italy comes closest to the approach of this dissertation: Going to market: Places of sociability in Turin and Lyon. These form the backdrop or frame of reference against which my study of the Stockholm market halls is conducted.

Consumption

The origins of the Swedish market halls have been discussed in this dissertation, as have various possible approaches to food provisioning in cities. Now we need to go into more detail over what strands in the research on consumption frame the theoretical perspectives of this dissertation. The market hall is interesting both as an idea, an imagined place, and as a phenomenon, a material place. Ideas about markets and empirical markets in themselves are part of what may be called a market practice. Actors, ideas, rules, and behaviors interact in a practice, which shapes and is

29. Hirdman, Y., Magfrågan.
32. Nordin, C., Le marché forain.
33. Nordin, C., Oordning.
34. La Pradelle, M. de, Les vendredis de Carpentras.
shaped by the ideas of the phenomenon, the market itself. What powers, rights, and obligations do we ascribe to different actors in a market? To understand this, we need to use a combination of theories on consumption and theories of the urban experience:

We are all members of urban consumer culture, and in reality there is a diverse mix of social groups that physically and symbolically occupy, produce meaning and create belonging in the spaces and places that constitute the commodified city.

This commodified city that Mark Jayne speaks of has gradually evolved, even if the impact of commodification has been greater in the latter half of the twentieth century. Let us first turn to examine the theories of consumption that will allow us to appreciate the transformations of the long twentieth century that is the temporal framework of this dissertation.

The academic interest in consumption has been very prolific for decades. There is now a wide variety of readers and anthologies as well as a number of important academic works on consumption, displaying various affiliations and disciplinary backgrounds. In the Swedish context, the number of anthologies and individual scholarly work on consumption in its various forms has also increased. The study of consumption has drawn on a number of different disciplines: economics, history, geography, anthropology, sociology, and psychology, to mention only the most frequent disciplines. It is referred to as “consumer culture”, “consumer society”, “cultures of consumption”. When the ambition is to define an

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37. Jayne, M., Cities and consumption, p. 7.
39. Miller, D., Material culture and mass consumption; Lury, C., Consumer culture; Slater, D., Consumer culture and modernity; Fine, B., The world of consumption; Clarke, D. B., The consumer society and the post-modern city.
41. Gustavsson, M., Makt och konstsmak; Fredriksson, C., Ett paradis för alla; Husz, O., Drömmars värde; Metzger, J., I köttbullslandet; Smas, L., Transaction spaces, to mention but a few.
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academic field, it is referred to as “consumer studies”, “consumption studies” or “the study of consumption”. This dissertation positions itself within this heterogeneous tradition. The focus here is on the cultures of consumption and its material expressions. How do commodities obtain a value? Consumption can thus be defined as “comprising a set of practices which permit people to express self identity, to mark attachment to social groups, to accumulate resources, to exhibit social distinctions, and to ensure participation in social activities.”

In his classic introduction to The Social Life of Things, Arjun Appadurai examines the dynamic processes of consumption and production of objects, and their social meanings. This article stands out as the point of reference for most material culture and consumer culture studies. In this dissertation, it will serve as a screen through which matters of taste and its material expressions in the form of definitions of quality will be analyzed. Taste and consumption have been the objects of study for sociologists and anthropologists in a number of works. An evident point of reference when it comes to matters of taste and consumption is Pierre Bourdieu’s Distinction. Bourdieu’s account of the production of taste aims at explaining how social relations are shaped by and also shape the meaning of objects. In relation to the market hall and who goes shopping there, it can be said to be a matter of taste, an acquired sense of what choices seem meaningful, what tastes seem natural, what habits seem self-evident, or in other words, what forms of capital we have access to. This is formed by what social space we inhabit, and thus how we perceive and perform quality.

Consumption is about values as much as it is about commodities. When it first appeared, the market hall was one expression of, and one answer to, the new conditions for consumption. Its subsequent history is also the history of how new conditions for consumption altered the prerequisites for what forms of distribution were best adapted to the current landscapes of consumption. Food shopping is a commonplace and mundane activity, but it takes place within a complex framework of social, economic, and cultural contexts. This tells us something about how the

42. Warde, A., Consumption, food, and taste, p. 304.
44. Douglas, M. & Isherwood, B., The world of goods; Goody, J., Cooking, cuisine and class; Mennell, S., Murcott, A. & van Otterloo, A. H., The sociology of food; Beardsworth A. & Keil, T., Sociology on the menu; Bell, D. & Valentine, G., Consuming geographies; Warde, A., Consumption, food, and taste.
45. Bourdieu, P., Distinction.
city is organized, how municipal control is carried out, as well as how lifestyles and cultures of consumption emerge and are made meaningful.

Food shopping in the late nineteenth century in the new market halls took on a different character. The glittering lights, the brass rails and fixtures, the dark wooden fittings, the water tanks, and glass display counters are examples of how food shopping was embracing luxury and modernity. Food shopping in the mid-twentieth century portrayed the run-down market halls as outdated. Instead, new retail spaces had become the epitome of modernity. The mundane aspects were softened by novelty and the increased convenience. Food shopping in the market halls in the twenty-first century has again become something else, as what was once the expression of utmost modernity is reinterpreted as the most traditional and authentic, a charming remnant from the past.

The image of the market hall today is largely tied to questions of consumption practices. Is it possible to discern changes in our patterns of consumption or new trends by looking at market halls? The renaissance of the market hall can be seen as part of an increased interest in food and gastronomy, which is also evident in the growing market for cook books, as well as the increasing number of cooks hosting their own television shows, gastronomic societies, and food blogs. Food snobism and being a “foodie” have been fashionable for some time now. This gastronomic turn has boosted the market for small-scale artisanal food production, as well as for lifestyle foodstuffs. In particular, the affluent urban middle classes use high quality and luxury foods as markers of their social affiliation. The market hall is also emblematic of a sense of local anchorage, of a rural, more “natural” and authentic past — a simulacrum of community. One example of this can be found on the website of Söderhallarna market hall, where the construction of the new market hall was justified in the following fashion:

The objective was to create a traditional market hall with a high ceiling and shops that together could offer a wide variety of goods and services. A market hall isn’t just a place to shop, it’s a place to find inspiration, meet friends and enjoy good food.

46. Bell, D. & Valentine, G., Consuming geographies; Warde, A., Consumption, food, and taste, p. 184-186.
47. Bell, D. & Valentine, G., Consuming geographies; La Pradelle, M. de, Les vendredis de Carpentras; Marsden, T., Flynn, A. & Harrison, M., Consuming interests: the social provision of foods; Warde, A., Consumption, food, and taste. p. 183-186.
The perspective presented above is related to the research on consumption, which sees it as a production of identities, meaning, experiences, and relationships. The consumer is here seen as an actor with preferences and power of agency, living in a post-Fordist world where the producer has to adapt to the fickle consumer. It also recognizes that consumers are rarely “rational” in the strict economic sense of the word, but rather that consumption is as much social and cultural as it is driven by economic considerations. Consumption is seen in this dissertation as being governed by motives that are both social and material - the consumer articulating individuality within collective frameworks of reference, which may be understood in terms of social worlds.

However, that the consumer as a category has received such iconic status is a fairly recent phenomenon, which is clearly evident when we look at the cultures of consumption linked to the market halls. In the research on consumption, the degree of agency attributed to consumers varies. Sometimes, the consumers are found to have fairly limited opportunities of choosing lifestyle and consumption pattern following Bourdieu and the habitus concept, where all consumption reveals class position to some extent. Consumers are found to adhere to the more open and temporary notions of lifestyle and identity in Michel Maffesoli’s neo-tribes, where individuals are joined for limited periods of time by common ethical, political or other identity related standpoints. A similar view is found in the descriptions of new social movements by Alberto Melucci.

In this study, I am inspired by the insights of Bourdieu, which has partly informed my interpretation of the social games acted out by customers and vendors. How they act and what they buy or sell is understood in a more fragmented way, more akin to the neo-tribes or the new

49. Giddens, A., Modernity and self-identity; Featherstone, M., Consumer culture and postmodernism; Mörck, M., Spel på ytan; Clarke, D., The consumer society and the postmodern city.
50. Slater, D., Consumer culture and modernity; Warde, A., Consumption, food, and taste; Fine, B., The world of consumption.
53. Bourdieu, P., Distinction; Maffesoli, M., The time of the tribes; Melucci, A., Nomads of the present.
social movements. The concept of cultural fragmentation, with its focus on the disruption of old affiliations and social bonds, applies well to the study of consumption. This is linked to the ideas of a reflexive modernization, where people in the era of high modernity are described as reflecting on their own behavior and ideals. This in turn allows a greater freedom to chose and negotiate identities, meanings, social relationships, and authenticity. In many respects, what Anthony Giddens describes as reflexive modernization is acted out in the market halls of the twenty-first century, where identity and authenticity are mediated through the quest for quality.

The city

The cultures of consumption materialize in a context, a place, and a landscape. The place in this study is the market hall, of course, and the landscape that interests us here is the city, and more specifically, the modern city. The city and modernity are vital to understanding the cultures of consumption taking place in the specific context of the market hall. The debate on modernity in the social sciences has indeed been very extensive, and there will be no lengthy discussion of it here. What is of interest is how the theoretical discussions about modernity define modernity, both as an experience and as a particular phase located in time and space, with capitalism and industrialism being the characterizing features. The dissertation aims at capturing parts of the experiences of modernity, and it also spans over a period in history that corresponds to this phase.

To Giddens, the three main elements of modernity are: 1) the separation of time and space, 2) the disembedding of social institutions, and 3) institutional reflexivity. Giddens also uses the term “high modernity” to characterize what we are now experiencing. “Late modernity” and “post-modernity” are other ways of characterizing our times. These also relate to both an experience and a particular phase. The idea of the dynamic character, the notion that social change is more rapid than ever before, seem to fuse these different perspectives. The modern paradigm has also received attention as an empirical object of study. To examine the market hall is also one way of studying modernity as an empirical phenomenon, and to analyze some of the concrete manifestations of modernity.

Notions and ideas of modernity exist in relation to notions and ideas of the past. When the notion of modernity equates it with progress, the past is cast in a negative way, as being old-fashioned and outdated. In general, the romantic notions of the past refer to a distant past. Here the modern is contrasted with the past as in the sense of the traditional, the authentic. As Walter Benjamin put it, we despise yesterday and long for the days before yesterday. In the market hall, the notions of tradition, past, and present are subject to renegotiations and reinterpretations.\footnote{I am indebted to Johan Fornäs for pointing this out.}

If the modern was associated most vividly with the urban in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the modern condition is no longer confined to the city alone, nor can the city be defined according to one model. My study aligns itself with the theoretical project of Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift, which sees the city as inherently dynamic and imbued with multiple temporalities and spatialities. In the words of Amin and Thrift, places “are best thought of not so much as enduring sites but as moments of encounter, not so much as ‘presents’, fixed in space and time, but as variable events; twists and fluxes of interrelation.”\footnote{Amin, A. \& Thrift, N., \textit{Cities: reimagining the urban}, p. 30.} The main characteristic is thus the encounter, which is seen “as a formative element of the urban world.”\footnote{Amin, A. \& Thrift, N., \textit{Cities: reimagining the urban}, p. 30.}

Places as “moments of encounter” put the focus on what can be termed sociability. When exploring sociability or sociation, to use a term coined by Georg Simmel, as a set of informal social relations, the urban setting has often either been portrayed as a site of isolation, or as a close-knit community. In fact, it might be more rewarding to study sociability through the types of social interaction situations and the types of material contexts found, without strictly dividing it into polarities of Gemeinschaft vs. Gesellschaft, rural vs. urban, cooperative vs. competitive, or communal vs. anonymous. Instead, these are often parallel and co-constitutive, and are acted out depending on the context.\footnote{Savage, M., Warde, A. \& Ward, K., \textit{Urban sociology, capitalism and modernity}, p. 96-110.} This view of the urban is consistent with Amin \& Thrift’s theoretical project: to study the multiple temporalities and spatialities of the dynamic places which make up the urban experience. Furthermore, this approach will help us understand the context of the market hall and its transformations during the long twentieth century.
Amin and Thrift speak of the particular ecology of the city, where the heterogeneity itself grants and sustains a market for consumer goods, housing, leisure, food, and public goods. They are careful to point out however that the “city no longer experiences self-expanding growth based on local consumption,” but rather is part of complex global networks. The global networks go beyond the actual sourcing of products and services. As cities compete on an increasingly international arena, the commodification of cities as an experience becomes more acute. Amin and Thrift speak of how there is a tendency to assign or market specific themes for cities, in order to turn them into commodities. It is a way to “re-engineer the experience of cities”, which is comparable to the impact of Haussmann’s boulevards. Only here it is not the result of one master plan, but rather the effect of several attempts. “What is new is the general pervasiveness of this phenomenon and the construction of a systematic body of knowledge – of what spaces entertain how – which informs it.”

Nevertheless, neighborhoods are appreciated for their specific uniqueness, their distinctiveness, and not for their conformity. Impression and image management have become increasingly important to keep this distinctiveness, and thus guarantee economic and political success. This can be seen in the market halls of today who carefully manage their image, and who use history as one of the tools to create distinctiveness. The landscape of consumption described by Sharon Zukin in her *Landscapes of power* connects the urban studies tradition and consumption studies in a fruitful way. Zukin looks into how cuisines and gentrification shape their own consumption landscapes and their own logics.

In the same vein as Zukin, the term landscape is used in this dissertation as a metaphor to explain how the city and consumption interact in relation to the market hall. The result of this interaction is the formation of a specific sense of place for which the metaphor landscape, with various prefixes, has been used. In the first part of the dissertation, retail and urban landscapes dominate. In the second part, retail and consumption landscapes are the most frequent. In the third part, the term consumption landscape has largely replaced the term retail landscape, to desig-

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64. Amin, A. & Thrift, N., *Cities: reimagining the urban*, p. 124, original emphasis.
nate the shift towards consumption as the primary motor of the overall economy, as well as a tool of self-realization.

This has implications for how the market hall has been interpreted in the last part of this study, where the market hall has been integrated into the upscale gentrified side of the experience industry. Consumption and entertainment become mixed here. According to Amin and Thrift, these new spaces can be seen as a form of imaginative escape, characterized by being highly interactive, theatrical, omnisensory, and adaptive. Even if the places they are speaking of in this context are not market halls, the paths taken by the market halls are similar. The produce itself is no longer enough. Instead, events fill the market halls which strive to become not only food emporiums, but also experience emporiums.

Amin’s and Thrift’s theoretical approaches are extremely helpful in an analysis of the market hall from the formation of modernity in the late nineteenth century Stockholm to the consolidation starting in the inter-war years. They are also useful to analyze the increasing questioning of large scale rationalization of the food sector, and in particular of food retail, in the late twentieth and twenty-first century, that is, the late modern era. The focus on place as a source of competitiveness complements the sociological theorizing on consumption in the more restricted sense discussed earlier. The role of place has received a growing attention in the last decades. The geographer Michael Storper, among many other scholars, has rediscovered the region as a response to the challenges of globalization. The intense patterns of interaction, both competitive and cooperative, that historically characterized industrial districts and successful regions today, has also inspired studies on a new urban governmentality. In particular inner cities are upgraded as potential arenas for economic success.

This line of thinking has found some of its most salient expression in the works of Richard Florida, and has led to the enthusiastic clamor of urban governments anxious to remain competitive. This trend has been investigated in a more critical manner by other scholars, such as Amin and Thrift. They show how “soft” indicators, such as social ameni-

68. Storper, M., The regional world: territorial development in a global economy.
71. Florida, R. L., The rise of the creative class; Florida, R. L., Cities and the creative class.
ties, have become a significant factor in urban investment decisions. But how this actually turns out, how the soft amenities and the knowledge in cities are translated and transformed into economic capital and commercial values, is hard to predict. The renewed interest for the local and local/global in regional and urban contexts may seem to be of relevance only for the contemporary part of my study. Nonetheless, I think it can be highly fruitful to remain sensitive to the significance of place in the historical parts of the dissertation as well.

The theoretical sources of inspiration presented above may appear disparate. However, in a multi-disciplinary study which aims at an understanding of how the consumption culture and the spatial dimension of food consumption have been articulated over a century, there can be no single theoretical framework that will suffice. Instead, the most fruitful approach is to utilize a combination of different approaches related to each of the overarching research questions. This should not be interpreted as embracing a non-reflexive eclecticism. On the contrary, by confronting different theoretical traditions, a more complex understanding can be reached.

**Quality, rationality and authenticity**

The three concepts of quality, rationality and authenticity have crystallized into the structural elements of the analysis of the empirical material. They serve as my “interpretative schemes”, and they are the result of the interaction between theory and analysis of the empirical material. Below is a discussion of the theoretical foundations for these concepts.

To define quality is a delicate task permeated by ambiguities. It reflects the position of the person who uses the term, the producer, the vendor, or the consumer. Behind all these definitions we also find the definitions of quality stipulated by the rules and regulations aimed at protecting public health and the freedom of trade and competition. How these norms have been articulated in the course of history is subject to legal, economic, and political aspects, and it is informed by the underlying cultural and social


73. Amin, A. & Thrift, N., *Cities: reimagining the urban*, p. 73-75.

values that imbue every aspect of the notion of quality. An additional factor that complicates the equation lies in the asymmetries of information and the conventions that frame our understanding of what constitutes quality.\textsuperscript{75}

Quality is made in the individual and collective compromises around its constitutive elements. In this sense, it is a convention between the various actors that contribute to the realization of quality. It is both a normative and dynamic process, and the actors actively contribute to negotiate what constitutes the elements of quality in a collective discussion that is or is not supported by more official regulations.\textsuperscript{76} There are certain essential dimensions in the construction of quality: the product itself, the monetary value it commands, the trust the product inspires or fails to inspire, global, national and local regulations, as well as the role played by expertise in establishing what attributes should be measured and valued in the definitions of quality.\textsuperscript{77}

The concept of quality almost always has a positive connotation. But the term is problematic. Quality refers to certain attributes of an object that can to a certain extent be measured, in the case of food this can be nutrition value, or how succulent or sweet it is. Most foodstuffs have several attributes, but exactly what attributes are the most valued varies over time. Some attributes such as fresh, frozen, home-made, or factory-made could be used in a purely descriptive rather than normative way. However, the concept quality tends to blur the descriptive and the normative: we speak of food as having quality (certain descriptive attributes) and often mix this with value-laden judgments about the normative value of these attributes.\textsuperscript{78}

There are several ways we may study the concept of quality: 1) utilize different “orders of worth”, such as aesthetic, economic, or ethical, which might be seen as expressing incommensurable qualities; quality is here seen as contingent, specific in time and space; 2) investigate how rules and regulations favor various actors in their aspiration to define quality,

\textsuperscript{78} Harvey, M., McMeekin, A. & Warde, A. “Introduction”, In M. Harvey, A. McMeekin & A. Warde (eds.), \textit{Qualities of food}, p. 2.
by evaluating the power relations to see who has the greatest potential of advancing their notion of quality; 3) view quality as the outcome of a process of negotiations; 4) view quality as the result of a thick description of the social processes, where definitive intrinsic attributes and relevant positive valuations are fused to ascribe quality to products.79

To deal with issues of food quality and assurance as a major asset in the production of quality, Terry Marsden has introduced the concept of “quality chain” to explain how small producers market local food using the notion of “quality” as one of the major stakes to promote and legitimize their own practices. Marsden sees these “alternative food networks” as a battle for knowledge over definitions of good quality and how food should be produced, distributed, and consumed. In this framework, quality is seen as having both social and technical dimensions. The conventional industrial corporate retailers have imposed strict hygienic definitions of quality in the conventional supply chains. The alternative definitions of quality in ecological and regional quality conventions challenge the conventional systems.80 The place of market halls in this quality battle is not set. It depends on the ongoing negotiations in the market halls, on the collective understandings that vendors and customers chisel out, on ideals embraced and in practice entertained.

The companion concepts of rationality and authenticity reflect much of the same ambiguities and situatedness that characterize the concept of quality. They have also been subject to reinterpretations and recordings over the course of time. Originally, the concept of rationality was mainly used in connection with economy of resources. Later on, it acquired its close association to modernity.81 Rationality and rationalizations became the catchphrases in business circles, as well as among social reformers and politicians. Rationality was modernity, and without it the modern welfare state could not prevail. Nowhere was this focus on the blessings

81. Gellner, E., Reason and culture: the historic role of rationality and rationalism.
of rationality more prominent than in the ideological and practical work of the cooperative movement. The history of the cooperative movement is interesting in relation to the path taken by the market halls. When the market halls failed to present themselves as rational, the cooperative movement was leading the way as champions of rationality and modernity. The association was so thorough that the cooperative movement failed to reinvent itself successfully when rationality lost its appeal. The market hall then emerged as a champion of authenticity, a much more successful strategy in the period of late modernity.

The history of authenticity as a concept is also long and complex. It traces its origins to the beginnings of the modern project. But the authenticity that interests us in relation to the history of the market hall is rather the commodified authenticity that Elizabeth Outka places in late nineteenth century and early twentieth century Britain. At this point in time, writers, advertisers, and architects began to create and sell images of an authentic cultural realm, rife with nostalgic pictures of a pastoral, idyllic past. The same time period also inspired both a recalling and an invention of traditions.

The cultural power of authenticity as a marketing tool was so great that even though the result was that authenticity was commodified, it was still considered as outside the marketplace. The quest for authenticity can be considered as the antithesis of the emerging mass market, but Outka points to the importance of commodified authenticity for both modernism and modernity. In this sense, the relationship between the quest for authenticity and the pursuit of rationality are two sides of the same coin of modernity, as we will see in the debates over how to organize the food markets in Stockholm.

The term authenticity has thus been recoded several times, and its popularity fluctuates. It is perhaps a sign of the times that Joseph Pine and James Gilmore, who traced the contours of the (upper middle class) experience economy, now have moved on to analyze authenticity. In

83. For an overview of the philosophical roots of the concept of authenticity, see for example Ferrara, A., *Reflective authenticity: rethinking the project of modernity* and Taylor, C., *The ethics of authenticity.*
84. Outka, E., *Consuming traditions: modernity, modernism, and the commodified authentic.*
85. E. J. Hobsbawm & T. O. Ranger (eds.) *The invention of tradition*, is of course the classic reference.
86. Outka, E., *Consuming traditions: modernity, modernism, and the commodified authentic.*
CHAPTER 2

their recent book, Authenticity: what consumers really want, Gilmore and Pine continue to capture the desires of a primarily white middle class.88 The desire for authenticity is also explored by Sharon Zukin in an article on how authenticity is negotiated and acted out in the urban context of New York City.89 The approach taken to the concept of authenticity in my study of market halls draws on Outka and Zukin. Outka is useful for situating the concept of authenticity in time and space, which has relevance for the connection between the commodified authenticity and modernity. Zukin is helpful for understanding what constitutes a city, and how every space and every place must be understood in relation to each another. This indirectly has implications for what can be defined and what will be defined as authenticity in late modernity.

Outka has the greatest relevance for the first part of the study, in understanding how the farmer could become such an iconic figure, and to perceive what was really at stake in the debates over what constituted quality and sound trade at around the turn of the nineteenth century. Zukin’s accounts of late modernity and consumers’ desire for authenticity mirrors the findings from the ethnographic fieldwork in this dissertation. The urban experience in New York and Stockholm differs of course, but the similarities and differences bring out both the common ground and the unique characteristics of Sweden in late modernity.

3

Ethnography and history: a long-distance relationship?

This dissertation spans over a long time period. It makes use of different methods, drawing on history as well as ethnography. In the ethnographic part of the study, fieldwork is undertaken in three different locations. This raises a lot of questions. What are the implications of the fact that I chose to study three different market halls, each with its own spatial characteristics and separate historical trajectories? In what ways does the long time perspective make me see things differently? How can the historic perspectives benefit the contemporary material? And how can the ethnographic enrich the historical analysis?

The final reading of the archives pertaining to the nineteenth and early twentieth century is highly influenced by the ethnographic experience. One of the strengths with ethnography is that it brings out the importance of cultural framing. Historical anthropology gives insights into how ethnographic methods can enhance the interpretation of historic sources. For example, when the historical anthropologist Brian Axel speaks of treating archival documents “as signs signifying the effectivity of disparate forms of colonial practice to generate ‘truth’, and ‘bringing an ethnographic sensibility to an archival object’,”¹ this resonates with

how I have interpreted the material from the Stockholm City Archives. To take this stance seriously means to see “archival documents as domains of knowledge production that are rife with intertextuality, polysemia, and contradiction.” Of course, the Stockholm City Archives do not reflect a colonial past, but the attitude taken by the elites towards the lower classes in their own countries have certain similarities to the colonial administrations. The aim was to educate and improve, and to order and restructure.

When the market hall was introduced in Sweden, it was clearly a top-down reform endorsed by the upper middle classes. The reformers, who were mostly male, had somewhat limited insight into the practical realities of the women in charge of the food shopping. From the point of view of the male reformers, the stupidity and stubbornness of the housewives and the maids were inexplicable. They offered first-class facilities, and the conservative housewives refused to recognize the advantages of the facilities. The traces of this story in the archival records from the Stockholm City Council speak of the past from the point of view of the male elites. If we remain vigilant of whose voices are speaking, we may see the effects of the mismatch between the expectations of the reformers and the realities of the housewives. In fact, this mismatch may in part explain the failure of the market hall project in Stockholm. Another part of the explanation could be that the reforms were not thorough or fast enough. The ambitious visions were never implemented, and the magnificent system of market halls came to naught.

The middle part of the dissertation about the decline of the market hall is necessary to understand how the market hall went from being the triumph of modernity to being considered an obsolete parenthesis. This part is largely a historical exposition, and explains how, in late modernity, the market hall was yet again recoded as something desirable. In the middle part, we make an excursion outside the market hall. The retail landscapes under investigation have been analyzed by other researchers, and their work, along with segments from the contemporary debates and the hands-on perspective of the trade journals, have formed the basis for my interpretations of the consumption landscapes where the market hall was but a vague remnant of the past.

The market hall and the interactions between customers and vendors in the market hall setting in the early twenty-first century demand a different approach than the historical parts of the study. In Navigators of the Contemporary, David Westbrook argues that ethnography today is more

about analyzing situations rather than culture. With floating identities of
the modern condition, we all become ethnographers of ourselves, where
the task of the ethnographer is more about helping ethnographic sub-
jects articulating themselves - a kind of “paraethnography” to use West-
brook’s own term.  

In late modernity, experience-oriented food consumption has risen to
prominence. Furthermore, the social demographics of Stockholm have
changed to include more people with higher education. These people,
who can be said to belong to the gastronomic middle classes, are the
prime targets of the experience-driven consumption. In late modern so-
cieties, the non-standardized that is on display in the market hall holds
a promise of something more authentic, of more exquisite quality. The
market hall becomes a way of presenting the self: a late modern form of
food consumption.  

Going to the market hall and buying things by the
piece, rather than the pre-packaged standardized food items on sale in
the supermarket, can be described as a subjective aesthetic experience. It
is a search for authenticity, even if what is for sale is perhaps more similar
to the commodified authentic than anything else.

This dissertation could almost be seen as a fusion of three different
studies. The reason why this design was chosen is that a dialogue between
analysis of contemporary and historical phenomena deepens our under-
standing of the present situation, as well as of the past. The different parts
and the different material categories of the study enhance and expand the
horizon of understanding. They interact as each part enriches the other,
and the sum of all three is greater than would have been the case had I just
looked at one or two periods. The analytical questions from the middle
part build on the experience of the first and the third. Why did the market
hall lose its appeal? What symbols of modernity are formed during the
interwar and post-war years? These questions gain from the long histori-
cal perspective. There are specific methodological demands for each part
of the study. With research questions spanning over a long period of time,
there is dialogue in the overall way of approaching the material.

The fact that the theoretical understanding of the city is inspired by
Amin and Thrift, who see the city as a process, also has implications for
the methodological perspectives: “The city is made up of potential and
actual entities/associations/togetherness which there is no going be-
yond to find anything ‘more real’. The accumulation of these entities can

4. This has been inspired by Erving Goffman. See Goffman, E., The presentation of self
   in everyday life.
produce new beginnings.” The evolution of the market hall is a process, and the evolution of the retail and consumption landscape is a process. If indeed we are moving beyond a placeless foodscape, then part of the solution to the new forms of this new foodscape might be hidden in the history of the urban foodscape. The ambition here has been to assume the position of the reflexive walker, an encounter between the researcher and the city. This encounter has to be grasped with other technologies of knowing: historical records, city council records, news clippings, literary descriptions, and commercial material. This attempt at being a reflexive walker has also transfused the contemporary part of the study.

Brian Axel argues that in order to make our work intelligible to others we need to ask ourselves the following questions: What is our context of analysis? How do we contextualize our inquiry? How are we to select our analytic frame? The questions must not be asked in a naïve fashion, but rather we need to remain conscious of how we co-produce the context, and critically reexamine our interpretations and our analysis, as well as our preconceptions and our contextualization. It is here that the ethnographic eye provides a depth to the historical methods. The tensions between the different contexts in which the market hall as a phenomenon and as an idea was situated can be seen in the ideals and the images of the market halls presented in the official documents, and the frustration over the market hall’s lack of success, which was attributed to the illogical behavior of consumers and vendors. The concept of context taken in this critical vein has a lot in common with what Don Kalb and Herman Tak call critical junctions, i.e. a focus on relations through time, relations in space, relations of power, and dependency and relations between distinct domains, such as economics, law, and culture. This includes also the remembered, desired, repressed, and imaginary relations. The relations studied could be horizontal or hierarchical, but always dynamic and dialectical. Kalb and Tak actually define critical junctions as a matter of discovering and describing not only relations, but also context: “Context is about how space and place, global and local histories interconnect to

5. Amin, A. & Thrift, N., Cities: reimagining the urban, p. 27.
produce a multiplicity of interlinked modernities.”10 The local and the global are part of the same web, which makes worthwhile “exploring the intersections of historically specific local practices with processes of a world historical order.”11 We see how the local practice and ideals of the market hall in Stockholm interact with the global, in the form of the rise of the US economic hegemony described by Giovanni Arrighi, which can also be interpreted as an expression of modernity.

The interconnectivity of the study of the historical and the present day is a lens for understanding the gradual evolution of urban cultures of consumption. It contributes to the research about modernity in a concrete way: it demonstrates how the common aspects of the modernization process were articulated in the specific context of the market hall as an urban meeting point. In this way, the study contributes to our understanding of urban culture as a set of separate activities segregated in time and space. The market hall is a social and cultural meeting place, a passing place, a liminal space typical of urban settings in modern times.

During the process of collecting material for the different parts of the dissertation, I was looking for themes and subthemes in the analysis of the different materials. Every time period had its own set of materials, and every time period has been analyzed partly in isolation from the other time periods. Initially, the themes were more general and descriptive, and several different themes could apply to the same incident. Gradually, I sought themes on a higher level of abstraction that would apply to the entire period, something that would work as interpretative schemes and structure the narrative of the dissertation. The constant flux of theory, ideas, material, hypotheses, theory, material, new ideas, can be said to be part of a theory-method-material nexus that form the basis for my understanding of the market hall and the cultures of consumption in urban food retail.

As stated previously, the concepts of quality, rationality and authenticity can thus be said to be my interpretative schemes. The analytical focus has been on how they have been articulated through time and space. Quality, for example, includes both social and technical dimensions. Food quality and assurance are here interpreted as a battle for knowledge over definitions of good quality and how food should be produced, distributed and consumed.

Rationality, which during the first and the second period had such a desirable connotation, in the third period translates into standardized blandness, and, to a certain extent, food scares. In the first period, the discourse of health and hygiene reveals an understanding of the city and modernity that is also embedded in social and cultural values: a value framework that translates into a legal framework of regulations. This is carried even further in the second period, when rationalization and automation gained momentum throughout the production-distribution-consumption-chain.

In the experience economy, values such as tradition, nostalgia, artisanal, and small-scale are equated with the desirable, the authentic sense of food lost. Authenticity is translated into a direct engagement with the expert on behalf of the consumer. This is visible in the first and the third periods, but in the middle period the expertise is transferred to the food industry, and away from vendors and consumers. In the supermarket there is no room, at least in a formalized sense, for these types of discussions, or even for products that were the expression of authenticity in the first period and particularly during the third period. The authenticity is thus part of an economy of expertise, as well as an economy of trust. This economy of trust builds on a particular type of ethic, where the informal is celebrated, but it is also question of a form of production of community.

In the initial analysis made on the ethnographic material, the concept of “loci communes” used by Michael Billig was one way of understanding how people talk about certain things according to certain conventions. When Billig uses “loci communes” he refers to the mutual conventions that exist for talking about certain things, certain themes, and how this works almost as a form of mutual meeting places, as a mutual forum for discussing themes. It is the taken-for-granted, the assumed understandings, that allow us to follow a story, and that structure the way we tell a story. Even if Billig looked at stories about the British royal family, stories about food and food consumption work in similar ways. Several previous studies about food point in that direction without using the term “loci communes”.

12. The most extreme case being the mad cow disease perhaps. See for example Schwartz, M., *How the cows turned mad*.
The notion of loci communes may be connected to what Arjun Appadurai calls “regimes of value”, i.e. how certain commodities are ascribed a value in a social context and how this value depends on and interacts with the social context. This study has used “loci communes” and “regimes of value” as sources of inspiration for thinking about the interactions in the market halls. The actual terms used draw on the metaphor of community, as in the community of gastronomes, for example, and the three structuring concepts of quality, rationality and authenticity have been inspired by Appadurai’s regimes of value.

**Method and material for part 1**

- The Stockholm City Council (minutes, proposals, rescripts, committee rescripts, appendixes etc. to cover the municipal debate).
- The City of Stockholm Municipal Abattoir and Market Hall Board (collection of press items from the first director of board on the city’s market halls, annual reports of the city’s market halls, etc.).
- Contemporary descriptions.

Several architectural periodicals have been thoroughly searched without yielding any substantial result. The same goes for trade journals like *Våra livsmedel* or *Köpmannen*, and more general periodicals like *Ny illustrerad tidning*. Instead, we find the debate on market halls in other forums. The Stockholm City Council is the most significant forum.

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16. *Tidskrift för Byggnadskonst och Ingenjörsvetenskap* (Journal for the Art of Building and the Science of Engineering), issues 1859 to 1864 and 1867 to 1870 (the issues available at Kungliga Biblioteket); *Nordisk tidskrift för byggnadskonst och skörd samt tillämpad mekanik m.m.* (Nordic Journal for the Art of Building and Handicraft and Applied Mechanics etc), with only one year of publication, 1871; *Tidning för Byggnadskonst* (Journal for the Art of Building), 1909 to 1923; *Teknikal tidskrift* (Journal of Technology) 1867 to 1901; The following periodicals are indexed in a database: *Arkitektur och dekorativ konst* (Architecture and decorative arts), 1901 to 1922; *Byggnästaren* (The Builder), 1922 to 1984; *Arkitektur* (Architecture) 1959 to 2004.
The Stockholm City Council

Most issues relating to the construction of market halls were debated in the Stockholm City Council as they demanded heavy municipal investment. Whether the City should invest this money was not an easily settled matter. In 1873, for example, the Stockholm City Council advocated a market hall system similar to that in Paris. The result, however, was Kötttorget and Hötorget market halls built by the city, but also a number of privately built and privately run market halls: Östermalm, Maria, Svea, and Vasa. Eventually the city assumed responsibility for Maria and Östermalm market halls, but the outcome was not determined from the start. The city also used existing buildings and converted them to market sheds, like at Nytorget, and built two market halls for fish. The Central market hall was inaugurated in 1913, and towards the end of the First World War an additional market hall was planned and subsequently constructed in the old town center, Mälarpalatset market hall.

Many, like the appointed city veterinarian Sven Nystedt, spoke in favor of a market hall system and against the open air street markets. The costermongers, the hawkers, and all the middlemen were depicted as the causes of the high prices and the low quality of the food supply, as well as the reason for congestion and disorder. The solution chosen by the City Council was to replace them with city commissionaires, appointed to oversee the trade in the capital at the wholesale markets and market halls. Questions of responsibility took center stage here. Who should assume the ultimate responsibility for securing the food provisioning of the city? Public authorities or private enterprises? I have investigated the years 1863 to 1933, which basically cover the golden years of the market hall construction up to the beginning of its decline in the 1920s. The year 1933 was chosen because that year a wholesale market hall was constructed, and the idea of retail market halls no longer had the center stage.

The debates and the documents from the Stockholm City Council often result in material manifestations: buildings in the city. There are several ways to approach buildings and architecture. Inspired by David Harvey, Mike Savage, Alan Warde and Kevin Ward suggest that we look at the city as an arena for power struggles. This demonstrates that the built form cannot be read simply as the product of an age. Specific social groups use the built environment as an arena to achieve cultural hegemony and social and political power. This is why buildings of the same period are more likely to be the result of conflicting values and power

18. SCC, 35/1873.
struggles than an expression of common values.\textsuperscript{20} The interpretation of the story of the Stockholm market halls draws on this: the contrast between the high-brow official ideals and the harsh realities of actual construction, and between romantic utopias of city planning and the ideals and desires of the population living in the city.

A city is of course more than the official debates of its city council. Ethnologist Mats Hellspong suggests that a cultural characteristic of the city may be provided by a study of many different materials: census and tax registers, inventories, juridical protocols, guidebooks, memoirs and diaries.\textsuperscript{21} Similar types of materials have been collected to study the Stockholm market halls in order to understand how the contemporaries viewed consumption and the market halls. The most important finding consists of thirteen books containing newspaper clippings from 1902-1937 in the Abattoir and Market Hall Board Archive. The news clippings collection was initiated by the first director of the Abattoir and Market Hall Board, Martin Sandeberg. In fact, Martin Sandeberg started this collection well before he was appointed director, when he was working as the appointed city veterinarian, and the collection continued after his retirement. The news clippings cover a wide range of subjects, almost all relating to the municipal abattoir, which was under the same authority as the market halls, or the market halls themselves. The interpretation of these clippings demands a great sensitivity to the nuances of different time periods, but has served as an important source for understanding the climate in which the market halls were conceived.\textsuperscript{22}

To find evidence of the impact of the market hall on the city of Stockholm, the yearbook from the Society of Saint Erik\textsuperscript{23} (Samfundet St Erik) was examined through the years 1906 – 2003. Every yearbook contains approximately five to six articles. Out of the ninety-seven books examined, only six articles touched on the subject of market halls. One was specifically concerned with Hötorget market hall and its development, the other five were childhood chronicles where shopping, in particular at Hötorget market hall, was mentioned. The authors of the five chronicles mostly have upper middle class backgrounds, except for one daughter of an artisan. The first chronicle appears as late as in 1956. Two more appear in 1958 and in 1959, whereas the two remaining turn up in 1979 and in


\textsuperscript{21} Hellspong, M., ”Svensk stad ur etnologens synvinkel”, In I. Hammarström & T. Hall (eds.), \textit{Perspektiv på Svensk stad}.

\textsuperscript{22} Zintchenko, L., \textit{Stadens tidsbilder}.

\textsuperscript{23} Saint Erik is the patron saint of Stockholm.
1989. All of these articles were written by women, probably because the purchase and preparation of food had a fairly trivial and everyday character relegated to the female sphere. The first volumes of the Saint Erik Yearbook clearly do not find either the form or the function of market halls to be of interest. It may well be that the market halls were too old to present the charm of novelty, and yet not old enough to rouse the historic sensibilities of the members of the Society of Saint Erik. The Society of Saint Erik was a voluntary association and the membership base was usually drawn from engineers, teachers, architects, and other groups who could be said to be part of the educated urban elite.

To find traces of the elusive consumer and her voice, a number of handbooks in knowledge of commodities have been studied, along with cookbooks and handbooks for housework and the education of young housewives. The result from these investigations was surprisingly meager. Over a period of forty years, from 1883 to 1923, they reiterate the same concerns: young women did not have sufficient education, which in combination with the amount of new commodities in the market, opened up the possibilities for fraud and adulteration.

To understand the specificity of the market hall, a contextual understanding of the history of Swedish food distribution was necessary. Ulf Rämme’s study on the food trade in Stockholm provides good statistics and data for the organization of the food trade, as does the study by Sven Gerentz and Jan Ottosson on the same subject. A study of the wholesale and retail trade in Sweden in the twentieth century by Hugo Kylebäck also contributes to the understanding of the development of the food trade in Sweden. Peder Aléx’s study of the cooperative movement is also useful in this respect, although the focus in Aléx’s study is more on the cultural significance of the cooperative movement. The history of distribution in Sweden is also examined via the development of the ICA movement, even if this holds greater significance in particular for the second part of the dissertation.24 Together, these studies provide an understanding of the food retail trade and the provisioning of cities against which the developments of the market halls may be better understood.

Method and material for part 2

- Studies on the development of the retail trade, both cooperative and private, and studies about distribution.
- Contemporary books discussing the retail and distribution question.
- Memoirs from key actors.
- Handbooks.
- Trade journals like *Svenska förpackningar, Butikskultur, Fri köpenskap, Svenska stadsförbundets tidsskrift.*
- Photographs of market halls in decline from Stockholm’s stads-museum, the Stockholm City Museum.

The period of decline was not a clean break with the past. The literature that provided the contextual understanding of the general retail landscape for part 1 serve as the point of departure for understanding the developments in part 2. When the market hall lost its allure of modernity and became a non-issue, there was already a retail infrastructure in place. It was not perfect, but it was more successful than the market hall. To make up for the absence of traces of the market hall, my attention was thus focused on the evolution of the general retail landscape. The retail evolution was interpreted in relation to the evolution of Swedish modernity. This larger story then provided the frame of interpretation and understanding into which the sparse traces of the market hall was inserted.

In 1942, the famous photographer Lennart af Petersens was employed by the Stockholm City Museum (Stockholms stadsmuseum). He documented much of the inner city on the threshold of urban regeneration. The photographs of the Stockholm market halls in the 1950s and 1960s, mostly by af Petersens, poignantly reveal their decline. However, they have served more as a way to think about the void of the market hall, than a basis for analysis.

The contemporary debates, the handbooks, and the trade journals all spoke of the greater story of Swedish modernity and the retail revolution. They beamed over the successful retail formats, the self-service stores, and the modern packaging technology. The realities and the interpretations of modernity they revealed speak of different interpretations of quality, rationality, and authenticity than in earlier eras. In these accounts, the national level was more pronounced. The supreme entity was the welfare state, not the city. Still, the investigation of part 2 keeps Stockholm as the main focus as far as possible.
Method and material for part 3

- Participant observation in Östermalm, Hötorget and Söderhallarna market halls. Fieldwork conducted between September 2005 to August 2006.
- Informal and formal interviews with customers and vendors in the above-mentioned market halls.
- Formal interviews with administrative personnel from the former Stockholm Market Hall Board.
- Archival material at the Stockholm Market Hall Board (newspaper clippings, annual reports, and registers of vendors/tenants from 1975 to 2005, in five year intervals).
- Commercial material, printed and web-based, from the Market Hall Board, the vendors and trade associations in the above-mentioned market halls.

Why ethnographical methods?

Ethnographic methods offer a way of analyzing contemporary phenomena, of capturing practices and ideals. For a number of reasons, it was not possible to do ethnography in the traditional anthropological sense, with the popular notion of living out in the field for at least a year, and getting to know all aspects of life. The primary reasons are that market halls are specific settings, places of commercial activity, which are open only during fixed hours, and this limits the access. That the market halls are only open during specific hours is not necessarily a disadvantage, instead it reflects the conditions of the modern urban experience. The market hall is a specific space, a place in the urban landscape. Modern urban lives are generally lived and experienced in different places, and different geographic places tend to organize life. To study the market hall is part of an increasingly prolific form of ethnography which is undertaken in different workplaces and in consumption and business settings. In order to bring in some of the holistic approach that is the hallmark of anthropology, I attempted to look at the market hall itself holistically.

Description of the field(s)

Östermalm, Hötorgt, and Söderhallarna market halls are the three existing market halls in Stockholm, each with its own architecture, history, and character. For reasons of multiplicity and openness, I found it motivating to do fieldwork in all three of them. George Marcus advocates multi-sited fieldwork in order to counter-balance problems of reflexivity, and to offer new ways of doing ethnography, especially when you do ethnography “at home”.26 Also, I believe that in order to capture the essence of the market halls, they need to be studied in relation to one another. I have alternated between the three market halls, and spent approximately four hours in each market hall, before changing venue. Sometimes, however, I stayed in the same market hall the entire day. I have alternated between open and more focused observations, depending on my knowledge and familiarity with the field, and what stage I was currently in methodologically and analytically.27

The first market hall in the study, Östermalm market hall, is located in the upper class district of Östermalm, and caters to the most upscale clientele. It was constructed in 1888, and it is the only market hall preserved from the first era of market halls. It was threatened by demolition during the 1950s restructuring of the inner city, but was saved by petitions and the fact that other parts of the inner city were being remodeled earlier, and by the time Östermalm was facing urban regeneration, the general feeling had changed. Östermalm market hall upholds an air of tradition, authenticity, and venerability.

The original building of the second market hall, at Hötorgt, was actually demolished in the 1950s restructuring. After much debate, it was finally replaced by a new market hall, which was inaugurated in 1958. Perhaps as a concession to the conflicting ideals about what kind of city was desirable, and as a sign of the relative (un)importance of food retail, the replacement was relegated to the underground.28 Hötorgt market

28. In the discussions about the renovations of Hötorgt market hall in November 2009, the link between the open air market and the market hall will be made more visible by replacing the fast food restaurants at the street level with food stores. The number of fast food outlets inside the market hall shall also be reduced according to the City Commissioner Kristina Alvendal, who wishes to “put Hötorgt market hall on the gastronomic map”. In the com-
chapter 3

hall is situated right in the city center, mostly surrounded by offices and shops, although a few residential buildings still exist. Hötorget market hall has the most international character of the three, with shopkeepers and merchandise from all around the world. It also seems to attract the most diversified clientele.

Söderhallarna market hall from 1992 is the most recent of the three. It is a market hall located together with other facilities in a commercial center. However, it has a privileged position as one of the main attractions in the center. Södermalm used to be defined as the working class district of Stockholm, but increasingly from the 1980s this characterization no longer applies. A middle class clientele with more upscale food preferences is now the predominant group in Södermalm.

Conversations

Michèle de La Pradelle interviewed some of the market stall holders in her study of Carpentras to find out more about how they view their business, the customers, and the way of life they sell and live. On a slightly different note, I have in my study focused more on conversations with the vendors on themes like trends, target groups, regular customers, and how suppliers are chosen. This resonates with David Westbrook’s argument about ethnography as essentially approaching subjects through conversation and how this has a value all to itself: it opens up theoretical and analytical ways of exploring contemporary society, which respects and reflects the perceptions of the ethnographic subjects.

During slow hours, most vendors have been very accommodating, and I have spent a lot of time discussing various issues in the market halls with them. Initially, these discussions took the form of informal interviews, probably because that is an established format, a convention that most people are familiar with, but more often it was conversations in Westbrook’s sense. Since I spent less time with the customers, both regular and occasional customers, the informal interview format was more common with them.

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mments to this article, people express worries about the future of the market hall. See Gyllenberg, E-K., “Hötorgshallen rustas upp för 60 miljoner kronor”, DN, November 5, 2009 and www.dn.se/sthlm/hotorgshallen-rustas-upp-for-60-miljoner-kronor-1.988492 for the online comments.

29. La Pradelle, M. de, Les vendredis de Carpentras.
Many handbooks on how to conduct interviews recommend starting with simple questions like name, age, occupation, and so forth. In my informal interviews, these questions have sometimes been too personal. The primary interest has instead been to establish confidence with the interviewees, and to show that my interest is in the issues of consumption and market halls. Some consumers and vendors expected me to display taste and distinction in my capacity as a supposed expert and “food researcher”. Interviewees often want to know what results the researcher has come up with, or what other people have said in previous interviews and how the researcher has interpreted this. Many vendors and customers did this: the vendors wanted to see what their co-vendors, who represent both competition and co-operation, had said. The customers seemed to seek assurance that their consumption choices were sophisticated relative to other consumers. There are many normative notions about healthy eating, the proper meal, and gastronomy. Many consumers wanted to display what they believed were the proper attitudes, and at the same time check what the researcher thought about these issues. Many also wanted to know why they were chosen for an interview. Some people seemed to be more accustomed to being taken seriously and displayed a greater degree of confidence, and as long as the questions were consistent with the way they presented themselves in relation to food and consumption, they were happy to answer.

In the field and outside

For the fieldwork, I have mostly relied on conversations and to some extent, interviews. My recollections of the conversations were written down as fieldnotes, as were some of the interviews when the interviewees did not want to be recorded. I used various techniques for taking fieldnotes. As the field became more familiar to me, I stayed for longer stretches of time before noting down the impressions and conversations. When there were situations that seemed to be of particular significance, or situations that simply caught my attention in one way or other, I retreated to write down in as much detail as possible while it was still fresh in my mind. In the evenings, I would transfer my notes to files in the computer. The fieldnotes have served as a way for me both to find patterns and to keep a

31. See for example Kvale, S., Den kvalitativa forskningsintervjun.
distance to my material. At the same time, it has also in a sense helped me overcome the distance in time and space from the situations I aimed to capture, and reflect over the situated character of my interpretations.34

One of my initial ideas was to follow consumer flows, to see whether there was more intense activity during certain hours or certain days. Another question was what people do in the market hall. Do they just stroll around looking? Do they eat in one of the restaurants? What do they buy? How do they buy things? Do they ask to sample the food before buying? Are there negotiations? Is advice asked for or given? These questions can partly be answered by following the consumer itineraries. This technique was used by numerous researchers in the shopping mall project in Solna Centrum.35 Michèle de La Pradelle acted in much the same way for her study of the street market in Carpentras.36 However, this proved to be fairly difficult during slow hours. Instead, I asked if I could come shopping with a number of customers, and asked if they could explain to me what they were doing as we went along. Most people did this willingly.

During busy hours it was much easier to pass unnoticed, and as I got to know the vendors, my presence became both more and less noticeable. I became more noticeable because the vendors knew who I was, and less noticeable because they would no longer ask if I needed help and I would then be less noticed by other customers. Consumer flows, or rather the perceived intensity (or lack of intensity) in the consumer flows, were one of the things most vendors and staff liked to discuss and comment on, sometimes at length. They compared and evaluated the number of customers to the number of customers they would have expected at this time of the day, the week, the month, or the year.

Additional tools of interpretation

Another category that helped in answering the questions about the meaning of the market hall has been advertising material, both printed and web based.37 These have been analyzed, along with infomercials from the Stockholm Market Hall Administration on the market halls. When the Market Hall Administration presented the market halls on their website,
it was in the tone of infomercials, and it indicated how the city administration wanted to present the market halls. The market halls themselves also have their own websites, and after the Stockholm Market Hall Administration was incorporated into another Administration, their importance increased. More elaborate advertising material such as coffee table books to celebrate an anniversary, suitable as gifts with their glossy photographs, also say something of how business owners want the market halls portrayed. One example of this is Ö-hallen, which was commissioned in 1997 by the Market Hall Administration to celebrate the renovation of Östermalms market hall in 1995-97.

Some of the larger vendors, like Melanders, have their own advertising material printed in the form of newspapers, although in the form of advertisements. These are distributed with SvD, one of the larger Swedish morning newspapers. One way of interpreting the advertising material is offered by the American geographer Robert Sack. According to him we can analyze advertisements in relation to nature, meaning, and social relations. What we perceive (nature, the material aspect of the commodity) is interpreted (meaning, the cultural values attached to commodities) through society (social relations, every commodity embodies social relations in how it was produced, distributed and consumed). By weaving these elements together, consumers form a fabric or the context of consumption.

Rather than taking photographs, I have been working with existing photographic material. This had the additional advantage of saying something about how the business owners and the administrators want to present the market halls.

To use these kinds of additional sources is an increasingly common practice in ethnographic studies. The economic historian Martin Gustavsson cites the anthropologist Mary Des Chene as an advocate of a combination of ethnographical methods and classical methods in history, such as archive research, to justify this line of research as fruitful interdisciplinary work – especially for volatile settings such as shopping malls, or market halls for that matter, where the constant flow of people makes it more of a transit place than a settled place. George Marcus is

also an advocate of this approach.\textsuperscript{41} Ian Hodder talks about the study of material culture. He stresses how the significance of material objects must always be interpreted in their cultural context, and situated in relation to production and use. He also discusses the notion of time in the study of material culture, how material meaning varies over time, and is constantly subject to reinterpretation. This implies that the researcher has to examine past and present, as well as different expressions of material culture.\textsuperscript{42} The additional material, for example the documents, helps to critically examine the observations and interviews, as it facilitates to put these results into context. The interviews and the observations allow the researcher to experience things firsthand. Both the interpretation of the documents and the interpretation of the interviews and observations thus enhance one another.


\textsuperscript{42} Hodder, I., “The Interpretation of Documents and Material Culture”, In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln, (eds.): \textit{Handbook of Qualitative Research}. 
Prelude

Dreams of modernity: 
the rise of the market hall

Stockholm at the end of the nineteenth century was a city anxious to enter the ranks of the cities of the modern Western world. The main concern of city officials was to create a proper urban setting. In this endeavor, domesticating the rural, or rather, extracting the rural from the urban, became paramount. At the same time, the city could not survive without the constant influx of people and products from the countryside. This development was self-reinforcing. The more people moved to the city, the more products were needed to feed them all, especially as the patterns of urban food production were gradually eliminated.\(^1\) Paradoxically, the desire to create distinctions and a firm urban-rural divide, led to a re-evaluation of the farmer. The farmer became an iconic figure, celebrated as genuine and sound, and as a true expression of the Swedish national soul. Still, there was an urgent need to establish forms of urban food distribution to secure a sufficient, safe and (hopefully) nutritious urban food supply.

\(^1\) A lot of food was produced in urban settings. In fact, growing food and keeping livestock in the city was common practice until the end of the 19th century. As the city expanded, there was less room for plantations and the sounds and smells of animals were less tolerated.
In the 1860s and 1870s, the role models for the organization of the food distribution were taken from continental Europe. Those advocating a market hall system in Stockholm pointed to the Parisian market halls as examples of how a modern international city solved the food distribution challenge in a modern and rational way. The ‘market issue’ was primarily under debate in the Stockholm City Council. Concerned citizens, who had visited continental Europe, deplored the state of the food markets in the Swedish capital.

The first attempt was successful, but it was a single, very rudimentary market hall built in 1875. Another more luxurious market hall opened seven years later, but overall the Stockholm City Council was slow to act and negotiations took time. The situation in Stockholm was thus far from a fixed system of distribution on the scale seen in Paris. The open-air markets and the market halls were perceived as two aspects of the food distribution problem, and the City Council appointed a committee in 1891 to investigate how the city’s food supply ought to be conceived. The Stockholm city officials were primarily looking at developments in Berlin, where a set of retail market halls were being constructed during the 1890s. Open-air markets and market halls in other European and Swedish towns were also monitored by the market committee of the City Council. The difference between retail and wholesale market halls was beginning to attract interest, but the division was not well-defined, and the term ‘central market hall’ was used to indicate both retail and wholesale.

How the system of food distribution should materialize, and who should take responsibility for its establishment and its continued sustenance, were by no means obvious. Even the most fundamental issues were yet to be resolved. What kind of infrastructure was needed to secure enough food for all the inhabitants in the city? Should this be public or private? What were the appropriate levels of control and regulation? What was safe food? What food could be sold in open-air markets? What about food prices? In the arenas of politics, science, health, and business, the food distribution question was acted out.

To understand the historical changes that took place, the following chapter will use the methodological and analytical concepts of quality, rationality, and authenticity. As discussed previously, the term quality is problematic since the descriptive and the normative intermingle. During this time period, descriptive attributes such as nutrition value or bacterial content were matters of heated debate, reflecting novel scientific findings.

2. See for example SCC 23/1865; SCC 33/1866; SCC 107/1867; SCC 58/1869; SCC 35/1873 and Hermelin, C. F. S., Torghandeln i städerna.
3. SCC, appendix 5/1895.
Whether or not quality should be regulated, and in that case how, was also still unsettled and visions of a legal framework were opposed to self-regulation. We can see the various debates as a struggle between different “orders of worth”: aesthetic, economic, ethical or hygienic, all expressing qualities according to their own logic. What aspects were given priority, and how they were valued, is highly contextual.4 The concept of quality was enhanced by the concepts of rationality and authenticity, themselves specific in time and space as well. The beginnings of scientific management in the US were only vaguely filtering into the Swedish debate initially, but as the 1930s approached, rationality moved to the fore as a most valued attribute. Authenticity during this period had more to do with upholding the urban-rural divisions, giving the right kind of rural farmer priority over the urban impostor.

Stockholm on the brink of modernity

Congested city

In 1867, a proposal for a new marketplace on the square Norra Bantorget\(^1\) was presented in the City Council. The proposal stated why the city needed to look over its current food distribution system. The population had increased. The number of foodstuffs that entered the city had also increased with the new railroad transports. A new marketplace would encourage direct trade where farmers could sell their goods to eager townspeople. There were many benefits in this, for city dwellers and farmers alike. A more direct trade with the farmers would at once guarantee lower prices and fresher produce, which would be highly beneficial, especially for the poor. The farmers would encounter a ready market and thus be induced to bring their goods to Stockholm rather than elsewhere. It was the city’s responsibility to procure a point of sale that would meet the demands of both townspeople and farmers.\(^2\) This position reveals a concern over the food trade and its organization. The real, authentic farmer was presented as a guarantee for freshness and, ultimately, quality.

\(^1\) The name Norra Bantorget refers to its location by the Northern railway station.
\(^2\) SCC 107/1867.
The author of this proposal was the Agricultural Society of Stockholm. They asserted that a new marketplace was badly needed, not only because the current outlets were congested, but also because farmers wanted one place to dispose of all their goods and not be obliged to find ways of transporting themselves and their goods to various open-air markets far from the railway station. Preferably, the city should provide covered markets, also known as market halls. The agricultural society also endorsed the idea to add side tracks from the railways, which would facilitate the unloading of the farm produce arriving by train. It was of utmost importance that the size of this new marketplace would be materially larger than the Hötorget marketplace, which was by far too congested.\(^3\) Not everyone agreed with this description of the situation. There were objections that the proposal was expensive and that there were no guarantees that a marketplace twice the size of Hötorget was actually necessary.\(^4\)

The suggestion of a new marketplace at Norra Bantorget was emblematic of the discussions in the Stockholm City Council for years to come, and they continued with certain variations and additional suggestions. The main themes remained: the congested marketplaces and the fear that the farmers would not bring their products directly to the city and instead rely on middlemen. Even worse, there was a fear that the farmers would export the food away, leaving the city barren and completely at the mercy of middle men. What was being played out here was primarily a concern over attracting the authentic, honest farmers with their untainted quality products, but it also reflected a concern for optimizing the distribution to keep the prices down and thus satisfy the consuming public.

The response of the City Council was also typical: there were always those who pointed to the uncertain outcomes of every major investment and who preferred inaction, which at any rate was cheap. It also tallied well with the laissez-faire ideology of leaving everything to the market that was part of the official discourse. However, the laissez-faire approach was never fully pursued. In practice, the city’s engagement and responsibilities continually increased, as did the acceptance that the city had a responsibility for the well-being of its inhabitants, and that the best way of ensuring this was through regulations and control. A regulatory framework could not come into place without defining the borders of what constituted the limits of quality.

The desire to construct a bigger and more rational marketplace was connected to the severe competition for space at the Stockholm squares.

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3. Hötorget literally means the Haymarket, and was one of the old marketplaces in Stockholm. The name Hötorget actually dates back to the 1640s.
4. SCC 107/1867.
The old city center, the Old Town, had no more room to expand: the existing space on embankments and squares was insufficient to accommodate all the vendors and customers. Hötorget, another well-established marketplace in Stockholm, was also plagued by congestion. New marketplaces were discussed and various locations suggested. The waterways had hitherto been the most important means of transporting food to the city, but the railway was continually gaining in importance. The Old Town represented the core of this water-centered food system, with the squares Kornhamnstorg and Mälartorget as its nodal points. However, none of these marketplaces had direct access to the railway, and the railway was seen as the future. The future street system, in fact, ought to be adapted to the railway, argued the experts employed by the City Council.  

This was a new way of conceiving a rational food trade and planning for the future.

New marketplaces in proximity to the railway stations thus appeared as a most convenient and modern way of city planning. For the northern part of Stockholm, Norra Bantorget was thus presented as an optimal choice. For the southern part of the city, the place favored was the square adjacent to the southern railway station, Södra Bantorget. The population of the southern part of Stockholm had risen to 40,000 inhabitants, and its geographical position on a hilly island meant that its inhabitants needed a marketplace of their own as the city expanded further. A marketplace was vital and its location had to be chosen with care, especially since it might be there for centuries, as the City Council carefully pointed out. The marketplaces still remained at the center of attention when a new food distribution system was to be conceived. But a matter of such weight commanded serious consideration, and it was hard to select a place that would be accepted unanimously.

The suggestions of the new marketplaces met with some skepticism. One of the members of the City Council thought the price of the site at Södra Bantorget was too high. Also, it was impossible to know how much of the goods that came by the main road would end up at the new marketplace of Södra Bantorget. It was highly improbable that the sellers coming by the main road would wish to stop at the new marketplace, seeing how reluctant they were to sell anything at the existing marketplace of Adolf Fredriks torg, preferring instead to sell their goods at the crowded

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5. SCC, 33/1866.
6. SCC, 33/1866.
7. SCC, 58/1865.
8. Adolf Fredriks torg was renamed Mariatorget in 1959, even if the issue of changing names was first mentioned in 1923.
markets of the Old Town. He also pointed out that the residents of the southern part of Stockholm had already chosen their marketplaces: most went to the markets in the Old Town. Whether they or the sellers would change their habits remained open to doubt.9

Governing the consuming public was a delicate matter. Simply providing some infrastructure would not be enough to assure success. Norra Bantorget never turned out the way it was hoped. The called for extensions were never carried out. The City Council found the investments to be too great, and despite lengthy discussions that continued into the Swedish Parliament, the result was far from the grand new square envisioned by Albert Lindhagen, the influential city planner, or Gillis Bildt, the governor of Stockholm.10

Södra Bantorget was hardly more successful. The food trade remained on a small scale and vanished entirely in the 1930s to give place to the monumental House of the Citizens (Medborgarhuset). Perhaps it is unfair to judge the failed attempts at organizing the food trade around the two railway stations. The first square remained small and had too close proximity to an established marketplace, Hötorget. The second railway station itself never took on the expected importance since subsequent extensions of the railway connecting the southern and central stations diminished the importance of the southern railway station. What these examples show is that neither the City Council nor private enterprise embraced the intended commercial space. They provided neither the infrastructure nor the activity necessary to turn the railway station squares into bustling marketplaces. What had been presented as a supremely rational and modern way of planning for food infrastructure, intended to secure a food supply of quality and quantity, came to naught.

To see how Stockholm has developed geographically and extended its territory during the period described, see William William-Olsson’s classic maps from 1850, 1865, 1880, 1895, 1910 and 1930 on the following pages.11

**Shaping the market**

What shape and design the new marketplaces ought to take was another matter of debate. As we saw above, the agricultural society in the county of Stockholm advocated covered markets, or market halls, to accommodate farmers and protect them and their produce. In 1868, C G Hierta, 

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9. SCC, 58/1865.
William William-Olsson, Stockholms stadsmuseum.

an estate owner, suggested to the Stockholm City Council that a market hall ought to be constructed in Stockholm. Most other European cities had market halls, and there was no reason the Swedish capital should do less than the large cities of Europe. If nothing else, the harsh climate in Stockholm made it unavoidable. Mr. Hierta argued that the advantages of market halls were widely known; it was only a question of who should undertake the construction, private entrepreneurs or the City itself. The market hall was presented as a rational way of preserving and attracting

12. SCC, 58/1869.
quality, but also as a way to guarantee that the authentic farmers would bring their wholesome produce to the capital.

Hierta declared that the best would be for the City to assume responsibility. According to the cost estimate in Hierta’s proposal, the City would actually benefit economically from the construction of a market hall as the revenues from the stall holders would largely cover the construction costs within a short period of time. There would be sixty-eight stalls, each with its own water tap, wash basin, and water chute to promote cleanliness in the interest of good health and civic rectitude. If the City declined, private entrepreneurs were bound to go in to reap the benefits of this promising business venture. The members of the City Council were not convinced, however, and recommended a rejection of the proposal.15

A private entrepreneur did turn up and proposed to build market halls on suitable public lots in return for the permission to collect revenues from the stall holders, to cover the construction costs and the maintenance. This suggestion provoked a debate in the City Council over whether the City should grant the use of public lots to private entrepreneurs, if their intent was to serve the public with facilities such as a market hall. The City Finance Committee was set against the proposal. If any building was to be commissioned, the City should build and collect revenues itself. The City Council did decide that private enterprise should not be allowed to build on public lots, especially not such valuable lots as the ones suggested for the construction of market halls. It also opted for the construction of a test hall, before any system of market halls could be considered.14

In the end, the City decided to build a simple freestanding shed with iron poles and tin roof and no fixed walls. It contained sixty-four stalls and would mainly sell meat. The selected location was Köttorget, which literally means the Meat Square, and it was in right in the middle of the busiest commerce zone on the embankment of the Old Town, where most of the trade was taking place.15 The City Council had opted for prudence rather than a full-scale market hall system. It was both safer and cheaper than engaging in uncertain business ventures with the taxpayers’ money. This outlook on the role of the City in how the food trade should be organized reflects the uncertainty surrounding both what the role of the City itself should be and what constituted a well-organized and well-functioning food trade. In a sense this can be interpreted as reflecting

13. SCC, 58/1869.
14. SCC, 35/1873.
15. SCC, 35/1873.
a general uncertainty on the level of what could be said to constitute a rational food trade, as well as what a good food trade entailed.

The construction of the test market hall Kötttorget, which was inaugurated in 1875, did not solve the problems of congestion or satisfy the complaints voiced by the Stockholm agricultural society. The most popular marketplaces in the Old Town and on Hötorget continued to attract the biggest crowds, and there seemed to be no end to the influx of buyers and sellers. To build something at the crowded marketplaces in the Old Town meant that part of the trade would have to move elsewhere.
The construction of the market hall on Köttorget pushed away the farmers coming by steamboat, who had been granted exclusive access to this space in 1870. A petition from the steamboat captains pleaded that the City Council revise its plans and build the market shed at the neighboring square Mälartorget. Otherwise the farmers would be obliged to add the expense of transportation to the price of their produce, which would certainly not benefit the consuming public. The fight for space in what was judged as the most advantageous business site continued over the years to come. In this spatial battle, definitions of what was an honest trade, who should be allowed to use the coveted space, and whether trade should be in the open-air or in covered markets, accrued in importance. Here questions of authenticity and rationality as well as ultimately quality, were used as arguments for and against various regulations, depending on the position of the interested parties.

One of the most visible and debated aspects of the food trade was the practice of selling live cattle. The livestock trade largely contributed to the noise and pollution of the existing marketplaces, especially Hötorget, where the trade was most intense. Already in the 1860s, when the market issue and the congested marketplaces were first under debate, the trade in livestock was targeted as particularly troublesome. Selling live cattle in the open-air was cruel to the animals, who had to suffer wind and weather. Also, the animals were tired and stressed from the journey to the city and were thus not in good condition, which meant that they were sold at a loss to the farmer. Moreover, the animals disturbed the neighbors and polluted the marketplaces. Better then to hide and protect the animals in market sheds, argued the Stockholm agricultural society. The City Council pointed out that it was mainly butchers who bought livestock, and that the City Council preferred to build market halls for the street hawkers who catered to the public. The public was defined as individual households, whom the City should protect, whereas the butchers qualified as private enterprises, who should fend for themselves. Ten years later, the majority of the trade in livestock continued at Hötorget, despite the efforts to move it to Norra Bantorget. At Södra Bantorget, near the Southern railway station, a market shed for live cattle had been put up without success. To alter the habits of buyers and sellers and move the trade, more powerful means of control or more compelling incentives had to be put in place. The market issue had to gain more

16. SCC, appendix 29/1880.
17. SCC, 66/1874.
18. SCC, 24/1866.
19. SCC, 90/1876.
powerful cachet. Here the concern over the urban character, or rather the lack of urbanity, of Stockholm as a potential world city contributed to putting it on the agenda.

**Transcending the provincial character**

In 1878, Baron Hermelin wrote an indignant contribution to the debate on the market hall issue. The situation in Stockholm was compared to Paris and its beautiful Halles, much to the detriment of Stockholm. The extreme cost increases in the Swedish capital over the past ten years were
attributed to the lack of a coherent market system. In Paris everything was modern and well-organized. The construction in iron and glass was worth all admiration. As an example of modern elegance, Hermelin mentioned fish swimming in basins with continuously running water.

The halls were equipped with gigantic storage cellars, where food came from railway tracks from all the major stations in Paris. This system relieved the traffic situation and lowered the distribution costs. The distribution system was described in detail. First the garden produce arrived. It was quickly unloaded, inspected and resold by commissionaires. The noise level was intense, due to all the people, the horses, donkeys, ducks, geese, hens and pigeons, but order was still maintained by the forty police agents, and the trade was efficient and rapid. This well-organized system attracted goods from all of France and even from Europe.

The elegance and the neatness of the halls were particularly admired. The gas lighting and the water consumption were signs of modern notions of cleanliness. Public health inspectors surveyed all the food before it was offered for sale. Hermelin also cited the example of the sale of eggs, which employed forty-eight people, and how they sorted the eggs according to quality. The most exclusive eggs were even sold with cachet and the date the eggs were laid. The saleswomen were complimented for their noble manners and their charming appearance. The porters had elegant velvet coats and hats: all of which inspired the most vivid admiration.

The market system of Paris consisted of the central market halls and of fifty-seven covered markets around town. It employed 30,000 people and still generated a surplus, Hermelin reported. The ambulatory trade in Paris was also under control of the public health inspectors. A most satisfactory system, he concluded. Brussels, Vienna, and Berlin are other examples of cities where the trade had been organized in an orderly manner.

The comparison between Stockholm and Paris can be interpreted both as a way of defining quality and as a way of defining rationality. The entire description by Baron Hermelin focused on the rationality of the Parisian system, and its excellent quality food. Quality in this sense was attributed to the aesthetic values of the architecture, the organization, and the ambience of the Halles. Certain specific attributes were also brought forward to underline the superiority of the Parisian way, such as the example

of assigning cachet to the eggs. Here quality was defined more from the gustatory and hygienic point of view. The organization and the modern equipment of the Halles, such as railway transport underground, were taken as emblematic of the rationality and modernity of cosmopolitan Paris. Even the neatness of the porters’ uniforms was taken as testimony of the rationality and quality of the French food system.

The state of the Stockholm markets was deplorable. Hermelin described a visit to Hötorget in November 1877. The milk was standing in the black mud on the pavement, being diluted by the rain as the milk maids avoided putting the lids back on. Next to the milk, swine carcasses
were displayed on the ground itself, sometimes protected by old carpets or rags, filthy kitchen towels, or old horse blankets. The meat had come by railway and had to be transported to Hötorget, which explained why the seller had no cart on which to display the meat.25 On the southern part of the marketplace, the level of filth was rising up above the ankles. The market stalls there had tent roofs that splashed the customers with rain water. The candles used for lighting were insufficient; the ground covered with debris meant that the customers risked tripping and falling over. Meat was cut up on dirty old chopping blocks where the meat often fell to the ground. Entrails, eyes, blood, and hides were scattered around the meat sellers.26

The newly constructed market hall at Kötterget was deemed too small, and only some of the vendors observed the neatness and tidiness Hermelin associated with a proper market hall.27 The Stockholm market halls lacked quality and rationality, and consequently the quality of the food was called into question. The city itself would also suffer from the association: a city with such objectionable organization of its food trade could only be expected to fail other areas as well. This sentiment was shared by many of the members of the City Council, and the possibility of building a full-scale market hall system to respond to the increasing pressure on the food distribution of Stockholm gained momentum.

By the 1880s, the food distribution situation had indeed not improved: the market hall at Kötterget was insufficient, and furthermore its construction had created chaos when the trade in farmers’ produce coming by steam boat had been assigned to a small embankment. And the congestion was steadily increasing as fifteen more steamboats were granted permission coming to market at the Munkbron embankment. To solve this predicament, the Office of the Governor of Stockholm suggested a new market hall at the nearby marketplace of Mälartorget. Then Kötterget could be reserved for the farmers’ market yet again. But the Finance Committee of Stockholm preferred to concentrate on one market hall at the time, and recommended not to pursue the venture.28

Since Kötterget market hall had been an economic success, the City Council had decided to build another market hall at the coveted Hötorget marketplace. That sellers and buyers were in the habit of going to market there was undeniable, but the new building meant less selling space. It was going to be a more ambitious and more luxurious hall than the first

28. SCC, appendix 29/1880.
one at Köttrorget. The new hall could accommodate 132 stallholders, had individual cellars, gas lighting, asphalt flooring, and countertops of oak or marble. The construction was described as a miniature version of the Parisian Halles, which inspired both praise and criticism. All the vendors who lost their places due to the construction were offered a stall in the new market hall. Twenty-four well-known vendors with a wide clientele accepted the offer and moved in. Still, 173 vendors moved to the Norra
Bantorget marketplace. The hall was opened October 2, 1882 without any official ceremony.29

The Stockholm agricultural society continued to press for market sheds and halls to accommodate the farmers and facilitate the trade between farmers and city dwellers. Norra Bantorget would be much more attractive with such a covered market, and it was also in dire need of proper pavement. To support their argument, the Agricultural Society framed their complaints in terms of “indirect taxation” of country and city folk alike. At that time, farmers coming by rail were obliged to pay for transportation to marketplaces far away from the railway station. Sometimes, the prohibitive transportation fees forced them to sell on commission to middlemen instead. The fees and extra expenses the farmers had to pay naturally affected the price of food for the city dweller and it was in this sense it could be considered an indirect taxation. This explained the staggering food prices of the capital, claimed the agricultural society.30 The agricultural society used the figure of the authentic farmer as a guarantor for rational trade with quality products. The proximity and the freshness of the produce was to be protected by providing covered markets, which were thus presented as the most rational and efficient way of organizing the food trade.

In 1882, the City Council did eventually provide a market shed on Norra Bantorget. Three years later the shed was converted to another use. The fees charged the first year were subsequently removed to induce the farmers to use the shed which the agricultural society had requested with such insistence.31 But the lure of the Hötorget marketplace was apparently too strong. The food trade on Norra Bantorget instead took a different turn: 80 illegal market sheds covered the square, forming a miniature town of its own with bakers, butchers, shoemakers, hatters, cigarstores, glassware, pottery, chinaware, as well as cafés and restaurants. The illegal shanty town attracted the attention of the City auditors and was demolished in 1893. After this, all trade seems to have vanished according to Nordin.32 The unintended consequences of the decisions taken by the public authorities and the politicians paved the way for the development of Norra Bantorget. Instead of the rational, efficient food center promoting direct trade between authentic farmers and urban consumers,

30. SCC, appendix 53/1881.
31. SCC, 158/1885.
32. SCC, appendix 5/1895; Nordin, C., Oordning, p. 184-185.
the space was used in a different way by urban entrepreneurs eking out a living in an unforeseen way.

By the 1880s, Stockholm had expanded further and new districts called for city planning and infrastructure. Existing districts that had retained a rural character aspired to assume a more urban quality. Appeals for covered markets and marketplaces were consistently made as the new districts took form. The space for marketplaces competed with the desire for parks, another distinguishing feature of a modern city.  

33. SCC, 197/1884; SCC 253/1884; SCC 54/1886; SCC 141/1886; SCC 168/1886.
the district of Kungsholmen, the residents fought to have tobacco fields removed, both with reference to the need for parks, covered markets, and marketplaces. These pleas were ignored. Fields and cultivation near the city center did disappear as the value of the land gradually motivated more profitable use. Market halls were not necessarily among the new lucrative fields of application.

Still, five private market halls were constructed during the 1880s and 1890s. The first, which opened in 1881, had to close the same year. It only contained six stalls, and furthermore both the timing and the location were ill chosen: in 1881 the neighborhood around Observatoriegatan was not very affluent and the vibrant Hötorgt marketplace was only a couple of blocks away. Not even a decade later, the situation was completely different for another private market hall which opened just around the corner from the aborted one on Observatoriegatan. The Vasa market hall was situated in between Norrtullsgatan 5 and Vegagatan 4 and contained 28 stalls. The clientele who catered to this market hall was well-off and preferred not to go to the nearby Hötorgt. The Vasa market hall had almost five times as many stalls, but the altered character of the neighborhood attributed to its success. It might also reflect a different approach to location: proximity had a value of its own. The Vasa market hall was described by a journalist in 1902 as a most original and charming hall, so the ambience and allure of quality created by the vendors could also explain why this venture had better results than its predecessor on Observatoriegatan.

The most spectacular and the most successful private initiative was the still-existing Östermalms market hall. Built in a few months and inaugurated the 30th of November 1888 by King Oscar II and Prince Carl, it attracted a lot of attention from the start. Nevertheless, its success was not absolute. The vendors at the marketplace outside the hall were reluctant to leave their inexpensive places for the costly and luxurious stalls inside. The hall was heated, had electric light, hot and cold water, and good ventilation. The stalls were painted in red and blue and had an almost theatrical quality. Architecturally the hall was interesting: it used modern materials such as cement, and modern building techniques with cast iron structures, but the style was inspired both by the medieval brick

34. SCC, 152/1888; SCC 62/1869; SCC 73/1889; SCC 127/1891; SCC appendix 54/1891.
35. Christina Nordin, who has made an extensive inquiry into the Stockholm market halls, believes the Vasa market hall probably remained in service until 1954. In 1965 the house was demolished. See Nordin, C., Oordning, p. 203, 209.
36. Nordin, C., Oordning, p. 203.
buildings and the arcade structures common in the Mediterranean. This was typical of the architects Kasper Salin and Gustaf Clason.37 The Östermalm market hall aspired to joining primarily aesthetic and hygienic values to signal quality. This was by itself not enough to guarantee economic success.

The Svea market hall was constructed in 1889, a year after the Östermalm market hall. Built with two floors ornated by a couple of small towers, and had 46 stalls, with cellars and water and gas in the aisles. Like Östermalm, it had stores facing the street outside. It was located a couple of blocks away from the successful Vasa market hall, by a street that would later become one of the main boulevards in Stockholm, Sveavägen.38 Six years after its inauguration it was sold on auction under a writ of execution. Almost twenty years later, the City Council was offered to buy the market hall in 1914. The City Council declined since the cost of repair would be too great, and the market hall was probably demolished in 1930.39 This private enterprise failed to survive on its own merits, and

38. At the time, the street was called Stora Badstugatan, and retained a rural character. Still, the city plan indicated that it would become a major thoroughfare.
Chapter 4

Unlike the Östermalm and Maria market halls it was not rescued by the City Council. Time and space had passed it by and it could signal neither quality, nor rationality. As for authenticity, it had nothing to offer. Its vendors were not farmers, and the aesthetic and architectural value of the building was not enough to qualify for any authenticity claims either.

The Maria market hall was the first on the island of Södermalm. The location was not bad, a couple of blocks away from the Maria marketplace on one of the main arteries, Hornsgatan. It was inaugurated in October 1899, contained 65 stalls, a café, a restaurant, five stores, electric light, and free hot water for the tenants. A journalist who investigated the market halls in Stockholm in 1902 described the hall as follows:

In a few words, the description of this hall can be summarized in the following, very sad fashion: a market hall that is spacious and well organized, but in sad want of vendors and consequently in want of goods. This is due to the surroundings of the marketplace, whose vendors have no desire to move into the market hall. [...] The construction of the market hall has been declared to be of such excellent quality that it has been used as a model for several other market halls in the rest of the country.31

This meant that the pressure on the existing marketplaces remained, and if anything it increased with the constantly increasing street trade. At the same time, new shops opened all over Stockholm and the competition was ruthless. The first market hall at Köttorget, which had opened towards the end of an economic boom, had still proven to be a lucrative venture for the City. The more elaborate Hötorgshallen, which was inaugurated almost ten years later, was profitable for the City, but not necessarily for the stallholders. The economic rationality of the market halls was being challenged by the stores. Even location patterns were beginning to change. No longer was it an absolute truth that a central location was paramount. Rather, proximity to the consumer might be more valuable.

The situation for the vendors at Hötorget market hall was increasingly difficult. Not only the open-air market outside the hall, but also

40. At this point in time it was called Adolf Fredriksborg, which was confusing since there was a church with the same name located in the city.
41. "Denne hall kan i korthet defineras på följande, mycket sorgliga sätt: en mycket rymlig och praktiskt inrättad saluhall, som lider brust på försäljare och således åfven på varor. Detta förhållande lär komma sig af hallens grannskap till salutorget. Man har ingen lust att lämna detta för att flytta in i hallen [...] Konstruktionen af [hallen] uppgiftes vara så god, att den flera gånger tagits till mönster vid uppförandet af saluhallar i landsorten." Citation from Nordin, C., Ordning, p. 209, author’s translation.
the multitude of new stores opening all over Stockholm, were contributing to cut-throat competition. By 1886, the stallholders were already demanding rent reductions. By the beginning of the 1890s, additional competition from the impressive and privately owned Östermalm market hall further exasperated the stallholders at Hötorgshallen. The fish vendors wanted water basins with fresh, continuously moving water to be able to sell live fish, in order to compete with the commerce from the open-air market, and the elegance of Östermalm market hall. In this new retail landscape, over-establishment in the food trade went hand in hand with an insufficient and inefficient distribution system and an ill-defined regulatory framework. Bankruptcy was common among the small food retailers, but prices were not always low enough to satisfy the needs of the poorest inhabitants. The Stockholm food market was thus less than perfect.

42. SCC, 72/1890.
43. SCC, appendix 72/1893.
The Market Committee undertakes an investigation

The members of the City Council were aware of the difficulties of the urban food market. The market hall system envisaged and commissioned by the Office of the Governor of Stockholm in 1869 was still not in place. In 1888, Eduard Fränckel, who was a prominent member of the City Council, proposed that the City should build a central market hall that would be the core of this modern food system. The location Mr. Fränckel had in mind was the Old Town, just next to the existing market hall Kötterget. The market hall would be a two-storied building, with 52 stalls on the ground floor, 90 up in the galleries above, and 20 offices on the top floor. The elegant and modern market hall would replace the old and dilapidated hall, and at once be a sign of progress and a solution to the unsatisfactory food distribution.44 Most of the food supply still arrived by boat and this meant the location in the Old Town was perfect. In addition, it was still a favored spot for inhabitants from all of Stockholm, Mr Fränckel claimed.45

The proposal for a central market hall was typical of the times in several ways. Firstly, the grandeur of the building was intended to impress and to evoke progress and power. Secondly, the selected location reflected a way of perceiving the city itself: the center was still the Old Town, while the commerce on the busy marketplaces and embankments were bordering on chaos, but also bustling with life and energy. If only this could be harnessed and neatly ordered, the city would prosper. To expect the center to be the most natural and most rational place to locate the food trade was also typical.

The consensus seemed to be that a modern central market hall should be constructed, but what remained to be solved was whether this should be undertaken by the City itself or by private entrepreneurs. Mr. Fränckel, who believed the City had a responsibility for the urban food supply in general and the food prices in particular, meant that it was more rational if the City assumed responsibility for the project, since this would probably lead to the lowest prices and the best quality. A modern city should set the norm for the food trade. The Finance Committee did not share Mr. Fränckel’s optimistic view of the profitability of the central market hall

44. This market hall would be the most expensive in the history of Stockholm. The construction costs would amount to 390,000 SEK, and to buy the land would cost an additional 710,000 SEK. These sums could be compared to the 250,000 SEK granted for the Hötorget market hall in 1880, see SCC, 64/1880. To motivate the costs, Mr. Fränckel pointed to the revenues estimated to generate 89,300 SEK annually.
45. SCC, appendix 34/1889.
venture. Instead they pointed to the falling revenues of the other market halls, and the uncertainty of how the urban food system would evolve.\(^{46}\) The proposal for a central market hall in the Old Town was re-submitted over the following years at regular intervals, and in 1891, a private entrepreneur even offered to undertake the construction, but the City Council postponed until Mr. Fränckel retracted his proposal in 1897.\(^{47}\) The concerns of Mr Fränckel and the response of the City Council were emblematic of the way the Stockholm food distribution evolved: on the one hand, concerned citizens demanding reform, and on the other, the City Council, always careful not to spend taxpayer money unnecessarily. It also reflected the tension between what fell under the responsibility of the community at large and what private enterprise should attend to.

Still, in the absence of a municipal market hall system with central market halls, the congestion at the marketplaces was worsening. To respond to the situation, the City Council appointed a Market Committee in 1891. The most urgent reasons for a Market Committee were to address the following problems:

- The congestion that hindered sellers, buyers, and traffic in general
- The hygienic risks of selling meat under the open sky
- The lack of market halls and the unsatisfactory standards of the few existing market halls
- Stockholm residents parading as country people to avoid taxes and fees, and as a result hindering the real farmers from marketing their produce

Among the members of the Market Committee were those who were clearly in favor of more municipal control, with municipal market halls and slaughterhouses (like the city veterinarians Billström and Kjerrulf) and those who were professed liberals and shunned municipal control as an attack on free enterprise, preferring to see everything solved on a voluntary basis (such as the public health inspector Wawinski). Among the members was also a merchant who had a stall in Hötorget market hall, Vilhelm Hansen.\(^{48}\) Mr Hansen would later play an important role in arguing for stricter rules and more municipal control of the urban food supply.

\(^{46}\) SCC, appendix 34/1889.
\(^{47}\) SCC, appendix 1/1899.
\(^{48}\) SCC, appendix 5/1895.
Four years later, in 1895, the final report of the Market Committee was submitted. The report was fairly thorough. The Markets Committee conducted a review of the existing trade in the marketplaces around town. To conduct their investigation, they collected several reports, complaints, and proposals from interested parties and sent out a questionnaire to other European towns to see how they had solved the market issue. The city officials in Berlin, Frankfurt am Main, Leipzig, Munich, Stuttgart, Vienna, Antwerpen, and Paris had all answered a number of questions about the trade in open-air markets versus the trade in covered markets, the nature of permissions for sale, days and hours for trade, fees and revenues for the market trade, if meat sales were allowed in the open-air markets, and if city-dwellers and country-people had different privileges. The work undertaken by the Market Committee can be interpreted as a way of establishing standards: what was desirable, what was rational?

In general, the Market Committee argued in favor of more rules and stricter regulations. The Market Committee criticized the police for not applying the existing market bye-law to its full extent: order and cleanliness of the marketplaces should be more rigorously enforced. Even so, the rules and regulation were deemed too lax. It was, for example, enough to report to the police to receive a permit to market. This opened the market to all, with no screening. The Market Committee advised that some screening process should be in place, so that a ban could be imposed on dishonest vendors selling inferior goods. The problem was that the existing market bye-law and the regulations of the public health board were not in accord: the stricter rules that prohibited the sale of injurious or adulterated foodstuffs were rescinded by the freedom of trade. The concerns for a rational food trade with more rules and regulation could also be interpreted as a new way of defining quality and authenticity. The questions about authenticity concerned both the goods themselves and the vendors: with ascertained provenance and origin, authenticity could be granted and implicitly also quality.

That the lax rules led to congestion and chaos at the existing marketplaces was a recurrent theme in the report from the Market Committee. One of the reports described the congestion due to the trade on the steamboats below Köttorget. There was a tremendous crowd anxious to get ahold of the best goods first, making it difficult to unload and transport the goods at all. The situation was made worse by the city dwellers going to their summer houses in the archipelago, and by the fact that the

49. SCC, appendix 5/1895.
50. SCC, appendix 5/1895.
steamboats also served to transport livestock. The congestion resulted in what the Market Committee called ‘undesirable trade practices’. For example, untidy vessels and barges were used both for storage and sale of sensitive foods. This was highly objectionable, the more so as it entailed that the barges performed the functions of marketplaces, free of charge. The concern for the hygienic aspects of the food trade was clearly not the only motivation for the Market Committee, as financial and regulatory issues were also highly prioritized in the debate on the design of the future marketplaces.\(^{51}\) Again we see how the notions of quality and rationality are acted out: to organize and control the food trade was essential in the eyes of the Market Committee. However, exactly how to do so was still a matter of debate.

There was one question on which the Market Committee was adamant: ambulatory trade should be banned altogether, as it inevitably led to chaos and disorder. The ambulatory trade was associated with the open-air markets and its hucksters. The female vendors in particular were portrayed as disturbing elements: defiant and cantankerous, they refused to make amends, not responding to friendly reprimands, nor sharp admonitions or even financial penalties from the police. Abuse, loud bickering and fights were common, according to the Market Committee.\(^{52}\) The popular culture and the new bourgeois urban culture were clashing in the marketplace issue. In the face of the roughness of the open-air markets, the market hall was seen as part of a more orderly urban landscape, where bourgeois women could move freely. The notions of quality advocated by the upper middle-classes defined the street vendors as antithetical not only to quality, but also to rationality and authenticity.

The market committee also addressed the proposal for a central market hall in the Old Town which had been under discussion since the late 1880s. The Market Committee was in favor of a modern central market hall, and the location in the heart of the city appealed to the committee, who did not take notice of the falling revenues at the existing market halls. The committee was also in favor of replacing the old, primitive, and rundown first market hall in the Old Town, Köttorget. An alternative to tearing it down was to put it at the disposal of farmers. The Market Committee was in favor of attracting what they defined as authentic farmers, as opposed to townspeople simply parading as farmers. True direct trade between authentic farmers and urban consumers would benefit the poorest inhabitants, for whom the City had a responsibility.\(^{53}\) The distinction

\(^{51}\) SCC, appendix 5/1895.

\(^{52}\) SCC, appendix 5/1895.

\(^{53}\) SCC, appendix 5/1895.
between authentic and fake farmers stemmed from the regulations that gave real farmers the advantage of selling free of charge, whereas city people had to pay a fee for going to market. It also reflects an idyllic notion of the genuine yeoman much in vogue during the national romantic era of the late nineteenth century.

As real market halls were expensive, the committee had asked architect Wickman to design and estimate costs for market sheds at Kornhamnstorg, Mälartorget, Kungsholmstorg, Roslagstorg, Nybrohamnen, Norra Bantorget, Adolf Fredriks torg, Södra Bantorget, and possibly by Nytorget, if the existing market shed there would not be sufficient. The Stockholm Agricultural Society had been asking for market sheds or halls for a long time as a way of promoting direct trade between farmers and consumers. The direct trade and the authentic farmer were celebrated as the highest form of quality by this time. This form of trade was at the time of the report classified as the most rational, as no middleman was there to reap the profits of the hard work of the producers and the consumer would benefit fully from lower prices and fresher goods.

Nonetheless, the most tangible result of this ambitious official report was the reformed market trade charter of 1897. This put a ban on meat sales in the open-air markets. But the full-scale market hall system, which the Governor of Stockholm had asked for in 1872, where all trade with sensitive foodstuffs under the open sky would be totally prohibited, was far from being realized. Another effect of the report was the pronounced preference given to farmers over all other vendors selling in the marketplaces. The raison d’être of the marketplaces was to allow farmers to bring their cheap and wholesome products to market.

The privileging of farmers and the reserved marketplaces for farmer’s products was not a new phenomenon: in 1882 the marketplaces on Hötorget were reserved for farmers coming in for the day. The decree was never well-observed. Instead, the marketplaces displayed a fusion of farmers and citypeople, who had only registered in the surrounding countryside to obtain the privileges of real farmers, or in the words of their detractors: to be able to parade as farmers. In 1890, twenty-nine people were charged with illicit trade. The following year, some hundred vendors were charged with illicit trade. The charges were frequently the result of denunciations, often from jealous vendors who did not wish to see competitors thriving without paying proper taxes or revenues, the way real farmers were entitled to do. To define what was authentic proved to be a difficult

54. SCC, appendix 5/1895.
55. SCC, appendix 5/1895.
task. The incentives were economic, but the discussions often had moral overtones, where the good name of the vendor was at stake in a definition game over the quality and authenticity of the products.

**Rules and regulations on the rise**

The report of the market committee from 1895 arrived in an urban landscape that was very different from the Stockholm of 1872, when a full market hall system was first proposed. First of all, the number of food outlets had grown exponentially. The city itself had also expanded geographically and the remnants of agricultural practices had gradually been moved further out as the fringe area of Stockholm became more remote. The city had become more urban in character, with new boulevards and street systems, streets illuminated by gas lighting, and least but not last: water and sewage systems. This contributed to a new urban landscape, cleaner and more modern than ever before. The Stockholm World Exhibition of 1897 also made the contemporaries more acutely aware that the city was moving into a new century. The shift towards a cleaner and more organized city had in part been mirrored in the city regulations of the trade in food.

The period 1873 to 1896 was characterized by extreme fluctuations in the world market, and agriculture was in a particularly exposed position. This led to a restructuring of the entire food system. Farmers near big cities like Stockholm went from grain to animal husbandry and products higher up the value chain. Dairy, pork, and garden produce became increasingly profitable, especially for farmers in near proximity to urban markets. The near and the far however changed rapidly as the transportation systems improved. This restructuring of agriculture affected all of Western Europe. At the same time, the progress in transportation and cooling techniques meant that the competition from the transatlantic agrarian economies threatened to undermine the transformations in Europe. As a result, a wave of protectionism swept over the continent in the 1880s. This transition towards mass production was by and large successful. But the distribution was lagging behind: mass distribution and mass consumption were yet to be seen. As the distribution system was still

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57. We can see a diminishing acceptance of urban agriculture in the complaints to the City Council about the unhealthy fumes from the tobacco fields in Kungsholmen for example.

under formation, it remained open to negotiation regarding rules, regulations, and responsibility. A legal, economic, and physical infrastructure was under formulation, and in this process values were articulated and notions of quality, rationality, and authenticity defined and redefined.

In 1874, a Public Health Act for all the towns in Sweden was issued. Four years later, Stockholm established a bureau for Public Health Inspectors, the Health Police. Economic historian Rämme has shown how the work of this organization became increasingly efficient as the inspectors were given more power of investigation and more resources, even though their control could never be all encompassing. The public health inspectors drew on progress in medicine and the natural sciences to argue their case, and in 1882 a laboratory for the public health inspectors was inaugurated. Gradually, they also received stronger support from members of the Stockholm City Council, as well as from concerned citizens.59 The work of the Health Police was important in establishing what could be measured and what constituted quality, and it helped map out what could be defined as injurious to the health, poisonous, or adulterated, and what was healthy and authentic.

The reports from the public health inspectors during the 1880s exposed the appalling condition of the food market. Bakeries, slaughterhouses, and sausage makers were all targeted by the public health inspectors. In particular, the meat and dairy trade were subject to malpractice and frauds. The Public Health Board inspectors examined all meat coming to Stockholm from 1878 to 1912, when the abattoir in Enskede opened and inspection was undertaken there.60 This work can be interpreted as the practical manifestations of the quality definition debates.

The public health inspectors used the evidence from their practice to convince the City Council to reinforce the rules of the Public Health Act, and to give the Health Police greater authority to intervene and confiscate and actually destroy goods that were adulterated or injurious to health. Despite this, the capacity to protect the public remained weak, and the City Council was reluctant to introduce any mandatory regulations of meat, as this would risk augmenting the prices. The weak regulatory framework persisted until the introduction of the Stockholm Food Act of 1905. The strategies and methods of the public health inspectors in part compensated for the lack of mandatory control, but the lax rules and the

60. Herrlin, M., Berättelse om hälsopolisens i Stockholm verksamhet, p. 43-44, 45-7, 52, 61-2.
size of the Stockholm market attracted a lot of inferior and adulterated goods.\textsuperscript{61} The work of the health police can still be said to have paved the way for the stricter legal framework of 1905, and contributed to the new ways of interpreting and defining quality.

After the food act of 1905, the public health board emitted instructions for the design of butcher shops, sausage makers, curing houses, fishmongers, dairies, milk shops, bakeries, cake shops, cafés, restaurants, confectioneries and chocolate factories. To open a business in any of the above-mentioned fields, the Public Health Board issued a license after inspecting that the premises were conform to the legal standards. Milk shops and dairies were an exception: their regulation dated back to 1887 and was further reinforced in 1895.\textsuperscript{62} Again, this can be seen as the practical application of the new notions of quality.

The desire to create a more orderly food market manifested itself in several ways despite the inconclusive results of the Market Committee report. The most significant was of course the new market trade charter of 1897, which was a partial renegotiation of the existing laws regulating the market trade. As a result of the new market trade charter, the suggestion of putting up simple market sheds in the interest of hygiene and propriety from the 1895 Market Committee report was resubmitted to the City Council in 1897. The market sheds were to be erected on all major marketplaces. The City Council, however, opted for inaction.\textsuperscript{63} Inaction was cheap, and moreover it reflected the inability of the City Council to establish a common ground. The scientific evidence was still not decisive. It was possible to argue that the hygienic interests were overzealous and unfounded. How the food trade should be organized was not evident and the detractors of municipal control put their faith in the market. Fear of increased costs for the City in the form of investments and fixed costs, as well as for the citizens in the form of higher food prices, served as alibis for inaction.

Nonetheless, control and regulations were gaining powerful cachet in society and this of course affected the urban food scene as well. A variety of laws and regulations had been established from the mid-1800s to the First World War. These range from general rules, such as the national regulations for towns and cities, to more specific, such as the Stockholm

\textsuperscript{61} Of course, the lack of infrastructure regarding transportation and cold storage also produced a lot of inferior and spoiled goods, without any ill will from the sellers. Harsh living conditions made sellers less scrupulous. See Rämme, U., ”Hälsepolisen och livsmedelkontrollens framväxt i Stockholm 1878-1912”, p. 573ff, 591-593.

\textsuperscript{62} Herrlin, M., Berättelse om hälsepolisens i Stockholm verksamhet, p. 64-65, 80-94.

\textsuperscript{63} SCC, appendix 2/1905.
Food Act of 1905, which directly regulated the food trade. The legislation sometimes targeted other aspects and only later had consequences for the food trade, such as the public health act or the Trademark Protection Act. The food legislation was influenced by concerns for health and hygiene, for honest trade and fair competition, but also for sufficient supply and affordable prices.

The 1905 Food Act did not mean that all food trade under the open sky was prohibited, but it significantly altered the food scene by regulating an increasing number of areas. One of the direct results of the Food Act was that the City Council decided to buy the private Maria market hall in Southern Stockholm. The hall had been built in 1899, perhaps on the speculation that a ban on the market trade under the open sky would ensure good revenues for a market hall when the vendors were forced to move their trade indoors. There was of course also a generally expressed desire of protecting food, vendors, and customers from the elements, and promoting hygiene and propriety – a new way of understanding quality.

**Market halls as generators of modernity and urban prestige?**

Proposals for market halls had been put before the City Council a number of times well before the new Stockholm Food Act came into force. Most of the proposals were reiterated several times without yielding any results. That the market hall remained an issue might be interpreted as a result of the lobbying work of certain representatives of the food trade, who felt threatened by the street vendors and the trade in the vibrant marketplaces. To frame trade under the open sky as an assault on urban propriety and hygiene, they sought the support of actors like the public health board, city veterinarians and the city medical officers. But it was also the result of the desire of individuals anxious to create an infrastructure and a more urban character to their neighborhoods. The market hall here became the symbol of a modern urbanity.

The leading principle for the proponents of a public market hall system was that in order to control the food trade, public market halls were necessary: they were the most rational and efficient means of controlling the quality, hygiene, and prices of food. In 1902, a radical proposal for a ban on all market trade and construction of public market halls was thus put before the City Council. Behind this proposal we find the United
Committee against disloyal market trade (the UC), which had been established on the 20th of January 1902. The UC represented the shopkeepers, in association with the farmers and market gardeners of the Stockholm area. The UC actively took part in establishing definitions of what constituted honest trade. The definitions concerned the origin and authenticity of the products and the vendors alike. Who was entitled to sell what, where, and why? On a larger scale, this had to do with how the food trade should be organized in the most rational manner. At stake were questions of food quality, prices, and profitability.

The Market Committee report was denounced by the UC, who pointed to how other countries had established new market trade regimes restricting the sale of sensitive foodstuffs under the open sky since this practice was highly unsuitable. That was a fact so universally acknowledged as to leave no room for debate, the UC claimed. The Market Committee had not had any proper experts in the field of market trade and this accounted for the unsatisfactory result of the report, the vendors in the Hötorget market hall asserted. To support their argument, they invited the City veterinarian Sven Nystedt to give a speech. He enumerated the public and private market halls, the marketplaces and the total number of fixed stalls available, which amounted to 1,007. He also referred to 1,277 shops selling market produce. To ban the roughly 1,300 street hawkers would thus in no way threaten the urban food supply. The marketplaces would then be left to the 300 real farmers. The description of the food scene and the passion for making distinctions between farmers and street vendors corresponded to the general desire to define and set standards for quality and desirable trade practices to shape the market according to a preferred worldview.

More control and more restrictions were part of the UC list of requirements. To hinder cunning costermongers from parading as country-folk to avoid fees and taxes, the UC wanted the police that patrolled the marketplaces to be replaced every third month to avoid corruption, and all vendors to have a certificate to ensure that only real farmers were granted

64. This amounted to the vendors of the Hötorget, Östermalm, Svea, and Maria market halls, the Stockholm farmers’ association, the market gardeners’ associations and the fine grocers’ association.

65. It is difficult to estimate the exact number of shops and street vendors. For a discussion of the retail landscape see Gerentz, S. & Ottosson, J., Handel och köpmän i Stockholm under ett sekel och Hirdman, Y., Magträgan: mat som mål och medel. Stockholm 1870-1920.

66. Framställning angående torghandeln i Stockholm ordnade, p. 8-9, 10-13, SCC, appendix 107/1901.
space. The unfair competition and how the costermongers avoided fees and taxes were the most recurrent complaints from the shopkeepers. That the costermongers contributed to keeping the prices of food low was not true, they just pushed the real farmers away, the shopkeepers claimed. Again we see how the shopkeepers fought to establish their definitions of quality and honest trade, a definition that excluded the street vendors.

The shopkeepers, and more specifically the stallholders of the market halls, wanted to ban all trade on the marketplaces, except for the direct trade between farmers and consumers. But the definition of who was a real farmer became increasingly difficult to maintain while simultaneously gaining in importance. A person farming within the Stockholm city limits was not defined as a farmer since a farmer had to be domiciled outside Stockholm city. But was a real farmer someone who sold only what he or she had produced on their own property? This excluded farmers who bought produce from others when their own production was scarce or insufficient to meet the demand in the city. The farmers’ trade should be restricted to their own produce, and farm produce coming by rail ought only to be sold in wholesale, the shopkeepers argued. The farmers and the market gardeners joined in the criticism, since they found the competition for space tiresome. The farmers had one additional complaint, however, as they accused the stallholders in the market halls for sending out their servants to hawk on the open-air markets outside. As we see, it was not only difficult to establish the authenticity of a farmer, but the distinctions between wholesale and retail sales were not clearcut, and neither were the divisions between sales indoors and outdoors. The borders and margins of the food trade were floating.

The City Council responded to the lobbying work of the UC. The issue of building public market halls and banning all trade under the open sky was discussed at length in 1905, the same year that the new Stockholm Food Act came into effect. The following year the discussions continued and another appendix investigating public markets and the trade under the open sky was presented to the City Council. In 1905, the Office of the Governor of Stockholm explicitly referred to the UC investigation. It also based its arguments on the opinions of the Public Health Board, who supported the UC in their demands for a public market hall system. Only in covered markets could a satisfactory food trade persist. The Office of

68. Stålbring, Å-B., ”Handeln på Hötorget under 1800-talet”, p. 90.
70. SCC, appendix 189/1906. See also SCC, appendix 2/1905.
the Governor of Stockholm also invoked the suggestions by the City veterinarian Sven Nystedt of building a central market hall next to the grand central station. There were several other public market hall proposals: replacing an old bazaar with two new market halls on the new road to the Southern island, a new building for the existing fish market in the Old Town, and a new market hall next to the Southern railway station. The Office of the Governor of Stockholm was made its position clear: the City should assume responsibility and construct a sufficient number of public market halls in order to ban all trade under the open sky.\textsuperscript{71}

In the appendix, it was presented as essential that the city should assume responsibility for building public market halls for all who sold in the marketplaces under the open sky. The issue was of such vital importance that it was not advisable to leave the question to private enterprise. What remained to decide was where the City should construct the new public market halls.\textsuperscript{72} According to the views expressed in the appendix, and the experts consulted, all were clearly in favor of a centralized system of public market halls and stricter rules and regulations. As will be seen below, hygienic, commercial, and political concerns merged into a common perception of the problem of the urban food supply and of how quality should best be ensured.

On behalf of the Public Health Board, the city veterinarian Sven Nystedt had been on a study tour abroad to survey the food provisioning of other cities. He had also consulted experts, such as the Public Health Inspector medical doctor Backlund, and the merchant Vilhelm Hansen, who had a stall in Hötorget market hall. Hansen had studied marketplaces and market halls both in Sweden and abroad, and continued to play an active part in the debate about a public market hall system. Architects who had designed market halls were also consulted by the city veterinarian in his inquiry into the most rational food system possible for Stockholm.\textsuperscript{73}

The city veterinarian Nystedt saw the public market halls as the most rational answer to the problem of food distribution. It would at once solve issues of quality and ascertain that adulteration and fraud were minimized. The cost for the consumer would remain as low as possible, and the profits for the producers as high as possible. Not unexpectedly, the city veterinarian was not strongly supported by the Public Health Board nor the Health Police. He was however supported by the UC, despite the fact that he did not fully agree with their demands for harsher measures

\textsuperscript{71} SCC, appendix 2/1905.  
\textsuperscript{72} SCC, appendix 2/1905.  
\textsuperscript{73} SCC, appendix 2/1905.
against the street vendors. Nystedt had been invited by the UC to give a speech and he in turn asked one of the members of the UC, Vilhelm Hansen, to serve as an expert consultant on the commercial aspects of the market hall system.74 In his commercial exposition, Hansen, as we will see below, supported and reiterated all the points made by Nystedt.

A systematic and well-organized food trade was essential for any large city, Nystedt argued, and the bigger the city, the greater the reception area. Storage and distribution networks had to be well-organized. This was particularly vital in the face of current political developments: war always put an additional strain on the food distribution of any city. The Norwegian-Swedish Union was under increasing stress, and the Russo-Japanese war added to the sense of insecurity.75 Nystedt cited Paris as an example of how a city could feed two million inhabitants during a five month state of siege. In light of this, Stockholm needed appropriate storage and sales premises; direct connection to the railways and waterways; and hygienic storage for all commodities. And all of this should be designed to minimize the distance between producer and consumer.76 Rationality could thus take on many different forms, and be used in many different contexts. The insecure world situation was used to call for reforms of the food trade under the auspices of rationality.

Die Markthallen Berlins by August Lindemann77 was the main source of inspiration to Nystedt. In this book he found examples of a city that resembled Stockholm, but that had surpassed the developments of the Swedish capital. Berlin already had a well-functioning system of public market halls, both retail and wholesale.78 One of the lessons Stockholm could learn was that the market halls in Berlin were not successful initially. Only in the 1880s, when the city of Berlin had taken charge of the food trade, prohibited sales on the marketplaces, and installed a unified and well-arranged system of public market halls, did it become profitable to all. Private actors had sought to establish a market hall monopoly, but luckily for Berlin, Nystedt explained, the city decided that issues of such vital importance were best solved by public authorities, both from an eco-

74. SCC, appendix 2/1905.
75. Nystedt’s report was signed April 15, 1904.
76. SCC, appendix 2/1905.
77. The book was published in 1899, well before the system of market halls in Berlin had begun to come under criticism.
78. Separation of wholesale and retail into separate spaces and separate times was taking on increasing importance in the debate over how the food issue in Stockholm should be organized. This tendency became even more evident in the final report from the Food Committee in 1913.
onomic and hygienic perspective. To Nystedt, municipal control was the prerequisite for quality.

Nystedt compared his findings in Berlin with other examples from Germany and Scandinavia, always with the same conclusion. Only when the city assumed full responsibility could a public market hall system become profitable, hereby ensuring that prices were kept low and the hygienic standards were upheld. Private market halls were not nearly as satisfactory or successful according to Nystedt’s investigation. Consequently, he suggested that the City purchase the private Östermalms and Maria market halls in order to have full municipal control.

Hansen, the private businessman, supported the view that the City would best protect the public interest, as it was impartial and free from seeking profit. Like Nystedt, he clearly admired the German approach to organization: the system of city commission agents who were communicating with producers from all over Europe to offer the population of Berlin the best goods possible at the lowest prices available. The constant influx of food ensured abundance, moderate prices, and higher quality. Hansen saw the city commission agents as a way of limiting the number of middlemen: wholesale auctions could instead be held in the central market halls, from where the goods could then be transported in a rational and efficient manner. It was important that the public market halls were not reduced to a source of municipal income however. Hansen argued that keeping the rents as low as possible, in order for the stall holders to keep their prices down, would ensure the public’s good opinion of a municipal market hall system. As an interested party, Hansen’s definitions of best practices could be dismissed as a biased account. Still, the time and effort he devoted to learning more about market hall systems in Sweden and abroad through reading and study tours indicates a commitment beyond mere self-interest.

Both Nystedt and Hansen were convinced that an approach with centralized distribution and public market halls offered the best way of securing a rational and cost efficient food supply for the cities. It would contribute to raise the general quality as the goods could be inspected

79. SCC, appendix 2/1905.
80. The cities Nystedt cited in his report were Berlin, Hamburg, Dresden, Leipzig, Gothenburg, Malmö, Oslo (then Kristiania), and Copenhagen. Hansen also used international examples as evidence of the superiority of the public market hall system: London, Manchester, Paris, Marseilles, Brussels, Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden, and many other cities (although he never specified which other cities he referred to).
81. SCC, appendix 2/1905.
82. SCC, appendix 2/1905.
by public food analysts. Moreover, the mere fact that the consumer was offered a vast array of food within an accessible distance meant that they could undertake a voyage of inspection, which would raise the level of quality through competition. A rapid turnover would also guarantee the freshness of the supplies. At a time when individual cold storage came at prohibitive cost, large, centralized market halls would be able to provide cool storage, which would also be beneficial. When a public market hall system was in place, all food trade under the open sky could easily be banned. Nystedt was also critical of decentralized stores; they were overly luxurious and contributed to elevate the food prices unnecessarily.

Here we see how the opinions and ambitions of the city veterinarian Nystedt and the private businessman Hansen concurred. Both wanted centralized distribution in a system of public market halls. The idea was that the right kind of competition would promote the right kind of food trade: cheap and abundant, with safe food for all. This precedes the mass market approach for food that would establish itself decades later.

Nystedt repeated the essence of his report in a lecture to the Swedish Technological Society for Architecture (Svenska Teknologföreningens Afdelning för Husbyggnadskonst) on October 17, 1904. A transcript of the lecture was reprinted the same year in a technology journal, Teknisk Tidskrift. This enabled his views to reach a wider audience, and further influence public opinion in favor of his recommended market hall approach. In the lecture, the focus was on the architectural aspects of the central market hall in particular. Nystedt also presented Målarhallen, a proposal for a market hall in the Old Town. The benefit of a more centralized system both for abattoirs and for market halls was that the traffic situation, which was constantly getting worse, would be alleviated by the new, restructured new system.

Additional benefits pointed out by Nystedt were how economic growth would be stimulated by the centralized, well-organized abattoir and market hall system: the food trade would thrive and the food prices would decrease. Nystedt also posited that with a centralized food system new factories would emerge and prosper, such as new sausage factories, factories to make use of the tallow and marrow from the abattoir, albumen factories to make use of the blood, canneries, salting houses for meat and pork, and many other similar operations.

83. SCC, appendix 2/1905.
The visionary scenarios of a great system of public market halls gained hesitant approval from the City Finance Committee. In principle, the city veterinarian’s suggestion of constructing a sufficient number of market halls in order to abolish the unhealthy trade under the open sky was desirable. In practice, the financial aspects had to be taken into consideration. The City as landlord might suffer economic losses if the tenants in the market halls were not able to thrive in the cut-throat competition of the urban food trade. Already there were signs of vacant stalls in the market halls and diminishing revenues.  

Another objection was that the marketplaces should not be cumbered by market hall buildings. The Town Building Office preferred gardens, like in London. The elegant town square with its plants and fountains was an alternative way of expressing civic pride. From yet another perspective, the city engineer worried about increasing traffic and congestion. There were clearly competing uses of the urban space to be taken into consideration. A new interesting tendency around the turn of the century 1900 was how the separation of wholesale and retail into separate times and spaces was taking on increasing importance in the debate over how the food distribution in Stockholm should be organized. This tendency became even more evident in the final report from the Food Committee in 1913, and reflects a new attitude towards the distribution of goods. This new attitude paved the way for the middleman as a legitimate actor.

The harsh realities

The vendors in shops and market halls continually voiced their grievances. Rent reductions were one of the most common demands made by the market hall vendors to the City Council. In 1901, the stallholders in Hötortorget market hall had yet again petitioned for rent reductions and a ban on the marketplace outside the hall. The market conditions were abysmal, they complained. The Hötortorget market hall would soon be empty if the competition from the outside market continued unabated. Many of the vendors also had a stall in the neighboring Östermalm market hall, and the situation there was just as bad, they claimed.

Most of the vendors in the Hötortorget market hall had previously been vendors at the Hötortorget open air marketplace, and had moved into the hall with their wide circle of customers, thus laying the foundation for the success of the hall. They had consented to moving into the market

86. SCC, appendix 189/1906.
87. SCC, appendix 189/1906.
88. SCC 143/1901.
hall on the understanding that the competition from the marketplace outside would be limited to farmers, and not include dishonest and disloyal hucksters who paid no fees and no taxes. The hucksters and their deceitful manners and dishonest trade would not only drive away the poor, honest vendors in the market halls, but also all the real farmers as well, complained the Hötorget market hall tenants.89

If we look at the number of vacant stalls in 1901, they amount to eighty-one in total, with only a small number in the public market halls: six in the Hötorget market hall and twelve in Köttorget market hall. The majority were in the private market halls: thirty-eight in Östermalms market hall, twenty in Svea market hall, and five in Vasa market hall. After the new Stockholm Food Act was introduced in 1905, the situation improved for all market halls, except the biggest two, the Hötorget and Östermalms market halls.90 The empty stalls remained a matter of debate though, and some claimed that the stallholders were to be blamed as they outbid one another to get a hold of the best stalls. Others were more concerned about the hygiene and the urgency to ban all trade with sensitive foodstuffs under the open sky.91

The shopkeepers and the farmers did join forces to attack their common enemy, the street hawkers. The list of complaints from the shopkeepers and farmers was long: the unfair competition and the loss of tax money for the city; the hygienic concern for the food quality when sold under the open sky; the desire to promote direct trade that would benefit the poorest inhabitants. But the real enemy for the shopkeepers seems to have been the harsh competition that drove even the shopkeepers themselves into committing crimes that they accused other of. The farmers and the market gardeners were bothered by the congestion, and the farmers in particular were concerned about falling prices for their products. The middleman was accused of reaping the profits of the hard work of farmers to the detriment of the consumer and the producer alike. Even those who were themselves middlemen, like the shopkeepers and the stallholders in the market halls, complained about the dishonest middlemen driving up prices and depleting honest tradespeople. But the middleman was there to stay.

89. SCC, appendix 107/1901; Sifversson, A-B., ”Handeln på Hötorget under 1800-talet”, p. 90-93.
90. SCC, appendix 189/1906.
91. SCC, opinion 343/1901 in connection to SCC 143/1901.
Speeding into modernity

The Food Committee and the cost of living

The period from 1896 up until the First World War can mainly be characterized as a spectacular global economic boom and Sweden was riding the wave of economic prosperity full speed. Innovations like electricity, the internal-combustion engine, the ball bearing, the milk separator, and the telephone all contributed to the rapidly expanding economy. From the 1890s, it is possible to talk about economies of scale and scope. Scientific management and automatization were the spirit of the times, and rationality was beginning to aquire its status as a guiding principle for all forms of business, and as a positive value on its own. This did not mean that there were constant improvements to the economic and social conditions or that the profits were evenly distributed. On the contrary, this period was marked by sharp conflicts, and in 1904 there was a general crisis in the world economy. The effects were delayed in Sweden, and the full effects were not felt until 1907.1

In 1907, the food prices were soaring and unemployment made the poor even more vulnerable than before. To respond to the mounting criticism in the press, appeals were made to the Stockholm City Council, and a Food Committee was appointed to investigate what could be done in

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order to bring down the food prices. The committee addressed several main problems. First, there was the question of how to expand the urban food supply by increasing the food production in the vicinity of Stockholm. Second, the transportation infrastructure should be given an overhaul: perhaps the City could do something to facilitate transportation? Third, the food trade had to be organized in a satisfactory manner. The position of the committee was clear: the solution to these problems lay in a municipal market hall system and a public abattoir. The benefits of such a system were so obvious no further discussion was necessary, thus the committee would not waste time investigating what was already an established truth. Instead it would wait for this approach to materialize, and concentrate its efforts on investigating what could be done in order to support the public market halls to be.

The Food Committee reiterated the essence of their report by affirming that a well-organized market hall system was the solution to all the problems the food trade was facing. This was confirmed by international examples, and to further illustrate their point, the committee emphasized that the lack of organization was the reason Stockholm was still so expensive. Only when market halls in a sufficient number had been constructed could the food trade be centralized and the distribution solved in a rational manner. Then the capital could enjoy the benefits of abundant supply, cheap prices, and good quality. The distribution of food was presented by the Food Committee as being of the utmost importance, a question of national security. To support their argument, they pointed to the dock worker strike in Great Britain, that in a matter of days had caused a severe food shortage. To be dependent on imports to the same extent as the British was thus a serious risk. National food production was safer and more desirable. Thus the focus of the Food Committee lay on stimulating an increase in production and organizing a better distribution infrastructure.

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2. The members of the Food Committee were Gustaf Adolf Hack d’Ailly, Director of the National Railways Board, Axel Ceder, a mechanical worker at I. M Ericsson, and Edvard Laurent, a medical doctor. Sven Nystedt, the city veterinarian, was the first secretary, but was replaced by Vilhelm Hansen, a merchant with a stall in Hotorget Market Hall. Sven Nystedt continued to serve the Food Committee as an expert, along with others who were in favor of a market hall system, such as Klas Sondén from the Public Health Board, or August Lyttkens, who among other things was an inspector at the National Board of Agriculture. SCC appendix 75/1913. See also Nordin, C., Ordnings, p. 236.
3. SCC, 65/1907, SCC appendix 75/1913.
4. SCC appendix 75/1913.
Part of the Food Committee’s work on this matter was to investigate the railroad transports of food. A questionnaire had been sent out to the larger European cities, as well as to the USA and Australia, to see how they had approached the urban food supply: what had been done to facilitate transportation, and how had this affected the food prices? The investigation included questions about livestock, meat, milk, and dairy products, as well as eggs, macaronis, and garden produce. The recommendations of the investigation were to encourage refrigerated transports and provide adequate cooling facilities in the vicinity of railway stations and harbors, as well as special railway trucks for food transports and a general lowering of the fees for transporting food on the railways. If possible, the food transports should arrive as early as possible in the morning to be sold on the morning wholesale markets. The Food Committee concluded that to achieve a satisfactory urban food supply with moderate prices, the City had to provide the infrastructure for a rational food trade. This translated into rapid transportation, appropriate packaging, and refrigerated railway trucks. Fish, shellfish, meat, milk, fruit, and vegetables were goods

5. The questionnaires were circulated by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. See SCC, appendix 75/1913. The Food Committee was well-connected, and their investigations were given priority by the government. In fact, several committees were appointed to investigate the food situation of other towns.
that benefitted significantly in terms of quality from rapid, refrigerated transports.\textsuperscript{6}

The issue of effective transportation to Stockholm could be solved in a number of ways. The Food Committee preferred the railways. When already in place, waterways could be of use, but building canals was not an option. The committee also pointed to the example of food distributed by the postal services in Germany, where it had had a positive impact on food prices. However, the Swedish Postal Services were not positive to the suggestion that they should lower the postage charges.\textsuperscript{7} Mail order food never did take off in Sweden.

Nonetheless, the improvements in transportation and cooling techniques meant that food could be transported over far greater distances and be preserved over longer periods of time. This had consequences for the concept of quality. If milk, for example, could be transported over long distances, the attributes for determining freshness would alter from warm milk straight from the cow’s udder to cold milk, which was cooled immediately after milking. The most highly valued attributes were thus renegotiated. The transformations also had consequences for rationality and authenticity: was access to railway systems and a suitable infrastructure the same as a rational food system? And was cold milk real milk? The discussion could be extended to other foodstuffs as well. As refrigerated transportations improved, it was not necessarily better to transport livestock rather than meat, or live fish rather than iced fish. But every change was subject to new perceptions of the good and the bad, the healthy and the hazardous.

Still, the staggering costs of living in Stockholm had been observed in a survey in 1907-1908. The results showed that the main expense for most households was food, and for the poorest it amounted to almost half of the household income.\textsuperscript{8} The cost of food from 1888 to 1908 had been rising gradually, with sharp increases in 1889-1893, and incessant increases in 1904-1907, continuing upwards somewhat in 1908. This period also corresponds to the general crisis in the world economy as cited above. The cost of living in Stockholm was 5 to 10 percent higher than in the rest of the country, sometimes even 20 to 40 percent higher. The wholesale prices were not as high; it was primarily the retail prices that were significantly higher in Stockholm. The Food Committee suspected

\textsuperscript{6} SCC, appendix 185/1908; SCC, appendix 75/1913.

\textsuperscript{7} SCC, appendix 75/1913.

\textsuperscript{8} Housekeeping statistics were common around the turn of the century 1900, and the survey referred to similar studies in Copenhagen, Germany, and Finland. See SCC, 100/1910.
that higher rents of stores, expensive transportation, and unstructured distribution were the causes for the abnormally high price level in the capital. However, as the City Council had objected to the Food Committee collecting statistics on food prices in the stores of Stockholm, their estimates of the Stockholm food prices were based on statistics for hospitals, and could thus not provide the desired accuracy or level of detail necessary to explain the price levels in the capital.9

The Food Committee asserted that the staggering costs of living were not only confined to Stockholm, but also affected “most civilized countries”. Establishing a wholesale trade was important, but so was a focus on raising the production capacity. The work of the large agricultural cooperatives was promising, but in order for the consumer to benefit from the advances on the production side, the food trade ought to be organized in a rational manner by the municipal authorities, who would serve as business partner for the successful agricultural cooperatives. That would benefit producer and consumer alike. But the food question was both complex and urgent. To complement the progress of the agricultural cooperatives, citizens should be encouraged to raise rabbits and chicken, as well as engage in horticulture.10

This ambition could be linked to the “own-your-own-home” associations that were in vogue around the turn of the century in 1900. The ambition was, at least in part, to make the transition from an agrarian to an industrial society run smoother by providing the working classes with alternatives to poverty and socialism through the morally uplifting project of owning your own home and growing your own food.11

In the ambitious program of the Food Committee, no issue was too insignificant and no area too remote. Educating the public by giving free courses on various preserving techniques, or on how to cook cheap food, were among the suggestions from the Food Committee. The committee found inspiration from Germany, where several cities had similar activities for free. Selling food by weight rather than by quantity was another important reform that the committee sought to introduce. Again, the Food Committee found inspiration from abroad: Hungary had introduced such reforms much to the benefit of all.12 The desire to find solutions to all aspects of life, and the international examples to support the

9. SCC, appendix 75/1913.
10. SCC, appendix 75/1913.
12. SCC, appendix 75/1913; SCC, 254/1914.
suggestions, can be interpreted as part of a larger scheme of reforming society and keeping up with modernity.

Another movement that was approaching the harsh living conditions from a different angle was the cooperative movement. The Food Committee looked at whether cooperative solutions were more beneficial than municipal measures, or whether the cooperative movement and municipal authorities should join forces. They were assisted in this by the National Association of Social Work (Centralförbundet för Socialt Arbete), the CSA. The committee concluded that the cooperative movement was better left to itself and that the role of the municipal authorities was to provide an infrastructure for market halls in a centralized, rational food distribution system.

But to decide what infrastructure the municipal authorities should provide was a difficult question. Many solicited aid which served their own self-interest. For example, the Food Committee received proposals from producers who wished the City would provide market sheds free of charge. The reason for this, the producers explained, was that fine fruits and berries were sensitive and needed protection from the wind, dust, rain and sun that could all reduce the value and quality of the garden produce. Many producers had also started to pay more attention to elaborate packaging, which likewise needed protection from the elements. Yet another reason for the city to provide market sheds for producers was that towards the end of the day, producers who could not store their goods adequately would be obliged to dump their products to hawkers who would then resell at higher prices, to the detriment of both producers and consumers. If the producers had to bring their goods back home over night, this would increase the transportation costs and spill over onto the prices as well. That consumers could buy first hand when the producers dumped their prices, was not mentioned as a possibility.

Still, this reflects how different actors sought municipal support, and that they did this by framing themselves and their goods as being of such fine quality as to require encouragement and support. Attributes like ‘fine’ or ‘delicate’ were used as arguments. The provenance of the goods and the producers were also thrown into the balance: an authentic producer would sell his goods at lower prices and the freshness would likewise be

14. SCC, appendix 75/1913.
15. SCC, appendix 147/1908; SCC, appendix 74/1913.
preserved in a most rational manner only if direct trade was allowed to flourish in protected market sheds.

The Food Committee asked the agricultural societies from the immediate surroundings and from the more prominent farming districts in southern Sweden what the City Council could do to facilitate the influx of goods. The agricultural societies called for a better distribution system. Some wanted suitable consumers’ cooperative societies, as they were likely to serve the interests of producers and consumers alike, without seeking profit the way more commercially-minded middlemen were prone to do. The cooperative societies were considered as a way to provide a safe income for the producers: the producer cooperatives had established themselves largely by giving the producers market potential and had thus created confidence among many producers that cooperative societies were trustworthy in their nature. The producer cooperatives had also initiated payment according to quality, as various forms of grade labelling were entering the consciousness of the producers. The producers also called for more information about the food regulations currently in force. The Malmöhus agricultural society explicitly asked for modern market halls with sufficient cold storage for times of bounty, to balance the price fluctuations to the lasting benefit of consumers and producers alike.16

The former National Board of Agriculture inspector August Lyttkens, who had also been consulted by the Food Committee as to what the City could do to promote a larger supply of agricultural produce, wanted to see exposition halls to help food producers understand new technology and new methods for preparing, packaging, and transporting their products. This would also be an excellent opportunity to establish new contacts and business relations. The municipal exposition halls could be used by other actors than the food producers, and would keep down the costs. This would also contribute to lowering the costs of food in the long run.17

The efforts by Lyttkens and the various agricultural societies can be seen as a step towards standardizing and finding more streamlined solutions to the distribution of food, with transportation, storage, and suitable packaging in focus. The standardization efforts reflected a desire to organize production and distribution in a more rational manner. Here quality became a tool: if certain properties were valued and defined as quality, the producers would strive to produce more of the same in order to maximize their profits. The consumers would benefit since they could choose from products sorted into different categories, each with its own

16. SCC, appendix 75/1913.
17. SCC, appendix 75/1913.
set of properties and, of course, its own price range. Order and quality in a modern, rational manner would lead to less waste, lower prices, and higher profits at the same time.

The protective shelters and market sheds the producers had wished for, and that the Food Committee had recommended, were not well received by the City Council. The City Council did not wish to interfere this way in free enterprise. Furthermore, the vendors who had their fixed marketplaces would have had to dismantle their stalls, and the City still collected fees for their spaces. To provide market sheds free of charge to firsthand producers would thus distort free competition, not to mention how it would entail costs to the City Council without generating any incomes.¹⁸

The Food Committee held a different opinion on spending tax money. In its view, restructuring food distribution in Stockholm was of such high priority that the City Council, free of personal interests and profit-seeking, would do its best to assume full responsibility for its organization. Therefore the fear of spending tax money must be ignored as the food distribution had to be solved. The City should not seek to profit from the organization of the food trade; the ultimate goal should be to lower the cost of food, by providing the infrastructure needed for a centralized wholesale food trade in central, wholesale market halls.¹⁹

The Food Committee repeatedly used international examples, Germany in particular, to argue their point. German towns had implemented reforms and constructed wholesale market halls and abattoirs, which resulted in cheap prices, good quality, and a rational food trade. International scholars were also referred to by the committee to gain legitimacy. A translated copy of Dr. Lange’s Die Versorgung der gross-städtischen Bevölkerung mit frischen Nahrungsmitteln was submitted to the City Council as evidence of the the benefits of a well-organized food system, which would transcend the shackles of time and space. Supply would no longer be limited to the local level, as national and even international supply would open the gates to mass consumption. To handle the voluminous new supply, Dr. Lange argued in favor of city commission agents, central market halls, and public abattoirs - just like the Food Committee of 1907.²⁰

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¹⁸. SCC, 4/1909.
¹⁹. SCC, appendix 75/1913.
²⁰. SCC, appendix 75/1913.
City commission agents, central market halls, and public abattoirs

In 1907, the City Council appointed an Abattoir and Market Hall Board (the AMH Board). Two years later, the AMH Board took over responsibility for overseeing the open air markets. The most popular markets that attracted the largest crowds were the Hötorget and Östermalmstorg marketplaces, but the total area of available space for open air markets amounted to 13,000 square meters distributed across Stockholm.\(^1\) The members of the AMH Board all had international contacts and broad experience, as did the first director Martin Sandeberg, who had written on abattoirs and market halls for years and served as an assistant city veterinarian in Stockholm until 1902. He had also been the director of the abattoir in Gothenburg until 1910, at which time he was recruited to Stockholm.\(^2\)

The Abattoir and Market Hall Administration gradually increased their authority. They were given permission to hold food auctions, and investigated the introduction of city commission agents. They also prepared for the construction of the Central Market Hall and the public abattoir in Enskede. The director of the public abattoir and the market halls would oversee the marketplaces for livestock, the meat inspection bureaux, and the destruction of confiscated foods, in addition to his self-evident duties of managing the abattoir, the market halls, and as mentioned above, the open-air markets.\(^3\)

Half-way through their investigation, the Food Committee explained to the City Council that commission agents and public auctions in large centralized food distribution units, such as large public market halls with ample storage facilities, would be a way of solving the problem of the high cost of the urban food supply. The best solution would be if these were municipal, as it would guarantee low costs and high hygienic standards. The overall purpose was to lower transportation costs and thereby benefit from the increases in production that were being reported by the National Board of Agriculture. The Chairman of the National Board of Agriculture proudly announced that there were associations for the production and

\(^{22}\) Nordin, C., *Ordning*, p. 235-236. Sandeberg also collected press cuts on various food and veterinary related issues from 1902 to 1937, which have been preserved in the archives of the Abattoir and Market Hall Board. For a discussion of the collection, see the introduction of this book.
\(^{23}\) SCC, 164/1910; SCC appendix 76/1910; SCC 250/1909.
sale of eggs, fruits and vegetables, and cheap rabbit meat. The producers only needed an adequate distribution structure. 24

The distribution network in Stockholm was unfavorably compared to municipal solutions abroad. Paris, Vienna, Budapest, and various other European cities were cited as such examples, 25 but the US was also used to illustrate the benefits of a more centralized and thus more rational food trade. 26 The City Council sent Vilhelm Hansen and an architect from the Town Building Office on a study tour to Germany to present the plans made so far for a Central Market Hall that could provide the backbone of a new municipal distribution infrastructure. On the 30th of April 1909 they reported back that the German authorities had nothing but praise and approval: the blueprints for the new central market hall were exemplary. 27

So where did the food on sale in Stockholm come from in 1909? The Food Committee complained about a lack of comprehensive statistics. The largest part came from the surrounding farmland in the Mälardalen area, but food also came from the island of Gotland and the coastal districts of the county of Småland. There were statistics for food imports from Finland, Russia, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Great Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, Switzerland, Italy, the US, and Australia, but the list was not complete. Still, with food coming from such a variety of sources, it was necessary to have some form of control, and preferably a system of control that did not incur prohibitive costs. A public market hall system would best answer the demands for a rational food trade, with minimal profits for the middlemen, resulting in acceptable prices for the consumers. 28

To speed up the process of a comprehensive public market hall system, the 1907 Food Committee wanted the AMH Board to build public warehouses with cold storage and freezing equipment. This would also

25. Among the others European cities were Brussels, Düsseldorf, Fiume, Frankfurt, Karlsruhe, Köln, Leipzig, München, Stuttgart, and Trieste.
26. The US had a different tradition of food distribution, where public markets had been replaced by private enterprise, only then to be replaced by public markets yet again. Horace Capron, Commissioner of the United States Department of Agriculture between 1867 to 1871, undertook a review of the current market systems. His name is associated with the beginning of what can be called “scientific management of food marketing and distribution”, where the purpose of “eliminating waste and inefficiency depended on understanding the entire system and its parts.” See Tangires, H., Public Markets and Civic Culture in Nineteenth-Century America, p. 152.
27. SCC, appendix 121/1909.
extend the Stockholm frontiers of food supply in time and space, and thus create the most rational and modern form of wholesale food trade. The AMH Board, who was as of November 1, 1912 still waiting for the inauguration of the Central Market Hall, was critical. The Board used the market hall in Breslau as an example of failure. The newly opened retail and wholesale market halls in Breslau had an occupancy rate of only 12.1 percent. In Köln, the situation was almost as bad with only 15.9 percent of capacity in use. Despite insistent demands for municipal cold storage from the food trade representatives, this interest seemed to wither once the facilities were in place. The AMH Board asserted that it was therefore better to await the development of the central market hall before engaging in heavy investment in municipal warehouses which no one would want to use.29

Not surprisingly, the Food Committee did not agree with the AMH Board. In its view, the Breslau example only showed that the location of a retail market hall had to be chosen with extreme care. In addition, the result in Breslau could be explained by a vibrant trade in the open-air markets. In regards to Köln, the information must be old, as the Food Committee had understood that the municipal authorities in Köln were thinking of expanding the cold storage capacity and building bigger wholesale market halls. The cold storage was running on electricity and thus highly modern and rational.30

In 1912, two new city commission agents were appointed in addition to the already existing city commission agent for fish, one responsible for meat, wild game, and poultry and the other responsible for fruit and vegetables. The food was sold at auctions and public price quotations were published each week. The auctions and the price quotations disappeared and reappeared at regular intervals over the years.31 This was one way for the municipal authorities to intervene in the food market without interfering too much with free enterprise and without spending too much tax money. It was also a means to exercising control and measuring in a non-obtrusive way. The price quotations only concerned the wholesale side; there were demands for retail price quotations that were never implemented. The retail markets were of course much harder to survey, and there were more factors to be taken into account when assessing the quality of a retailer, such as convenient distance from home, opening hours, and service.

29. SCC, appendix 129/1914.
30. SCC, appendix 129/1914.
31. Tilstam, R., Livet i Klaraallarna, p. 115-117.
On December 3, 1912, the Central Market Hall finally opened its gates. Earlier the same year, on January 31, the Abattoir in Enskede was inaugurated. But it was far from an all-encompassing system with a sufficient number of market halls to enable a ban on all trade under the open sky. The following year, the Food Committee submitted their final report to the City Council. The report advocated a system of market halls to effect an organized food trade and distribution in the urban context. To understand the situation in Stockholm, and which measures the Swedish capital should take, there were comparisons with the food trade in London, Paris, and Berlin. Berlin, which had hitherto been held up as a model of achievement, was now deemed a failure. The consumers never frequented the retail market halls in Berlin. The lesson to be learned was that the location of a retail market hall was of utmost importance. The best thing was to build them next to existing marketplaces, and then put a ban on the trade under the open sky, thereby also solving the difficult issue of hygiene. There had been objections to retail market halls before the Food Committee submitted their report, but it is interesting to note that the committee, who seemed so committed to the idea of market halls, had changed their position. It was also interesting how a previously favored example of success, Berlin, now turned into a cautionary tale.

The Central Market Hall had a difficult start. Neither customers nor vendors were as enthusiastic as the City Council had expected. Instead, they stubbornly remained at the Hötorgt market hall and marketplace. The central market hall thus never turned out to be the roaring success that was hoped for. Just a year after it opened, the vendors were offered rent reductions of 50 percent. Fruit fairs were organized in the fall season with the dual purpose of increasing fruit consumption and raising public awareness of the central market hall. Even as the open air market at the nearby Kungsholmstorg marketplace was closed down the central market hall still had plenty of vacant stalls.

Already during the first year, the criticism against the Central Market Hall was vehement. In a newspaper article on August 2, 1913, it was declared a mistake. People were used to going to market at Hötorgt, and old habits die hard. It would be better to build another hall at Hötorgt, than to force the public and the food wholesale traders to move into a hall that was certainly vastly superior to the Hötorgt market hall, but in the wrong location. The wholesale traders preferred to be close to the retail trade at Hötorgt rather than close to the railway tracks by the Central Market Hall. The author of the article concluded that if the sale of

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32. SCC, appendix 75/1913.
meat was prohibited at the open air markets, the Central Market Hall might do better. However, the author added that it would be preferable to build a new hall at Hötorget.34

On August 23, 1913, the social democratic council member Anders Örne accused the press and the right wing political movement of sacrificing the public good at the altar of profit. The criticism came from those who wished to buy cheap and sell high. Örne claimed that the right wing and the right wing liberals were ignorant of the hygienic advantages of the municipal market hall, and were only interested in casting doubt on municipal socialism. Örne was clearly annoyed, and asked how a market hall built for the benefit of private enterprise, full of private entrepreneurs, could be interpreted as the first step towards socialism. He asserted that in due time even the conservative housewives and maids would realize that the Central Market Hall was the best alternative, as would the vendors, whose goods would be better protected and less prone to waste, in modern, hygienic facilities.35

An advertising campaign was launched in one of the biggest morning papers, DN (the Daily News). The paper had previously reported in a critical fashion about the empty central market hall. With the advertising campaign bringing in money and attention to the paper, the reports changed in character. Food shopping in the Central Market Hall was ever so much nicer than shopping at the unhygienic, cold Hötorget marketplace. DN reported on the success of advertising; the turnover had doubled the week following the campaign. The vendors were happy, since many of their old customers had found them again. The customers were said to be pleasantly surprised by the light and agreeable new market hall. Some vendors explained that customers, who had been frightened off by the empty hall, had now returned. When there is bustling life and commerce, the customers are happy. The housewives agreed, and pointed to that in the empty market hall the vendors stared or called out after you. One of the housewives explained that being able to shop around, inspect, and compare items without being solicited all the time was part of the pleasure of going to a market hall.36 At this point in time, this was not the common practice in the shops located around town. The shops with their

35. Sandeberg’s scrapbook, vol. 5, p. 26. Anders Örne was one of the prominent figures in the Cooperative movement. By the time of the debate about the Central Market Hall, he was editor of Kooperatören (The Cooperator). He was highly influential, and worked out the ideological foundations for the future cooperative movement. His influence even was international in scope. See Ålex, P., Den rationella konsumenten.
manual service and the counter at the center of the room, did not allow for casual window shopping or just looking around. You only entered a shop when you had a specific errand or purpose.

The advertisement campaign in DN was considered unfair competition by the trade journal for the retail trade, Köpmannen (The Tradesman), which called it an outrageous attempt by DN in collusion with the city to promote municipal intervention, to the material disadvantage of the independent retailers. There was obvious bitter envy of the DN campaign, and the article referred to another journal describing the importance of advertisement to attract crowds, and how this had made the customers flock to the Central market hall.\textsuperscript{37} The advertisement campaign had no long-lasting effects however, and neither did the ban on the sale of sensitive foodstuffs in 1914. In 1916, there were still vacant stalls in spite of 33 percent reductions in rent.\textsuperscript{38}

The Director of the Abattoir and Market Halls Administration, Martin Sandeberg, complained bitterly over the criticism his administration had received. He stated that the nation of Sweden nation was conservative, overly cautious, and suspicious of new ideas. Municipal institutions like abattoirs, central market halls, and the wholesale market hall for fish in Stockholm, were innovations that would work well if only given a chance. City commission agents and food auctions only worked in large cities like Paris and Berlin, and even there only after many years.\textsuperscript{39}

Sandeberg was aided by Vilhelm Hansen, who had been one of the masterminds behind the central market hall, and one of the most prominent detractors of the trade under the open sky. Hansen meant that all the difficulties of the central market hall could be traced to the open air markets. If only the City Council had decided to ban all trade under the open sky, then the vendors with their established clienteles would have been forced into the Central Market Hall and all would have been well. Besides, since 80 percent of all the food coming into Stockholm came by rail, the location of the Central Market Hall was the most rational. Success would be assured.\textsuperscript{40}

Sven Nystedt, the city veterinarian who also wished to ban all trade under the open sky, was more measured in his judgment. He opined that to force the vendors at the Hötorget marketplace to move into the Central

\textsuperscript{37} Köpmannen, nr 3, 2 February 1914; nr 5, 5 March 1914.

\textsuperscript{38} Trästam, R., Livet i Klarahallarna., p. 39.


\textsuperscript{40} Sandeberg’s scrapbook, vol. 5, p. 29.
Market Hall was a risk. The City Council needed to prove that this would have no effects on the prices, to gain the acquiescence of the public. It was important to find the right balance between the hygienic demands of safe food and the social demands of cheap food, Nystedt explained. In particular, it was vital to ensure that the price of meat did not escalate.41

Sandeborg, Hansen and Nystedt were all in favor of more municipal control and were, in their own ways, visionaries. They had all fought for a reformed food system, and had seen their ambitions restrained by unwilling City Council members, shortsighted vendors, and narrow-minded consumers. Their approaches and their ideas were not identical, but they shared a belief in municipal control as the guarantor of quality and rationality.

**Municipal control: securing a food supply**

The City Council continued to search for ways of procuring safe, cheap, and abundant food. The main idea was to simply provide the infrastructure best suited to promote the influx of food into the capital. But there were more ambitious projects such as pig breeding managed by the municipal authorities themselves, which would at once assure a steady supply of cheap pork, and dispose of the mountains of garbage the City had to handle. Five hundred pigs would eat the household garbage produced by the inhabitants of Stockholm.42 The Public Health Board had asked the city veterinarian Nystedt and the Public Health Inspector Backlund to investigate the result of the garbage sorting schemes introduced in Germany. The costs for garbage handling had dwindled, and, in addition, the household waste had been put to efficient use as feedstuff. This in turn led pork prices to diminish. The suggestion from 1906 was investigated by a five-member committee.43 This was indeed a time of investigating food: the 1907 Food Committee was seconded by other committees looking into specific issues, like the pork-household-garbage scheme. It is feasible to interpret this as a desire to scientifically and politically manage society by introducing rational measurements of all aspects of life.

The municipal management of food was further advocated by the Food Committee, who wanted to see a municipal dairy as well. Milk had become an increasingly important article of food. It was a common belief that children and young people needed milk to become strong and

42. The garbage would have to be sorted into three different categories to grant household waste only for the pigs.
43. SCC, 16/1909.
healthy citizens. Milk took on a symbolic aspect, and was defined as a matter affecting the national economy and thus of vital importance.\textsuperscript{44} The city veterinarian Nystedt was involved in this issue as well. He had been on a study tour in Europe and greatly admired the central dairies in Dresden, Hannover, Munich, Vienna, and Budapest.\textsuperscript{45} Again, the emphasis was on centralized production and distribution which would provide safe, cheap milk of good quality to as many as possible.\textsuperscript{46}

However, the Food Committee argued that the current state of affairs was deplorable. Milk spread all kinds of disease such as tuberculosis, scarlet fever, and diphtheria. Also, children under the age of five were over-represented among the deaths from intestinal disorders, which were most likely caused by milk. According to the Food Committee, the many middlemen, the bad transportation, and the lack of control over the entire production process called for a municipal dairy. With a municipal dairy, the milk trade could be centralized, and thus more rational and more cost efficient. The strict control of the municipal government would ensure better quality, and the lack of profit incentives would keep the prices down. With a municipal dairy providing a third of all the milk needed by the Stockholm population, the private actors would be forced to follow suit, and there would be a general rise in the milk quality.\textsuperscript{47}

In the view of the Food Committee, the food question was far too important to be left to private enterprise alone, since all inhabitants in Stockholm were concerned. The City had a responsibility to oversee the food trade. The municipal authorities should provide the necessary infrastructure: market halls, warehouses, and cold storage. A centralized wholesale trade with official price quotations and city commission agents would guide private business to conform to the high norms set by the municipal authorities. Private enterprise was unable to do this by itself, as the endless quest for profit would dissipate the initial entrepreneurial energy or transform it into cartels, trusts, and monopolies, the Food Committee argued.\textsuperscript{48}

\begin{itemize}
\item[45.] Nystedt also visited Köln, Wiesbaden, Copenhagen, Fredriksberg, Berlin, Malmö, and Kristianstad. He referred to countries outside Europe like Chile, Venezuela, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia as big milk producers and consumers.
\item[46.] SCC, appendix 82/1909.
\item[47.] SCC, appendix 82/1909.
\item[48.] SCC, appendix 179/1912.
\end{itemize}
The Food Committee was adamant about municipal involvement in the food trade. To support their view, they pointed to international examples, particularly Germany. The public market hall system in Germany was rational and efficient, as demonstrated by German economists who had written numerous dissertations and performed thorough investigations on the subject. The Food Committee used the international authorities as leverage in their critique of the state of the market hall in Stockholm. The committee asked why the Abattoir and Market Hall Board, appointed by the City Council already in 1907, had not managed yet to establish a public market hall system, despite the fact that they had had a mandate to do so for five years. The AMH Board stated that the critique was unfounded, and that they had only had responsibility for the city’s market hall system for three years, and furthermore that they wanted to await the developments on the Stockholm food market before undertaking any heavy investments.⁴⁹

**Buying private market halls**

In the wake of the Stockholm Food Act, the private Maria market hall was bought by the city. Only twenty-five out of the sixty-five stalls were occu-

⁴⁹. SCC, appendix 179/1912.
pied, even though the rents were lower and the stalls were bigger than in the Hötorg market hall. The interior had fish basins of cement, asphalt flooring, marble countertops, ceiling lighting, electric and gas lights, running water and drainage, and a basement with storage facilities and ventilation. It had been constructed in 1899, but because of a misconstructed roof it already had damages due to moisture. The food trade in the nearby marketplace was blamed for the great number of vacant stalls. The marketplace, however, had its own vacancies: only forty-two of the sixty available places had occupants. The inhabitants of the Southern island went food shopping in the Old Town, where the prices were low, but the City Council still decided to buy the market hall.

The large and luxurious Östermalm market hall, which had been built in 1888, was considered to be in a state of disrepair that deterred the City from buying it in 1905, and again in 1910. The market hall was also considered as an unproductive enterprise with many vacant stalls. If the City bought the Östermalm market hall, the tenants would surely demand the same privileges as the tenants in the other halls, such as free lighting and water. This meant that the City would not only lose the tax revenues it now collected from the private company, it would also be burdened by increased costs for electricity, gas, water, and repairs. Negotiations over the price continued until the City finally decided to buy the market hall in 1914. The following year, the City put a ban on the trade in sensitive foodstuffs at the nearby marketplace.

Another smaller and not so profitable private market hall was up for sale the same year. From the start in 1890, the market hall had disappointed its owners, stalls were vacant, revenues were low, and the customers failed to find their way into the new market hall. The Hötorg market place and Odentorget marketplaces were but a stone’s throw from the unfortunately located Svea market hall. In addition to these misfortunes, the city planning was slow, and the widening of the street where it was located was delayed. The Director of the AMH still wanted the City to buy the Svea market hall so that the trade in fresh meat at Odentorget marketplace could be banned. The City opted for inaction, and referred to plans to construct a market hall just a few blocks away. Additiona, the Hötorg market hall was so close that there would be no inconvenience to the consumers, the City Council argued. The desire to buy private market halls may be interpreted as an acceptance of stricter mu-

50. SCC, appendix 89/1904.
51. SCC, appendix 72/1914; SCC, appendix 123/1914.
52. SCC, appendix 73/1914; SCC, appendix 124/1914.
Reinforcing rules and regulations

The first step towards stricter rules was the Stockholm Food Act, which came into force on the 11th of May 1905. Successive amendments extended the scope of the Food Act. In particular, milk was subject to long discussions. The Public Health Board wished to ban the sale of milk and cream in the open air as well as in stairwells and homes. The Board asserted that adulterations and frauds had been common, and there was imminent risk that milk would be contaminated by accident since the hygienic conditions were highly unsatisfactory. However, the City Council was more concerned about milk prices and securing a steady supply, and consequently refused to comply. Four years later, in 1908, the Stockholm milk and food traders (Stockholms mjölk- och matvaruförening) and Stockholm Milk Merchants Association (Stockholms mjölkhandlareförbund) renewed the demand to ban all sale of milk and cream in the open air. They were supported by the Public Health Board, the city veterinarian Nystedt, and the public health inspector Backlund. The Public Health Board referred to their own investigation where the effects of
such a ban in other cities and towns had proved to be most beneficial. A number of cities had already implemented stricter rules on the retail sale of milk and cream: Örebro and Karlstad from 1906, Helsingborg from 1907, Kristianstad and Gothenburg from 1908, and Malmö from 1910. To illustrate the danger, the Public Health Board referred to an outbreak of scarlet fever in Stockholm in 1909, where the source of contamination had been identified as milk.53

There were also other reasons for the desire to create an organized and rational milk trade where ambulant trade was forbidden. The competition was severe, and the profit on milk meager. Fredrik Benzinger, who was also the managing director of one of the biggest milk distributors in Stockholm, pointed out that anyone wanting to open a milk store had to obtain permission from the Public Health Board, and the regulations stipulated healthy, light, spacious milk stores with satisfactory ventilation. The ceilings, walls, and floors should be kept clean at all times, the staff had to wear white and observe cleanliness. None of this applied to the ambulant trade, which unquestionably must be qualified as unfair competition, not to mention its detrimental hygienic aspects. The Stockholm milk and food traders also pointed to the unfairness and ruthless competition, as well as the right of the public to expect healthy milk. In November 1910, the City Council approved, and milk could no longer be sold under the open sky.54

The regulation of the milk trade was of course a matter of hygiene, as it was undeniable that milk could be a source of infection. But it was also a matter of business, where different commercial logics clashed: where the traditional opposed the modern, the ambulant opposed the settled, and to a certain degree, where the small-scale opposed the large-scale. The City Council was in disagreement over if and how the milk trade should be regulated. On the one hand, there was a concern to provide a steady, cheap supply of milk. On the other, this milk needed to be safe and nutritious. The Public Health Board was accused of hygienic snobbery, but refuted the criticism as unfounded – anyone who knew anything about milk and hygiene understood that it was vital to protect the public against adulterated and contaminated milk.55

To accommodate the demands of price and hygiene at the same time, a Milk Commission appointed by the City Council suggested that milk should be sold in sealed receptacles and contain a minimum fat content of 2.75 percent. This attempt to standardize and regulate the milk trade

53. SCC, 224/1910.
54. SCC, 224/1910.
55. SCC, appendix 9/1915.
was heavily criticized by the Stockholm Milk Merchant Association. They tried to defend themselves by appealing to tradition, that milk had always been sold unskimmed and in whatever quantity the customer desired. They also claimed that the milk quality might suffer if milk was to be distributed in sealed receptacles. The Stockholm Milk Merchant Association argued that the accusations of fraud and adulteration were unfounded. The new regulations would only benefit the milk farmers and the milk trust.\textsuperscript{56} The discussions and controversies over what constituted quality regarding milk are emblematic of the transformations of the food trade. The old traditions were gradually being replaced by modern rationality.

The transition towards the stricter rules that favored a more modern and industrial approach to food made use of old legislation to achieve a new food order. Part of this work was to reformulate definitions of quality to suit the new business logics. In particular, the sale under the open sky was targeted as being antithetical to good and wholesome quality. The by-law for the towns of Sweden of 1869 actually contained the possibility of banning trade in the open-air markets: “...after consulting the Stockholm City Council, the Office of the Governor of Stockholm has the right to ban all trade in fresh, raw meat from beef, mutton, pork or horse, fresh, flayed game, plucked poultry, salted or cured meat and pork, delicatessen, salted or cured fish, cooked shellfish, butter and cheese, bread, flour and grain or cooked food if the municipal authorities offer a sufficient number of stalls in market halls or sheds in the proximity of the marketplace.”\textsuperscript{57} This possibility was used to ban the trade at the Östermalm marketplace and thus boosted the trade in the nearby market hall.\textsuperscript{58}

Already in 1913 there had been a similar ban on the trade at the Hötorget marketplace in favor of the vendors inside the Hötorget market hall. The debates in the City Council were intense. The detractors of trade under the open sky were adamant that neither consumers nor vendors understood what served them best. All trade under the open sky had to

\textsuperscript{56} The biggest milk distributor in Stockholm, Mjölkbolaget, was referred to as the Milk Trust, Mjölktrusten. See SCC, appendix 138/1915.

\textsuperscript{57} “...överstädhållarambetet efter stadshållarnas beslut hörande ägor genom särskild kungörelse forbruda handel med färskt, rätt kött av nötkreatur, får, svin eller häst, färskt fårt vit, plöckat fjäderfä, saltat eller rökt kött och fläsk, charkutetivaror, salterat eller rökt fisk, kokta skaldjur, smöre och ost, bröd, mjöl eller gryn eller lagad mat på salutor, i vars närhet kommunen för sådan handel upplåter erforderligt antal fasta och tillfälliga försäljningsplatser inom saluhall eller saluskjul.” Överstädhållarambetets kungörelse den 11 januari 1869 med särskilda ordningsföreskrifter för Stockholm, § 1 mom. 6.

\textsuperscript{58} SCC, 144/1915.
be banned. This was vital to the hygienic and economic interest of the city. It was a pity that this decision had not been taken a year earlier when the central market hall was inaugurated. If a ban on the Hötorget marketplace had been issued then, the Central Market Hall would have fared better. The supporters of the open air markets spoke of hygienic snobbery and voiced concern for the poor with the effects on food prices. The issue of quality was not on their agenda, but price was.59

However, the era of open air markets was coming to a close. The new rules for the market trade were the result of persistent lobbying work. The shopowners in market halls and around town resented the competition from the open air markets, and continually depicted the vendors there as quarrelsome troublemakers who only wished to avoid taxation and sell second-rate goods at premium prices. In 1915, Mr Lind submitted a bill to restrict the trade at the open air markets and limit it to real farmers and national products only.60 By 1917, the open air markets were definitely losing ground. Marketplaces were seen first and foremost as a place for real farmers selling their own produce. It was no longer permitted to sell domestic products on commission, and no imported or manufactured goods were allowed. The ban came into force in 1918, since the City Council had constructed temporary market halls to grant stalls for the vendors from the marketplace.61 In a sense, the fall of the open air market could be interpreted as the triumph of the market hall since market halls were being constructed to accommodate the street vendors. The triumph was illusory and ephemeral. The retail market hall was about to itself decline.

The tide is turning: retail
market halls under criticism

In 1910, a bill was submitted to the City Council to remove the Nytorget market hall and replace it with a pleasant, modern towngarden. The Abattoir and Market Hall Board preferred to await the general guidelines for the marketplace and market hall system before giving their final answer, but since the Nytorget market hall was unprofitable, it could certainly be disposed of. Only three out of ten stalls were occupied, and the hall was in need of repair. In June 1914, the City Council agreed with the AMH Board, and the market hall was to be replaced by a garden.62 That there

59. SCC, 338/1913; SCC, appendix 197/1913, SCC, writ 350/1913.
60. SCC, bill 18/1915.
61. SCC, 288/1917.
were contending ways of expressing civic pride was not new. What was new was that not even the AMH Board attempted to preserve an existing market hall. To be sure, the hall had always been a temporary arrangement, an old fire house converted into something more akin to a market shed than a proper market hall. However, the AMH Board did not claim that any particular plans were made to secure a future market hall, which might indicate that the attitude towards retail market halls was becoming less favorable.

Over a decade later, the situation was definitely turning against retail market halls. The market hall on Hötorget was cold and drafty, and increasingly run down. In 1924, a bill was submitted to demolish it and move the tenants to the Central Market Hall, which was superior on economic and hygienic grounds. Perhaps the building could be moved to some suburb where it could still be of use. The Hötorget square was called the most hideous of all Stockholm’s squares, largely owing to the dilapidated market hall that gave the place a squalid character. The market hall looked older and more run down in comparison with the newly constructed Concert Hall. This called for a general restoration of the entire square, and various proposals were discussed in the press and at the City Council. Nevertheless, the City Council decided against moving the market hall, opting instead to repair it. The sum was deemed unsatisfactory by one of the members of the City Council, J. P. Pehrsson, who was in favor of constructing more market halls. He also wanted to see extensive renovations of the existing ones. Pehrsson complained that the market halls in Stockholm were in a state of anarchy, with the tenants painting their stalls in all colors of the rainbow, since the City did not take its responsibility as landlord. The market hall was under attack, yet there were those who still wished to see more municipal investments to set the system back on track. But the rationality of the whole venture was being called into question more and more often.

By 1927, the City had given up on the Maria market hall. It was old and run down and only 35 out of 63 stalls were taken. The results of the Maria market hall had always been unsatisfactory. From 1911 to 1922, it was operated at a loss. Only the years 1923-1925 generated any profits, but in 1926, it again incurred a loss. The turnover remained too low despite an advertisement campaign and brochures handed out in the neighborhood. If the market hall was demolished, it could be replaced with a

63. SCC, bill 44/1924.
64. ”Inga Potemkin-kulisser framför Hötorgshallen” 12 February 1924, Sandeborg’s scrapbook, vol. 6.
65. SCC, City minutes 20 December 1927.
housing complex. The vendors could easily find alternate locations for their stores, the AMH board declared.66

The tenants argued that this would harm 40 families who would lose their only source of income. The Maria market hall had a mission during times of depression when the City Council had used it to serve the poor and unemployed. The reason the revenues were diminishing was that the City had not kept the market hall in repair. The tenants suspected that they were sacrificed to give way to a motion picture theater, a place of amusement.67 The City Council answered the tenants that marble counter tops, glass displays, cold storage, and other hygienic necessities would have to be installed in order for the market hall to be able to compete with the surrounding food stores. Such an extensive modernization and renovation of the market hall would entail massive rent increases. To make matters worse for the tenants, the vast majority of the City Council was in favor of demolishing the Maria Market Hall.68

Rescuing the market hall?

In 1923, a bill was submitted by a broad coalition in the City Council to construct new market halls around Stockholm. Members from the right to the left of the political spectrum had joined together in this proposal.69 Concerns for public health and the beauty of the urban landscape were cited as reasons for constructing new market halls. The suggested locations for market halls were Södra Bantorget, Nytorget, Högalid park in Södermalm, Odengatan, and Hälningetorget in Vasastan. In addition, the Maria market hall was in need of serious renovation.70

On the 20th of May 1925, the director of the market hall advised that sites should immediately be allocated for the construction of market halls at Södra Bantorget, Nytorget, Högalid park, Odentorget, St Erikspalen, and the area between Roslagsgatan, Odengatan, and Tulegatan.71

66. SCC, 79/1927.
67. This was actually the case when the Maria market hall was torn down, and John A. Bergendahl, who was a legendary owner of movie theaters in Stockholm, built the Rio Theater in its place.
68. SCC, 79/1927.
70. SCC, bill 31/1923.
71. These locations roughly correspond to the ones suggested in the SCC bill 31/1923.
In addition to this, it was necessary to allocate space for market halls in the new areas on Kungsholmen.72

The first hall to be investigated was the one near Odentorget. Architect Erik Asplund, who had recently designed the new City Library, was commissioned to submit a proposal. He integrated the new design with the library, and gave it the shape of a low bazaar building running parallel with the Odengatan street, leaving six meters in between the 36 stalls and the street where flowers could be sold in the summer. The idea was that the design of the market hall would attract the crowds by virtue of being visible and accessible. According to Asplund, the bazaar quality of the building would leave room for big windows facing the street, which would make all the stalls equally attractive. The low building had the additional benefit of accentuating the majestic quality of the hill behind it, thus making the park stand out even more. The same effect would enhance the architectural qualities of the City Library. Still, the market hall would only be a provisional arrangement awaiting the expansion of the City Library.73

By 1926, the market hall director had changed his mind. He referred to Berlin and how the retail market halls had not been as successful as could have been expected. It would be better to wait for indications of a verifiable need before constructing retail market halls. He also stated that even when everything seemed to be in favor of a market hall, it could still fail, as in the case of the Maria market hall. The modern expectations of luxury and comfort meant that the consumers expected lavish food stores selling every food in every neighborhood. This reflected a wish to eliminate time and space in the name of convenience, which the director found highly inappropriate. Private store owners had sought to satisfy the extravagant expectations of the consumers, and the private stores now resembled miniature market halls. However, this was without the competition in the public market halls, the director acidly pointed out. That the retail market hall had no future, as had been asserted in certain business circles, was probably an exaggeration. The public market halls had a mission: to counteract the modern store luxury and keep down the food prices.74

The idea that public market halls were primarily an instrument to keep down the food prices, secure food supply, and organize the food trade, was confirmed in the official journal of Svenska stadsförbundet

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72. SCC, 80/1927.
73. SCC, 80/1927.
74. SCC, 80/1927.
(the Swedish Town Association).\textsuperscript{75} In 1925, the journal discussed the role of the public market hall, and how it tended to generate a surplus for the municipal authorities, despite the fact that this was not its primary raison d’être. The Swedish cities and towns where public market halls were already in place were mentioned.\textsuperscript{76} In addition, the journal mentioned the places where market halls were under investigation, or where private actors had stepped in,\textsuperscript{77} as well as where they had voted against the construction of public market halls.\textsuperscript{78} The journal pointed to the occurrence of special fish market halls in the bigger cities, but there was no reference to the division between retail and wholesale.\textsuperscript{79}

Two years later, the journal wondered if the market hall system was falling out of use in the bigger towns. The topic was induced by the debates in the Stockholm City Council over the future of retail market halls and the decision to close down the Maria market hall. The journal still reported about other towns, and how several were investigating the construction of public market halls, as well as how some towns actually decided to build.\textsuperscript{80} Market halls were not explicitly mentioned for a couple of years in the journal, but the 1927 article reflects the political outlook on market halls at the time. The unanimous consensus of the earlier years where the market hall was described as “an imperative public need,”\textsuperscript{81} or even the time of uncritical appraisal of the market hall as a general public good,\textsuperscript{82} were called into question. Still, new proposals and suggestions were submitted to the town councils, and new committees were appointed to investigate the question of building new market halls.

In Stockholm, suggestions for building market halls on Odentorget and Södra Bantorget recurred again in 1927, with new bills from Mr J.P. Pehrsson. He demanded new market halls or bazaars, as well as a thor-

\textsuperscript{76} Stockholm, Göteborg, Malmö, Helsingborg, Örebro, Eskilstuna, Uppsala, Karlshrona, Lund, Karlstad, Landskrona, Kalmar, Falun, Kristianstad, Västervik, Ystad, Luleå, Lidköping, Karlshamn, Tranås, Motola, Ronneby, and Skänninge.
\textsuperscript{77} Borås, Halmstad and Trollhättan. In Uddevalla a private initiative was under way.
\textsuperscript{78} Kristianstad, Växjö, Vänersborg, Oskarshamn, and Arvika.
ough renovation of the existing market halls. He received support from Mr Konrad Elméus, who wanted the City to at least construct temporary market bazaars if real market halls were too expensive. Two alternative proposals for market halls on Södra Bantorget were put before the City Council. The city veterinarian advised against one on the grounds that it did not meet the hygienic standards to be complied with, and the Abattoir and Market Hall Board lined up against the other, on the grounds that it was too expensive and that it would be difficult to find tenants. In their view, the existing Maria market hall was to be shut down due to lack of tenants and its vendors had had no difficulties in finding suitable store premises, which indicated that the vendors of Södra Bantorget would find locations just as easily. The consumers would hardly notice the closure of the Maria market hall or the open-air market in Södra Bantorget; the city was full of food stores. The Abattoir and Market Hall Board strongly advised against the construction of any new market halls or bazaars, and refused to allocate any resources to the construction of new retail market halls.83

The middleman

The middleman was gaining momentum. No longer bemoaned as a useless profiteer, the middleman was depicted as a necessary link in an increasingly complex chain of distribution. According to the Pomological Society of Sweden (Sveriges pomologiska förening), it was an antiquated idea that the best way of ensuring low prices was to cut out the middleman and only allow producers themselves to sell directly to the consumer. Rather, the Society wished to see a reformed distribution system. The farmer had better concentrate his efforts on producing food, and let a specialist manage the distribution side. This would be the most rational and modern way of managing the urban food supply. Also, with middlemen, food could be transported from afar, and the tyranny of local supply could be broken. Local supply meant that the consumers were at the mercy of local conditions and seasons, and crop failures entailed constantly fluctuating prices. It also meant that a lot of growers were cut out from the profitable Stockholm market. Mass supply of food from all over Sweden would surely benefit farmers from all parts of the country, as well as the consumers. Mass supply was modern, the Pomological Society concluded.84

83. SCC, 80/1927; SCC, 340B/1927.
84. SCC, 404/1920.
A mass supply would guarantee stable prices and a constant influx of food. What was needed was a centralized distribution, with a central wholesale market hall, an auction hall and a suitable traffic infrastructure. Furthermore, the Pomological Society argued that the growers should endeavour to pack their produce in a completely uniform way to facilitate the centralization efforts. It was also a question of overcoming the old prejudices of the marketgarderners in Stockholm, who feared that their revenues would diminish with increasing competition from growers from the rest of the country. But the consumers needed guidance as well, as now they feared that middlemen would increase prices. As a result, consumers preferred to make their purchases at the open air markets instead of shopping exclusively in market halls and shops, the latter being surely much more rational and modern.  

The proposal from the Pomological Society that the Stockholm City Council should appoint a committee to investigate the supply and sale of garden produce was not necessary, the City council replied, since the Minister of Agriculture had already appointed a Middlemen Committee (Mellanhandssakkunnige) on the 16th of July 1920, which would look into issues of storage, transport, and distribution of goods, as well as the effect of cartels, trusts, and chain shops on the retail prices of food. The Abattoir and Market Hall Board agreed with the suggestions from the Pomological Society, but complained that their own efforts were hampered by various representatives of the food trade who objected to any regulatory measures, and thus impeded any effort towards a more uniform food market in Stockholm. Wholesale markets, city commission agents, and regulations pertaining to food auctions were difficult to establish in this anti-regulatory climate, the Abattoir and Market Hall Board explained.

On June 17, 1922 the Middlemen Committee submitted their final report. The committee was to investigate the influence of the middlemen on the price levels in Sweden. The price levels of the wartime crises remained long after the war had ended. The regulations put into place

85. SCC, 404/1920.
86. SCC, 404/1920.
87. Mellanhandssakkunnige (1922) Mellanhandssakkunniges betänkande angående olägenheterna vid mellanhandssystemet inom livsmedelshandeln. Stockholm. The committee members were all prominent men: Gustaf Leufvén, manager of Sweden’s General Agricultural Society (Sveriges Allmänna Lantbruksslåskap), Eifl B Andersson, Stockholm county council member, Axel Dahlström, Göteborg city council member, Hugo Heyman, Director of the National Board of Health and Welfare, Albin Johansson, business manager at the Cooperative Movement, G Gerhard Magnusson, bank manager, and finally, Per Henning Sjöblom, member of the Second Chamber of the Riksdag.
during the First World War had in fact created a structure that initially benefited the middlemen, even after the regulations were abandoned. The situation changed when the economic boom of the early 1920s was followed by a recession.\footnote{SCC, 301/1922.}

The Committee was reluctant to recommend any coercive measures regarding distribution matters. However, the way the cooperative movement was organized seemed to reduce the negative effects of the middleman and benefit both producers and consumers, the committee concluded, and hoped for more initiatives along the same lines. A municipal price statistics board that would publish quotations weekly would probably work to apply downward pressure on prices. One of the main problems seemed to be that there were simply too many retailers whose turnover was insufficient to generate any reasonable profits for the owners. This contributed to the staggering food prices. Consumer credit was another problematic issue that hampered the rational organization of the retail trade. The wholesale trade also suffered from high costs, with transportation as one of the main culprits. But, the Committee pointed out, the overly strict hygienic regulations of the food trade also pushed prices upwards. Municipal authorities should assume the overall responsibility for the food distribution, and thus they needed to plan for market halls and sheds, as well as for an improved transportation infrastructure.\footnote{SCC, 301/1922.}

The Director of the AMH Board, Martin Sandeberg, was surprised at the criticism from the Middlemen Committee. He could not see how the AMH board had been overzealous in hygienic measures. He was also critical of price statistics boards, and found that the practice of publishing the names of those who had overly high prices was unsuitable. In this he was supported by the Central Board of Administration, who claimed that the price statistics boards had had no effect during the war. Of course, it was of utmost importance to counter cartels and trusts, but here the cooperative movement would play the role of price regulator.\footnote{SCC, 301/1922.}

**Gravitating towards wholesale market halls**

The AMH Board proclaimed that the municipal market hall system had undergone substantial changes, especially since the end of the First World War. The urban food system now relied mostly on stores. The hygienic and economic advantages of a more controlled and well-organized food trade were provided for by the cooperative stores, the large chain stores, and the
department stores, which had made the retail market halls superfluous. The municipal authorities and the Abattoir and Market Hall Board had better apply their efforts to organize the wholesale of food, which still had severe shortcomings. Neither the Abattoir and Market Hall Board nor the City Council saw any reason to undertake the construction of new market halls. It was sufficient to maintain the existing market halls and thus concentrate the efforts on the wholesale market halls.91

This gravitation towards the wholesale market halls was noticed by the journal of the Swedish Town Association in 1930. The decline of public market halls in the bigger cities was rather a change of course in the direction of wholesale, the journal concluded. As evidence, the journal pointed to the proposal in 1928 from the AMH board for a new wholesale market hall. The journal also made reference to the 1925 bill for centralizing the wholesale food trade in Stockholm. The market garderners of Stockholm and the Swedish National Association for Agriculture (SAL) had asked the AMH board to organize the wholesale trade of garden produce in particular. SAL was worried about the lack of infrastructure and the effect on the food prices in the capital. Trade in the open air markets was unhygienic, irrational and outdated. They were also severely undersized. The market halls were also outdated, and lacked sufficient modern cold storage.

During the 1920s, there had been discussions about constructing a wholesale market hall for meat, just like there was one for fish. In 1926, the AMH board decided to build a wholesale market hall next to the CSH. The alternative was to redesign the CSH or build at Norra Bantorget. After a year, the trade representatives could still not agree upon the best location and the decision was postponed. The CSH, which still had over thirty empty stalls, gradually turned into a wholesale market hall in 1928 when eight meat wholesale dealers moved in. Another three moved in the following year, along with two fruit and green and one fish wholesale dealer.92

The wholesale character of the CSH was reinforced by the food auctions held in there. The import of fruit by rail increased during the 1920s. Before that, most fruit had come by boat and only in small quantities. The fruit consumption steadily increased in the interwar years, rising sharply by the end of the 1930s. The opening in 1927 of the free port, Frihamnen, boosted the fruit imports further.93

91. SCC, 80/1927; SCC, 340B/1927.
93. Tilstam, R., Livet i Klarahallarna, p. 89-90.
The cold storage warehouses that the 1907 Food Committee had recommended were not constructed, but by the late 1930s, the area around the Central Market Hall had turned into the wholesale hub of Stockholm and would remain so until the new wholesale area in Årsta was inaugurated in 1962. The transformation towards more focus on centralizing the wholesale trade was the result of long debates. The debates reflected an increasing division between retail and wholesale, where the wholesale trade moved first in the direction of rationalization. In November 1925, a bill was submitted to the City Council demanding a centralized wholesale trade in Stockholm. The food prices in the capital were still horrendous. As an example, the bill mentioned how the price of carrots could be up to three times as expensive in Stockholm as in Malmö in Southern Sweden. Numerous improvements and reforms were suggested. Food should be sold by weight, not by piece or in bundles. Quality and grade should be well-specified and standardized. Public price quotations for the wholesale markets were presented as absolutely essential.

In 1929, the City Council decided to build the wholesale market halls in Klara. The city plan had to be altered, the tenants in the existing houses were evicted, and the architects consulted. The market gardeners were unhappy and complained, but by that time, the future of the Klara wholesale market hall was already decided. The symbolic transition from retail to wholesale market halls as the focus for municipal involvement and responsibility can be interpreted as a new meaning given to the concept of what constituted modern food trade, and as to how optimal quality was to be ascertained, with authentic goods being distributed in the most rational fashion possible.

Coda

Waning symbolic power: how the market hall lost its allure of modernity

The market halls in Sweden never became the roaring success that we saw in Great Britain, France, or the US. So why did the market hall project fail in Stockholm? In part it might be a question of timing. The construction of the market hall systems and the renovation of the public markets and open-air markets in the rest of the Western world preceded the developments in Sweden by at least twenty to thirty years. The time lag in Sweden was most probably due to the fact that Sweden became urbanized later in comparison to the UK and continental Europe, or even for that matter, the US. With the US there is also a difference of scale: the new frontiers and the new cities established in the US still had little in common with the urban development in Sweden; the US was both a big country and a country of immigration, full of influences from near and far, whereas Sweden was both a small country and a country of emigration, dreading the drain of the country’s most resourceful and industrious inhabitants. In this sense, we can interpret it as the difference between the pioneering spirits of the new world contrasted with the emigration debate of the old world.

All of these factors contributed to the delay in the construction of market halls in Stockholm. Additionally, market halls were in most cases
great public works financed by a slow-moving city council, reluctant to spend tax money on big projects like market halls when the city needed so many other infrastructural investments. This, of course, is not specific to the Swedish context. City councils and city administrations of the nineteenth century had a weak tax base and were in many cases corrupt or inept. As an example of how the private market halls fared, Östermalmshallen, which was constructed very rapidly, did not turn out to be the spectacular success its promoters were hoping to see. Eventually the city took over responsibility for the cathedral of food in the new bourgeois neighborhood of Östermalm.

Still, the construction of market halls in Sweden and in the rest of the Western world can be interpreted as the triumph of science in urban planning. Urban planning was a powerful tool, and in its service it had all the benefits of the new scientific and technical innovations. The urban landscapes became cleaner and more orderly, the market houses were increasingly standardized and the wholesale and retail trades were gradually confined to separate buildings of distinct character. As far as possible they were connected by rail to avoid cumbersome transports from the railway stations. Architects and engineers were working with the public officials to construct the most rational and efficient distribution system to serve the urban infrastructure. Of course, this development was in no way unambiguous or straightforward. Competing alternatives and reticence characterized the process.

What is remarkable is how little impact the construction of the market halls in Sweden had on the contemporary Swedish architectural debate. This might be attributed to the relative failure of the market halls. The market halls never attained the same impact as in Great Britain for example. However, despite the fact that the market hall did not make a great impression on the architectural debate, on what was desirable or undesirable in terms of forms of distribution and consumption spaces at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, we can still say something about the direction the market hall was taking the retail trade into. The debate over the value of the market halls took place more in the city councils, where those concerned about hygiene and a more orderly trade had ample room to express their views. The fact that the retail trade needed to be regulated and organized was recognized as a problem at the municipal level, and actions were taken that contributed to making the retail system more coherent and more predictable. The retail system was accompanied by a system of municipal regulation and control, but also a system of more modern commercial trade practices.

The creation of the market halls can thus be seen as part of a movement from a traditional guild system to a modern capitalist system.

In this process a certain type of store/consumption culture was the ideal and the aim. In the new, more sophisticated market halls both vendors and customers were supposed to behave in a manner that suited the ideals of how you behave in an urban consumption space. To achieve this, the status of the vendor had to be elevated, but the actual vendors also needed to conform and become the well-polished, well-bred, accommodating tradespeople that ideally operated within these consumption places.

In parallel with the slow construction of the market halls, exclusive grocery stores had established themselves at different locations in town. Perhaps part of the answer as to why the market hall system never had the same influence in Sweden as abroad is because the exclusive delicatessen and grocery stores had already taken up the niche that market halls could take in other countries. Delicatessens and stores like the famous grocers Arvid Nordquist or Axel Boive and their contemporaries were serving a clientele that could have been tempted by exclusive market halls or food halls in the great department stores. In London, Paris, New York and similar cosmopolitan cities, there was more room for a luxury market. The market in Stockholm was not big enough for both exclusive grocery stores and a number of exclusive market halls.

So why didn't the exclusive grocers move into the beautiful and modern market halls? If we look at the elegant grocery stores in trademark terms, we see that grocery stores were often named after the owner as a way to mark who you were. The owner was the guarantor of quality and his good name was the trademark, the assurance seal the customer needed, and the label of quality sought after. The reputation of the firm was the biggest capital, a trademark to be carefully managed. This might be a reason why many of the upscale grocery store owners stayed out of the market halls.

The market halls in the first period were competing against the open air markets outside, but also against the upscale grocery stores and the department stores. There was a veritable cocktail of competition: the vibrant open air markets, and their abundant assortment; the elegant department store NK, which also tried to create an urban room for the emerging bourgeoisie; and the exclusive grocery stores, with their knowledge and personal service, all catering to the same bourgeois customers. In trying to satisfy too many different tastes at the same time, the market hall ended up pleasing no one.
Part 2
Prelude

Dreams of rationality:
the decline of the market hall

The idea behind this part of the dissertation is to understand the void, the non-discourse on the market hall. Why is there a void? What explains the absence of market halls in the public debates? What is it in this period that eventually lays the foundation for the return of the market hall? Part 2 is different from both part 1 and 3: the purpose is to trace the general trends and tendencies. As a result, the analysis relies more on existing literature. What is of interest here is first and foremost the overall retail landscape in which the market hall fell from grace. In order to understand it we also need to look at the wider context in which the retail revolution took place: modernity. The literature on Swedish modernity in its entirety is vast and no attempt is made to cover all of it. Instead, fragments of the research on modernity will be used as a backdrop to the consumption landscape under investigation in this book.

The focus in part 2 is national, since the transformations affected the entire country. This is hardly surprising considering that it reflected a global restructuring of the retail trade. But the consumption landscape is first and foremost an urban landscape, and the bias remains towards Stockholm. The reasoning will be more tentative than in the previous chapters, where we followed the rise of the market hall or in the subsequent chapters, where we will return to Stockholm of the early twenty-first century.
The history of the retail revolution is important because it gives us the keys to comprehend the rise and fall and subsequent renaissance of the market hall. Whereas the first part of this dissertation looked at the rise, the focus of this part is the fall. The time period described in part 2 is important in order to understand the environment in which the market hall could come back and experience a renaissance. Nevertheless, very few sources actually deal explicitly with market halls during the period 1933-1973. It is difficult to pinpoint exactly at what point the market halls surged and attracted more interest again.

The following chapters thus propose to deal with why the market hall fell into decline, but will do so indirectly. Here the focus is to grasp the climate of modernization and rationality that corresponds to the high tide of the Swedish welfare state, which in turn corresponds to the high tide of the mass production and mass consumption in the Western world, a period of great expansion and economic growth. Still, the overall ambition in this part is to look at the example of the retail trade and the emergence of the self-service store in order to see what the implications were for how quality was construed. The new self-service stores are illustrations of the bigger transformation of the food industries, but also of the transformation of the urban landscape and its food retail systems. It is also a question of what elements constituted quality. During this period it was rationality rather than authenticity that took the center stage, as we will see in the following chapters.

The economic historian Hugo Kylebäck, who has written extensively on the development of the retail trade and especially on the history of the cooperative movement in Sweden, divides Swedish retail history into several blocks, where the period 1900 to 1950 is characterized by an older form of trade, and the latter half of the century is characterized by innovations and may be termed modern.¹ To understand the developments regarding the market hall, the period categorization made by Kylebäck has been adopted here, specifically the first half of the periodization, and comments on the market hall have been added.

- 1870s–1890s – The rise of the market hall.
- 1890s–1910s – The high period of the market hall.
- 1910s–1930s – The parallel system of manual counter service, stores begin to overtake the market halls.
- 1930s–1950s – The decline of the market hall: trade agreements and power struggles over the control of the retail trade.

1950s–1970s – The introduction and triumph of self-service, department stores, oligopolies. The market hall is a virtual non-issue.


1990s–2000s – Oligopolies are called into question, internationalization and niche markets are on the rise, which also means continued market hall renaissance.

To make an accurate period categorization is always a delicate task. The point of this periodization is to draw up the general lines of development, even if parallel forms of trade have always coexisted. The general lines of the development of the retail trade will then guide us through the following chapters and help us see why the market hall became such a non-issue: there was simply no need for the city to provide the infrastructure of a market hall when there were stores in every neighborhood.

The system of neighborhood stores had expanded in parallel with the market halls. The subsequent changes in city planning and the expansion of the city over a greater area further strengthened the advantage of the neighborhood stores over the centrally located market halls. Consumers expected their street to service them with food stores offering all the various items which they in the past had to go to the market or the market hall to find. The character of the neighborhood store changed too, when previous regulations as to what food items could be sold where were removed and stores could expand their assortment, thus making the market hall still even more outmoded.2

Even if the counter service stores triumphed over the market hall, the competition was still severe. The small neighborhood stores competed with the cooperative stores that continued to be innovative. For example, the cooperative movement had their special store structure, where three stores or more were located next to one another. Then there were the new forms of trade, such as the variety stores and the department stores, where food was also sold, even if food was never the number one article. The introduction of self-service was the revolution that finally permitted the restructuring of the retail trade, which went in the direction of large-scale rationalizations and, as far as was possible, mechanization. All of this can be interpreted as the antithesis of the craftsmanship and personal service of the market hall.

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2. The decaying market halls also faced competition from the big department stores, likewise located in the city centers. However, the department stores became obsolete very rapidly, especially as regards food distribution.
In the new suburbs the city planners and the representatives of the Cooperative movement and the ICA movement made sure the inhabitants were well-supplied with self-service food stores of unprecedented size. Eventually the big supermarket chains and their external shopping malls attracted the main business away from the city centers. What once was a good business location was no longer the same golden opportunity. The face of the urban landscape had changed yet again and rationality was the keynote characteristic. In order to understand how transformations of such magnitude could take place in such a short period of time, we need to dwell on the context in which they took place: Sweden from the 1930s to the 1970s.

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3. The ICA movement was the association of the private retailers, which became very successful. ICA actually modelled a lot of its business practices on the success of KF. See Wirsall, N-E., “Blad ur Hakonbolagets historia” In M. Falkenström (ed.), Något till liv: ett tidsskört med anledning av Hakonbolagets 50-årsjubileum; Nygren, E. “De frivilliga sammanslutningarnas tid.” In J. Ejdestam, N. Hedin & E. Nygren (eds.), Bilder ur lantbandelns historia, p. 345-400.
Climate of change

On May 16, 1930 the doors opened to the Stockholm Exhibition. The exhibition celebrated the triumph of modernism in architecture. In a sense, the exhibition also marked the triumph of modernity in Sweden. From the 1930s, the move towards modernity was the dominant position in politics, business, and private life: the advocates of modernity had overtaken the social and intellectual debate. This tendency was most pronounced among the social-democratic party members or those affiliated with the new social democratic elite. Every aspect of modern society should be molded into this new rational form: art, housing, family life, working life, production, distribution, and consumption. The new citizen had to be educated, society reformed, home, trade and industry rationalized, in order for a brave new world to arise.1

The advocates of modernity worked on several levels. The strength of the modernity movement came from its wide base of supporters. The alliances were sometimes unexpected and ran across political boundaries, as well as across sectors. The fact that industry, unions, politicians, and many representatives of the liberal professions joined forces in the reform

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of Swedish society paved the way for the unusual uniformity, strength and rapidity with which Swedish society went through reform and modernization. Under the particular historical conditions present in the interwar period, and even more so in the golden period of the post-war era, these alliances had enough to offer disparate actors in order for the reformation to be relatively smooth. Even when there was controversy, and of course there was controversy, the main direction had been firmly set: the love story of Sweden and modernity was established.

Whether this was just an image well-suited to the construction of the welfare state or a more substantial reality is not the issue here. The image worked, and it worked well, especially since it was taken up and disseminated by others. The production and reproduction of the image of Sweden as a country embracing modernity full speed and in complete harmony is found in a study by the ethnologist Åke Daun, who has studied the image of Sweden in search of the Swedish “national character”.

Here Daun cites a number of examples where the Swede is presented as a person who puts a lot of emphasis on rationality, reason, and common sense. Already in 1911, Gustav Sundbärg described the Swedish national character as having a pronounced sense of reason, objectivity, facts, and orderliness. But the love of rationalism can actually be traced back to the 1880s, according to the historian of ideas Kjell Jonsson, whom Daun uses to support his account. A Swede predisposed to engage in technical and practical issues emerged again in Hans L. Zetterberg’s *The Rational Humanitarians* from 1984. To explain the Swedish mentality, he used the long social-democratic rule and the ideology of the social democrats focused on reforms and compromises, where collective decisions were portrayed in a particularly propitious light. There was a strong conviction in Sweden that the state and the authorities would best ensure justice and fair play. To render politics in a scientific context can also be seen as typically Swedish, according to Daun.²

The rational, practical Swede, with his deep and unquestioning trust in the state, was not only an image propagated by the Swedes themselves. It was taken up by foreigners like American journalist David Jenkins, who wrote *Sweden and the Price of Progress* in 1968. Another American, the political scientist David Popenoe, studied Sweden and also concluded that to trust the state and follow the plans drawn up by the authorities was a trait specific to Swedish society. That the trust was fairly well-founded was the main argument of *Suède: la réforme permanente* from 1977, which

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used Sweden as the good example of a successful transition into modernity.³

Yet another classic example of how this image of Sweden was taken up by outsiders and propagated as unique example is the book *Sweden, the middle way* from 1936.⁴ This was written by Marquis W. Childs, one of the advisors to President Roosevelt. There was a desire to see and accept Sweden as something different, a country of bright and harmonious modernity. The production of the image of Sweden and its emphasis on rationality and modernity further propagated the view that rationality was synonymous with quality as quintessentially Swedish. Of course, it only reflects certain aspects of Swedish modernity, but it is remarkable to see how the voices of discord and discontent are drowned out in these accounts.

What we see is actually a nexus of social, scientific, technical, and political transformations reflected in a large number of committees and public reports in the 1930s and onwards, especially regarding social politics. A

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⁴ Childs, M. W., *Sweden, the middle way*.
number of reports were issued on agriculture, as well as the production, processing, distribution and sale of food. The reports themselves also undeniably generated change. The strong desire to change society and to do it in a rational way may in part be explained by the closely knit networks of a reform-friendly elite, who managed to attain an interpretative prerogative, where rationality was equated with quality.

The reform-minded elites recruited their most ardent supporters among radical architects, medical doctors, and social democratic politicians. People in the cooperative movement also played an important role. These people often knew each other and lived in the same neighborhoods. The very fact that the network members were living in such close proximity and often spent a lot of time with each other may in part explain the strength of the networks. Friendships, family ties, and geographic proximity made this elite highly cohesive and effective.

During this period of active modernization and urbanization, agriculture dramatically declined in importance relative to industry. To understand the subsequent changes, we need to look into the agricultural politics of the interwar period and after the Second World War. The course of events could best be characterized as a fundamental change in Swedish society, steered by an active decision to move into an era of modernization. And modernization meant rationalization.

**Agriculture heading for rationalization**

Agriculture had long been the backbone of the Swedish economy, but it failed to keep pace with industry with regard to modernization. Swedish farmers increasingly suffered from structural disadvantages, and the

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6. The neighborhood with the classical functionalist row houses in Ålsten, where the Swedish prime minister Per Albin Hansson lived, was one such center, and the block of service flats on the John Ericsson street in Kungsholmen was another.

7. The close-knit networks of reform advocates have been mapped out in different studies and from different perspectives than the broad generalizations in this chapter. See Wisselgren, P., ‘Kollektrivhuset och Villa Myrdal: om samhällsvetenskapens rum i folkhemmet’, *Topos: essäer om tänkbara platser och platsbundna tankar*, p. 130-151; Hirdman, Y., *Den socialistiska hemmafrun och andra kvinnohistorier*. 
countryside appeared less and less attractive for youth, who chose to follow their urban dreams rather than stay and endure the drudgery of rural life. Agriculture was hard work and farm workers were among the poorest in Sweden. This meant that agriculture was one of the prime targets for modernization and rationalization.

When the export market for agricultural produce collapsed in the beginning of the 1930s, the situation for the farmers became critical. It is in light of this state of affairs that we need to examine the historical compromise of the 1933 Crisis Agreement, which in itself has turned into a symbol of Sweden’s successful move into modernity. The agreement offered guarantees for agriculture to sustain the position of farmers and the pricing policies of agricultural products. The agreement then resulted in a transition of agriculture from subsistence to cash farming, and it was supported by a broad coalition of politicians concerned with the social improvement of the rural areas. The main concern during this period was to bring urban rationality out to the rural hinterlands. The urban values of rationality and fixed working hours were to be transferred to the rural context. The idea was to turn farmers into rational workers, and farming into an anonymous industrial activity.

The 1948 Agriculture Agreement further marked the point when farmers and agriculture entered the path of modernization, and from this time the structural rationalization of agriculture truly took off. The agreement stipulated that the farmer should be entitled to the same economic compensation as the average industrial worker. This meant that only a smaller number of farmers would be able to continue farming, but the ones who continued would have a decent standard of living as compensation for their labor. The difficulties and hardships experienced by farmers in the 1920s and 1930s had effectively laid the foundation for the desire to compromise and find new solutions across traditional political barriers.

The coalition between the Farmers’ Union and the Social Democrats made the structural transitions run smoothly. Parallel to this development was the producer cooperative movement among farmers and the development of cooperative agricultural credit institutes, which helped

spur the transformation towards structural rationalization of agriculture. What started out as local cooperation at the beginning of the twentieth century had turned into major producer cooperatives, more akin to global power players, towards the end of the twentieth century. As a consequence, the wholesale market in Sweden for virtually all perishables such as dairy products, meat, or fruit and vegetables, ended up in the hands of a few large producer cooperatives.

The large producer cooperatives in Sweden are thus the result of successful agricultural transformations, but their development has continuously enjoyed the support of politicians, which has cemented their success. The support of the producer cooperatives was also seen as a way of dealing with the problems related to food security and food provisioning by creating large, rational production units that could serve the entire country. The same tendencies are present in the rest of Europe, where active political support of agriculture has led to big producer cooperatives and farmers being dislocated from one another.

The structural rationalizations in agriculture had to be matched by similar developments in food industries and retail, which called for new forms of distribution as well. The market halls, which had emerged partly as a response to the difficulties of farmers to get their produce to town and thus transform the agricultural economy into a more market-oriented economy, were declared insufficient by the 1930s. The food market was still chaotic and the food prices were still abnormally high, at least in the capital as we saw in the previous chapters. New solutions had to be found to get the farmers’ produce to the market in a profitable way. Here the market hall no longer appeared as a viable option for the distribution to the end consumer. Where market halls persisted, they were wholesale markets. Even as wholesale markets, they were challenged by other forms of distribution. But it was not until the postwar period that the large farmer-led producer cooperatives were truly to be matched by the consumer cooperative movement and by the retail-led cooperative movement, ICA.

10. For example, the Danish dairy company MD Foods and Swedish Arla, which merged into one company in 2003, still operate in the form of producer cooperatives, even if the members hardly know one another anymore.
Rational designs

The cooperative movement was innovative and kept up to date with developments in the field of retail trade, distribution, and production of consumer goods and food. They also very much pioneered the store architecture: the architect bureau opened by the cooperative movement in 1924 had an enormous influence on the modernization of stores all over the country. The KF architect’s office designed over 2000 shops and shop fittings in the first ten years. The opening of the KF architect’s office can be seen as the beginning of a new commercial shop culture. KF also produced several instruction films about shop culture and how a good vendor should behave in accordance with the new rational and hygienic store interiors.

Standardization was presented as the answer to all the troubles of the modern consumer culture. Once the stores had been remodeled and standardized, with their new shop fittings and counters, shelves, compartments and fruit baskets, as well as modern packages and cans, it made sense to speak of a new store culture, as one of the supporters of the KF movement proclaimed in an article in 1935. Consumer politics were translated by the cooperative movement into a concern about how to build stores that would best serve the consumers.

Ten years after the cooperative movement opened their architect bureau, the private retailers opened theirs, Sveriges Köpmannaförbunds arkitektkontor (Architect Bureau of Sweden’s Merchant Association). Their mission was to serve private retailers and offer standardized store fittings and solutions, in the same way that the KF architect bureau had served the cooperative retailers. The efforts were communicated in a journal about the retail trade, where notable examples of new modern stores were presented, along with ideas for how to decorate your window display. The journal encouraged store owners to arrange their stores in a rational manner. It was important to keep the standards high and main-

13. This could translate into Swedish cooperative wholesale society’s architect’s office, which is how the office translated its name when it celebrated its 10th anniversary in 1935. For convenience the less cumbersome translation of KF architect’s office is used here.
16. The name of the journal, _Butikskultur_, literally translates into "store culture".
6.2 New rational store-designs pioneered by the cooperative movement.
Unknown photographer, 1934-1939, Stockholms Stadsmuseum.

tain the store spick and span to survive the competition from all the new
elegant stores.\textsuperscript{17}

Cleanliness and hygiene were often mentioned in the journal. According
to the journal, it was a sign of a modern store culture. The modern
was rational and the rational was standardized.\textsuperscript{18} The journal did spend
some time in negotiating how things would be standardized, and also
addressing the fear of stores losing their soul. Cost efficient standardiza-
tion of certain store fittings did not have to mean boring and impersonal.
Swedish design was claimed to be a sober and genuine style that refuted
any accusations of standardized conformity as bland and vacuous.\textsuperscript{19} But
the real antidote was a store where the clerks knew the value of service.
“Mechanization, stereotyped behavior and monotonous routine evapo-

\textsuperscript{17} “Vårda butiksklokalen rationellt!”, Butikskultur: Sveriges köpmannaförbunds organ
för butiksinnredningar och fönsterskyltning, p. 16-17 nr 5 1933, “Butiken och turisterna”,
Butikskultur: Sveriges köpmannaförbunds organ för butiksinnredningar och fönsterskyltning p. 10-12 nr 3 1935.
\textsuperscript{18} The model was taken from the cooperative stores whose success depended on
their higher hygienic standards and the standardization of the store interiors that
allowed for some economies of scale. See Brunnström, L., \textit{Det svenska folkhemsbygget.},
p. 200-201.
\textsuperscript{19} “Butiken och turisterna” Butikskultur, nr 3 1935, p. 10-12.
rate when personal service is celebrated, and it renders our stores in the bright colors of life itself, filled with genuine charm.20

But the new consumption landscape, for all its standardized store elegance, still suffered from extremely low productivity. With more people moving to urban agglomerations and more people working for wages, the number of people depending on stores to supply them with food increased. At the same time, the stores had difficulties finding enough staff without having to spend too much on salaries in order to be able to still make a profit. Social reformers anxious to move into a rational new society perceived the retail trade as problematic with its low labor productivity. An army of clerks and delivery boys were required, usurping a workforce that could be better employed in a more productive area of the economy.

**Rampant distribution costs**

As we saw in the previous part, Berlin and Germany more generally, as well as Paris to a certain extent, had been the main sources of inspiration in the late nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, especially for municipal forms of organizing the food distribution. From the interwar period and onwards, the US emerged as a strong contender for first place. This influence was strengthened after the Second World War, with the US emerging as the new global superpower. The prestige Germany had hitherto enjoyed was tainted by the Nazi experience, and the close ties between the Sweden and Germany sank into collective oblivion.21 The US was the future and the role model.

The American advertising and business literature had in fact been gaining momentum before the interwar period with translations of handbooks on how to sell, use advertising, and meet customers. The main themes were economic rationality, profit and gain.22 But the ideal prescribed in the literature was in stark contrast to the realities of retailers. In the 1920s and 1930s retail landscape, the mounting costs for distribution were recognized as a serious threat. This problem was further aggravated after the end of the Second World War and now something radical had to be done about the retail trade. The high costs of distribution were

in fact brought to attention by the government who threatened industry to intervene and impose strict regulations if they could not bring down the costs on their own initiative.23 Let us look at the arguments from two of the leading experts on distribution economics at the Stockholm School of Economics, Professor Gerhard Törnqvist24 and his disciple Nils Erik Wirsäll,25 who also worked for one of the biggest private wholesalers. Both of them were concerned with the staggering costs of distribution, why they kept mounting, and how the retail trade should handle these costs. Törnqvist continually undertook time studies in order to scientifically rationalize the retail trade. He synthesized some of the results of his investigations in a detailed handbook on the retail trade, where every aspect was covered: the layout of the store, the fittings, the lighting arrangements, mechanical devices, the staff, and advertising.26

In 1946, professor Gerhard Törnqvist was contemplating the future of the Swedish distribution system. Professor Törnqvist spoke of the changes that had affected the food trade and mentioned two of particular consequence. Firstly, from the 1940s the average household was urban and since most people had little possibility of storing large quantities of food in their flats, they bought smaller quantities and more often than had been the custom in previous decades. Handling many small purchases was less cost efficient than fewer, bigger purchases. Secondly, the overall mechanization of the industry had lead to higher wages in that sector. The retail trade, competing for the same labor force, was forced to increase wages without any substantial rationalization within reach.27

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24. Törnqvist can be said to have been a highly influential actor. He worked at the Stockholm School of Economics, where he taught a number of students who were later successful and loyal to the ideas of their mentor. He co-founded a journal on business economics, *Affärsekonomi*, where he contributed and functioned as an editor. He also co-founded a research institute on business, Affärsekonomiska forskningsinstitutet (AEF). For a discussion of Törnqvist’s wide sphere of influence, see Östlund, D., “Gerhard Törnqvist – månsterbildare planekonon och marknadsprofet”, In L. Engwall, (ed.), *Föregångare inom företagskonomi*, p. 147.
25. The business historian Hugo Kylebäck describes Wirsäll as kind of a chief ideologist for industry and trade, and as being closely linked to the private retailers’ association, the ICA movement, and the biggest private wholesaler, Hakonbolaget. In addition, he was also working at the Stockholm School of Economics. See Kylebäck, H., *Varuhandeln i Sverige*, p. 7-9.
Nils-Erik Wirsäll arranged a study circle on behalf of the Swedish Advertising Association in 1944 on the distribution of goods and its costs. Wirsäll confirmed Törnqvist’s analysis. He pointed to how industry had turned more to manufactured and semi-manufactured commodities, and how production had been concentrated into larger and larger factories to bear the cost of the increased mechanization. This in turn also raised the distribution costs, since the transportation costs increased with big industrial complexes centralized in a few locations. The retail trade had not had the same opportunities to mechanize and rationalize as industry, and the manual service retail trade faced dramatic cost increases, as well as a coming labor shortage when workers were drawn to the well-paid jobs in industry. 28

The higher wages would affect the entire society, warned Wirsäll, and society would have to bear the higher distribution costs that were the inevitable consequence of the increasing wages and the low productivity in the retail trade. The labor shortage would affect the retail sector in yet another more indirect way. With fewer people entering the servant profession, housewives would be under increasing strain, and they were then likely to try to shift some of their workload onto the retail trade and the food industry. 29 Törnqvist also predicted that fewer people would be able to keep a servant. On the other hand, more people would have access to telephones. They could then telephone their orders to the stores and collect them later on. Professor Törnqvist speculated that this new way of serving customers might be more profitable than counter service in the store itself. 30

Both Wirsäll and Törnqvist were aware of the fact that the retail trade faced great challenges. Wirsäll perceived how the consumers would try to shift more of the workload onto the retailers, which would put further strains on the already hard-pressed manual retail trade. Törnqvist, on the other hand, saw how one mechanical device, the telephone, could help rationalize the manual service store. The consumer would bear the cost of the telephone, and thus participate in the mechanization of the old counter service store.

The increase in wages affected the retail trade in other ways as well. The higher standards of living induced a more differentiated market, and this turned demand into a more fickle and unpredictable factor. With increased real income, people allowed themselves the leisure to choose,

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and more closely follow both their desires and the current fashions. But since they could only consume a certain quantity of goods, they started demanding (unnecessary) service instead of goods, once a certain level had been reached, Wirsäll complained. The consumer here is presented almost like a child, incapable of handling the new toys provided in a rational and predictable manner. The irrational behavior of the consumer hindered the rational endeavors of the retail trade.

The consumer was a troublemaker, and the consumer was often a woman. When Törnqvist spoke of women working outside the home, he regarded them as a factor that both put new restraints and opened up new possibilities for the food trade. The food trade would lose some of its business when women no longer had time to cook in the same way, but it would gain from selling women products that made their life and cooking more convenient. It also affected when and where women would shop, which in the same way both imposed constraints and opened up possibilities. To Törnqvist, it was essential to guide the consumer in the right direction, to help her make the most rational choices, and offer her the modern products she did not know she needed.

The US consumer was perhaps not rational or attentive to the working conditions of the retail trade when choosing what days to go food shopping. Most housewives did their shopping on Fridays and Saturdays, and not even cheaper prices on other days of the week could change that behavior. What was interesting about American housewives was their attitude towards new products. In 1946, 44 percent would prefer to buy rinsed and peeled vegetables that were ready to use. 55 percent wanted to buy ready-made meals, frozen, and packaged. 78 percent wanted more goods to be sealed by vacuum. 75 percent wanted packages that could be placed straight at the table. The advocates of self-service hoped that the conservative Swedish housewives would soon follow the example of the US consumer and her willingness to try out industrially-produced convenience food in modern rational stores.

To a certain extent, this was connected to the general discussions at this time of how women should be able to combine work and home, where

32. Wirsäll, N-E., Varudistributionen och dess kostnader, p. 11-12.
34. The consumption patterns were similar in Sweden, and Swedish retailers also, unsuccessfully, tried to change the behavior of consumers.
35. The results came from an investigation undertaken by the Home Makers Guild of America in 1946. The intention was to map out what American housewives wanted from their stores and how they currently shopped. See ”Lardomar från Amerika: Vad en husmor önskar av butiken”, Butikkultur, Nr 3 1947.
women like Alva Myrdahl, Karin Kock, and Britta Åkerman were very active. They promoted an ideal of rationality which opened up for new commodities that made housework less work-intensive. Their approach was more understanding than the attitude of the men at the Stockholm School of Economics or the men in the retail trade, but reflected the same desire to rationalize all aspects of life.

A more rational and more mechanized retail trade was perceived as an adequate response to larger changes in society by the reform-friendly Swedish elite. Both new consumption patterns, such as buying smaller quantities more often, and new income patterns, with more people demanding and receiving higher wages, meant that the retail trade had to somehow adjust. The prepackaged goods were the answer to both of these issues, according to Törnqvist. The prepackaged approach was a way of mechanizing the retail trade to make it more rational and more cost efficient, much in the same way that industry had changed. More customers could be served the small quantities they demanded in shorter time with prepackaged goods. This would also save labor costs and thus cut the rampant distribution costs. From the desire to serve as many customers in as little time as possible, self-service was only a step away. But in order for self-service to work, new retail technologies were essential: packaging and trademarks.

The packaging revolution

The retail revolution would not have been possible without another revolution: the packaging revolution. The packaging revolution was still in its infancy in the 1930s and 1940s. This did not mean that packages and trademarks did not receive ample attention from various groups. These groups were the food industry, the wholesalers, the retailers, and scholars with an interest in trade and distribution matters, as well as those interested in social issues, and finally politicians and bureaucrats eager to rationalize the food trade and make sure the consumers had access to healthy and cheap food in sufficient amounts.

Of course, goods have always been packaged in various forms, but industrial packaging, where goods were prepackaged at the manufacturers in packages destined for the end consumer is a fairly recent phenomenon. Before industrial packaging, most goods were packaged for the consumer at the retailers. The whole procedure of manual service was extremely

36. These women were well-known feminists. See, Niskanen, K., Karriär i männens värld, p. 159-201.
work intensive and demanded that there were enough sales clerks to serve the customers, who would have to wait in line. As long as labor was cheap and abundant, this was not a real problem. Staff was also supposed to prepackage staple foods during the slow times when there were no customers to serve, but the consumers could always choose their desired quantity and have it wrapped up by the vendor. This meant a lot of flexibility for the consumer, but also a lot of losses for the retailer. Foods were spoiled and spilled in the process of handling the goods. Also, the consumers did not always trust the retailers, who were accused of cheating with the quantities measured, and of tampering with the goods to make them last longer.\(^{38}\)

The retailers and the counter service system were under critique from the supplier side as well. The food manufacturers who wanted to market their merchandise were also suspicious of the retailers, and were afraid they would spoil the quality of the manufactured products and hence the good name of the food manufacturer. Manufacturers, who had prepackaged goods to offer, demanded higher prices for these items since they initially had higher costs in producing them. To convince retailers and consumers that their products had benefits, manufacturers had to ensure that the consumer was familiar with the trademark, and trusted and desired the quality of the product. The manual service in the store would then benefit from shorter time serving customers since a known trademark in a package would help the customers make up their minds. To the producers and manufacturers a known trademark meant a more stable demand. The prepackaged goods also entailed a new perception of quality. Here quality was equated with the industrially manufactured goods never touched by human hands. In order to accept this new interpretation, the consumer had to learn to trust and recognize the prepackaged goods as being of superior quality.

One way of creating this knowledge and trust was through advertising. As a matter of fact, advertising for packaged goods was pervasive in the 1930s - 1950s.\(^{39}\) The manufacturers also became more interested in market surveys and public relations to direct consumer demand towards their own products. This desire to control the market and promote packaged goods and the manufacturers’ own trademarks eventually led the manufacturers to set fixed gross prices that the retailers were bound to:

\(^{38}\) Mayo, J. M., *The American grocery store*, p. 64; Deutsch, T., “Untangling alliances: social tensions surrounding independent grocery stores and the rise of mass retailing” in W. J. Belasco & P. Scranton (eds.), *Food nations*, p. 156-174. The references are speaking of US conditions, but the development in Sweden was most probably similar.

\(^{39}\) Hermansson, K., *I persuadorernas verkstad*, p. 11.
they could neither sell at prices above nor below the prices fixed by the manufacturers. The fixed gross prices could be interpreted as a rational way of solving the problem of introducing a new form of the prepackaged goods with their registered trademarks. In the beginning of this period, the practice was justified by the fact that many retailers were inexperienced, and not always deemed competent to set prices on their own. However, this interpretation of the rational gradually lost ground. Still, the system of fixed gross prices persisted until the 1950s.

The main argument against the fixed gross prices was that the retailer could not compete with price, since the prices were already set by the manufacturers. Instead their chief means of attracting customers was to offer service such as home delivery. The detractors of the fixed gross price system claimed that since prices were not a competitive device, artificial service needs were created among customers, who never saw the real costs of the service they demanded. This unnecessary service drove up the distribution costs. What we see here is how the rational was re-coded with a different set of attributes. The retail landscape had evolved, and the old definitions of rationality no longer necessarily held true. The manufacturers had lost some of their privileged position in defining rationality. But there were other factors as well. The way distribution and retail were being carried out called for other solutions, and consequently other ways of defining what was rational and what were sound business practices.

Prior to the 1930s, the key issue had been simply getting a distribution system in place and making sure that the cities received sufficient amounts of food. As the food industry evolved and the transportation infrastructure began to come into place, a piecemeal distribution system materialized. However, the inefficiency of the retail system contributed to the high distribution costs and prevented any substantial rationalization. The counter service stores were often small, and this meant higher costs and lower profit margins as they could not benefit from any economies of scale. It was hard to make these stores more efficient or more rational in an economic sense. The progress and rationalization of the food industry were simply not matched by the retail trade. In the face of this situation, prepackaged goods held the promise of a more rational way of selling food at the retail level.

The packaging revolution began in the US. There it was primarily driven by manufacturers who wished to market their products and com-

municate directly with the consumer by means of the package. In Sweden there were not as many manufacturers with brands and packaged goods. A notable exception was the sugar manufacturing company, Sockerbolaget, which was one of the pioneers in experimenting with prepackaged sugar already by the 1920s.\(^{42}\) The development of packaging technology became essential, and there was an interdependence between the packaging industry, the manufacturers, and the retailers, based on the desire to rationalize the retail trade, even if the packaging industry took most of the initiatives as they were fighting to create a market for their products. The packaging company Åkerlund & Raising played a crucial role here, and they worked very actively with both retailers and manufacturers to promote prepackaged goods.\(^{43}\)

One of the key actors was Ruben Raising, the man behind Åkerlund & Raising, that would later give birth to the packaging innovator Tetrapak. Early on, Raising was keenly aware of what was going on in the US, and he went there on a study tour already in the 1920s together with another of the key actors in reforming the retail trade, Gerhard Törnqvist. In the US, they studied the packaging industry and how manufacturers used packages to promote trademarks. Raising’s and Törnqvist’s insights had implications for the perception of both quality and rationality, introducing and trying to implement the way these terms were used in the US in the Swedish context.

The duo Raising-Törnqvist was very active in promoting packages and in defining the qualities of a package, Raising from the point of view of an industrialist and entrepreneur, and Törnqvist as an academic. The notion of centrally-packaged goods for mass distribution remained at the heart of the packaging industry and the subsequent retail revolution. The package would communicate something to the customer. The message would in a way be contained in the trademark, which would give the customer guarantees of the quality of the product as well as the sense of acquiring certain values connected with the trademark. Both Raising and Törnqvist were ahead of their time in understanding the significance of the package and the trademark, each from his own perspective.

Professor Törnqvist, who was mainly concerned with rationalizing the labor-intensive retail trade, saw four ways manufacturers, retailers and consumers could gain advantages from more trademarks and packaging: 1) The production of the commodities would be less expensive in

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the long run despite initial investment costs in packaging machinery etc. 2) The commodities would be better protected during transportation and stock-keeping which would lead to decreased costs for distribution. 3) The packages could be used in window displays and the consumers’ awareness of the brand might lead to increased sales and thus decreased distribution costs. 4) The packaging in itself might induce the consumer to pay a higher price. But the overarching reason to turn to more packages was the time that could be saved in the process, as much as 30 to 40 percent in one sale according to time studies professor Törnqvist had undertaken himself in a store to observe how much time the clerk spent serving each customer. 44

The desire to quantify and measure was part of the scientific management revolution attributed to Taylor and it entailed specific understandings of what was rational and desirable, which also had implications for how the ideal and real retail landscapes were construed. The prepackaged was equated not only with rationality, but also with quality. Quality here was speed and hygiene, scientific solutions and rational mechanization that could be precisely measured and evaluated. It was always open to new time and cost saving schemes.

The development in post-war USA was quicker than in Sweden, and the ideas and ideals Wirsäll spoke of in the late 1940s were already materializing on the other side of the Atlantic. 45 The US techniques were subsequently imported, and a lot of perishables became staples through packaging that increased their keeping qualities. Cheese is one such example, and cold cuts in vacuum packaging is another example. Packaging also facilitated the distribution and diffusion of goods over greater distances. 46 So we see how a lot of the visionary ideas from 1948 were turned into everyday retail practices thanks to advances in packaging technique, new retail formats, and changing consumer ideals that transformed the notions of quality.

The transition towards more prepackaged goods was partly facilitated by the rationing troubles in the wake of the Second World War. To overcome the difficulties there was a standardization committee who worked on possible regulations of standard packaging and packaging sizes. This development supported the work of the packaging industry with its emphasis on standard solutions to achieve rationality and efficiency.

All of these arguments tied neatly with the contemporary debate on the high costs of distribution. In this debate, the packaged goods represented

44. Törnqvist, G., Varudistributionens struktur och kostnader, p. 81-4.
46. Tufvesson, I., Varuhandeln: igår, idag, imorgon, p. 41.
a break with an old and inefficient retail trade, and brought in some of the mechanization and modernization that had made the industry more rational and efficient. There was a desire to minimize manual labor, to mechanize, to scale up, and to assign the right function to the most efficient place in the food chain, in order to cut costs and arrive at lower prices. Nevertheless, for packaged goods to prevail there was the question of creating trust. The consumer had to be persuaded that packaged goods were more reliable and more desirable than the unpacked goods sold by weight or quantity.

There was psychological and technical resistance against the packaging of foodstuffs. The argument was that not all goods could be prepackaged. Fruit and vegetables are living and need air to preserve, while meat takes on a dull color when it is cut up and kept for a while. The retailers claimed that customers liked to see both fresh and cured meats to judge the quality. Prepackaged bread was another tricky commodity which made the customers suspicious. If it was prepackaged, maybe it was not fresh today? The change towards prepackaged goods was gradual and there were partial solutions where the customers were allowed to do some of the work. In the 1950s customers brought their own tin jug to fill up with milk by themselves. Butter was also sold on a semi self-service basis so that less honest customers could put a lump of butter in their milk jug. Before TetraPak milk was also sold in milk bottles of glass prepackaged at the dairy.

The expectations and desires of the consumers on the one hand, and of the retailers and food producers on the other hand, continued to clash. What constituted quality was subject to different interpretations, and the food industry had to work hard to convince the consumers. One thing that did play into the hands of the food industry was the hygienic concerns and the fear of other people’s hands touching your food. This was in fact used as an argument in favor of the industrially produced food. Mechanically prepared and packaged, untouched by human hands, it was cast as more hygienic, more modern and thus more desirable than the foods handled by clerks and vendors, whose hygienic standards the customer knew nothing about.

47. To understand packaged goods as a story primarily of creating trust tallies well with Giddens and how he sees trust and expert systems as the consequences of modernity.
The consumers needed time to adapt and learn to trust the prepackaged products. The trust they had put in the retailer was transferred to the manufacturer. Since they did not meet the manufacturer personally, the package served as a mediator between manufacturer and consumer. The package slowly communicated more and more information such as best-before date and more elaborate descriptions of contents. Some of these changes were the consequence of legal measures, others the result of a desire to stand out and catch the attention of the consumer.51

In the 1920s and 1930s, the idea of packages was only to speed up counter service stores and make them more rational. The concept of self-service was still in the pipeline (and the following chapter will look more specifically into self-service). However, without most goods neatly presented in packages, self-service stores would not work. Hence, the progress of the packaging industry also paved the way for the expansion of self-service stores and the growth of manufacturers’ brands. Dry goods and non-perishables, which have a long shelf life and a fairly stable demand, were among the first to be sold in packages. This was a way of lessening the risks of introducing the new format of prepackaged products.52

The introduction of prepackaged goods was a rapid transformation, and in a matter of a few decades it had completely altered the prerequisites of the consumption landscape. Prepackaged goods are in several ways the antithesis of the market hall. The prepackaged turned fresh foods into staples, craftsmanship into mass-production, and distinctive character into commonplace. It also offered a consistent, homogenous quality and unbeatable prices. This was especially the case once the retail trade had succeeded in rationalizing itself into the self-service era, as will be seen in the following chapter. But before that, it is necessary to return to the market hall, and see how it fared in this era of rationalization and mechanization.

The shadow of the market hall

In this pre-packaged new world, the market hall had lost its place as the flagship of modernity that was assigned to it in the Swedish debate of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Now the market hall seemed obsolete and outdated. In the vision of the capital city, architects and city planners had no room for market halls. As we saw in the previous chap-

3.3 Hötorgt market-hall behind the scenes.
Lennart af Petersens, 1940-1954, Stockholms Stadsmuseum.

ters, the petitions for market halls had declined steadily during the 1920s, to become virtually a non-issue by the 1930s. There was simply no need for market halls when there were small neighborhood stores in every corner.

By the 1930s, the small neighborhood stores had virtually flooded the food market and the competition was intense. The vast majority of the food stores were in fact quite small. Out of the 20,847 food stores in the food retail company census in 1931, only 183 had more than ten employees.53 The small retailers were fighting to guard the niche they had carved out for themselves, where being both geographically and personally close to the customers meant good business. They had to comply with the

needs of the customers and adjust to the suppliers. Their small size meant that their bargaining power was weak and they could not profit from any structural rationalizations. Still, the fact that they were accessible for customers, with their geographic position and long opening hours, meant that they at least had a strategic advantage relative to the market hall.

The market hall had almost all the disadvantages of the traditional small-scale counter service stores: the individual vendors competed against one another, and their stores were small in size, which meant that their bargaining power against suppliers and customers was just as insignificant as for the neighborhood stores. The advantage of attracting business because of a wide assortment and reputation for good quality diminished when the market halls received less interest from the authorities who acted both as landlord and as sponsor of the market hall idea. The premises were not as modern as they were when the market halls were first built, and renovations were delayed. As a result, the market hall seemed rundown, especially in comparison with the new stores where the window displays and the interior fittings reflected the latest fashion. The market hall stores were disadvantaged in yet another aspect, as they had no window displays to attract customers. In the 1927 market hall proposal for Odenplan, this feature was one of the advantages. This hall would run parallel with the street, and allow for window displays for every store. The market hall failed to comply with the commercial language and the ideals of rationality that stipulated that the quality of a store was displayed in the window. The silent façade of the market hall spoke of a different commercial logic, a different rationality.

Some of the smaller market halls such as Maria market hall had already disappeared, even if the three large ones, Hötorget, Östermalm and the Central market hall, remained. Hötorget and Östermalm probably survived owing to the open-air markets outside the market halls, which ensured a steady stream of customers. Both Hötorget and Östermalm also had a few stores of important size already by 1946, which may have helped the halls maintain their competitive advantage. The Central market hall on the other hand was close to the new Klara wholesale market hall and also engaged in wholesale, even if some of the retail sales persisted. Still, Hötorget market hall was remodeled and hidden underground. Östermalm market hall just managed to escape demolition by being granted listed building status.

54. These bigger stores actually still exist: G Nilsson in Hötorget, and Segers and Lisa Elmqvist in the Östermalm market hall. The owners have changed, even if the Elmqvist store still remains in the same family as of 2009. See Gerentz, S. & Otrosson, J., Handel och köpmän i Stockholm under ett sekel, p. 307.
That the market halls were no longer perceived as wonders of modernity might also be attributed to the undeniable fact that they were cold and draughty, and compared to the modern stores they did not offer the same convenience. In a commemorative book of the Klara wholesale district, one of the old veterans from the Central market hall bore witness to the cold and impractical working conditions. In winter time, temperatures could be around minus seven or eight degrees on Monday mornings, since the hall had no central heating. The vendors used kerosene heaters, and made tents of tarpaulin where they lit fires in buckets of sand drenched in methylated spirits. There was only one place in the hall where there was hot water, and there were always lines waiting for the hot water tap. The entrance to the cold storage was too small, and the difference in level inside the building contributed to the heavy work. To make matters worse, the maintenance was always delayed by the managing director Karlöf, according to the vendors.[5] Ivar Karlöf, who was director from 1940 to 1965, could reasonably be expected to wish to keep the costs down in this time period of vast restructuring of food distribution.

After the Second World War, the interest in market halls had definitely declined. Yet, a few towns issued investigations of possible market halls. But the reports were unanimous in their conclusions: market halls were out of date. Instead, decentralized systems of food stores were more in line with consumer expectations and town planning. Selling meat and fish on the open air markets was hardly a pervasive phenomenon anymore, which meant that the hygienic reasons for building market halls had vanished as well.[6]

As late as in 1957, the Gävle town council received a petition for a market hall. In the rejection of the proposal, the town council explained that the town had never before had a market hall, and to build one now would demand a complete makeover of the consuming public’s purchase patterns, which was unlikely to occur. The modern self-service stores already filled every need of the consumer and every commodity mentioned in the petition for a new market hall.[7]

The town veterinarian, who had been consulted, viewed market halls and open air markets as remnants from a distant past. They were from

55. Tilstam, R., Livet i Klarahallarna, p. 42.
when producers and consumers engaged in direct trade. By the late 1950s, the food supply was almost exclusively the concern of large producer cooperatives. In the old days, the town veterinarian explained, the food trade was centralized, but with modern stores it had become increasingly decentralized. Nowadays it was possible to buy all the food you desired in an all-purpose food store, and modern town planning always prepared for these stores.58

The town veterinarian concluded by saying that this development had been initiated by the consumers’ demands for faster service, and a market hall in a central location would result in no material advantages. In fact, it would be quite harmful to the decentralized food stores by pulling customers away. This in turn would have negative effects on hygiene, since less economically-sound stores had a tendency to lag behind in hygienic matters. As for the existing market halls in the country, most of them were older and completely deficient as regards hygienic and economic aspects. Many were partly empty, just waiting for urban renewal to sweep them away.59

During the 1940s, when the plans for urban renewal of the central parts of Stockholm were under discussion, the City Planning Office proposed to replace the old dilapidated Hötorget market hall with a new one. The Stockholm Chamber of Commerce was not favorable to this proposal, and since they considered market halls to be outdated, they recommended against such a wasteful use of valuable land.60 The Stockholm Chamber of Commerce represented commercial interests and the business community. They were anxious to enact lively commerce, and thereby create a competitive city center. In their visions of the future retail landscape, there was no room for market halls in any shape or form. The concept of quality and rationality embraced by the Chamber of Commerce evidently regarded the market hall as an obsolete, unprofitable form of trade.

The managing director of the Stockholm market halls, Ivar Karlöf, undertook an investigation in 1952. He explained that the land had in fact been reserved for the purpose of supplying food back in 1829. Furthermore, the sales in the Hötorget market hall amounted to nine million SEK per annum, quite an impressive figure at the time. The market hall

60. Nordin, C., Ordnung, p. 203.
also had certain unique properties to recommend it: a wide selection of foods from different categories and open competition between bigger and smaller firms in a defined space. This meant that the consumers were able to compare prices and qualities and shop around in greatest convenience before making their purchases. In addition, Karlöf pointed out that the service was quick and personal. To further argue his case, the managing director of the Stockholm market halls compared the efficiency and productivity of the market hall to that of ordinary retail stores. In his investigation, the market halls showed a greater turnover, higher product quality, and a more varied assortment. The costs for rents and salaries were also lower in the market hall, which added to its advantages.61

This investigation was undertaken before the self-service format had reached its later exponential expansion. In 1952, there were about one thousand self-service stores. Ten years later there were almost seven thousand, with the self-service stores representing 40 per cent of all the food trade in Sweden.62 It is true that even the number of stores in 1952 might have indicated that the winds of change were sweeping over Sweden, considering how five years earlier there had been only two stores in the entire country. Nonetheless, the majority of the stores were still counter service stores in 1952, and we need to consider the position of the managing director of the Stockholm market halls. For him to declare that the market halls under his supervision were profitable, would imply that there was a rational and high quality offering of food.

Still, the city center, or Nedre Norrmalm, was deteriorating rapidly. As the city planning was delayed, the process of deterioration was accelerated. From 1949, the City Hall cooperated with Stockholm School of Economics in order to address the difficult issue of the future of the inner city. In 1952, the first results of this research cooperation were presented, and six years later a more thorough report on the urban food supply was published. The report resulted in the localization of the wholesale food trade to Årsta in 1962.63

The time was propitious for restructuring of the retail trade. The result of the distribution investigation from 1953-55 was clear: it was time to speed up the transformations of the retail trade. This entailed new

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62. The peak came in 1966 when there were 9,076 self-service stores in Sweden. After this year, the number of stores decreased, but the total sales area increased. See Nyberg, A., *Innovation in distribution channels*, p. 112; Gerentz, S. & Otrosson, J., *Handel och köpmän i Stockholm under ett sekel*, p. 314.
town planning, with intensified slum-clearance and rationalizations, but also new pricing policies, more competition, introduction of self-service, free opening hours, and monitoring the potential evils of the oligopolistic tendencies of the retail trade. In this period of extreme rationalizations and consolidation of the food trade, the market halls were receding into the shadows. The era of the self-service store was about to transform the retail landscape of Sweden.

Distribution and retail: the silent revolution?

Standardizing consumers, standardizing retail

It is possible to argue that the Fordist mode of production and consumption led to a desire to rationalize almost every aspect of life. The urban studies scholar Saskia Sassen, among others, points to how this mode favored standardization, since there was a large majority of well-paid workers and members of the lower middle-classes who had the opportunity to demand goods on a scale that was hitherto unprecedented. In the post-war era, the effects of the industrial rationalizations thus resulted in both mass production and mass consumption. During this period, many housewives started working outside the home on a more regular basis, which also called for simplicity, and an aspiration to rationalize everyday life to meet the demands of modernity.

Semi-manufactured and manufactured foods were part of this desire for an easier everyday life, where there was room for wives to work. To buy standardized food products was perceived as a way to embrace

modernity in the 1950s and 1960s. This of course runs counter to the idea of the market hall as we know it today, with its wide selection of various delicacies and specialties as its hallmark. During the first half of the twentieth century, the gastronomic self-confidence of the Swedes was abysmal, and overall the prestige of gastronomy was very weak. Food was fuel, not pleasure. The struggle between the advocates of modernity and the gastronomes was thus an uneven battle in a Sweden so enraptured with progress and rationality. The consumer was to be granted access to safe and modern food products, and this usually meant standardized, industrially produced goods.

The new industrial foodscape was democratic in its scope: it was intended for all citizens, but the person responsible for introducing the articles into the home was the housewife. The housewife was often referred to as the “purchasing manager of the home”, and her performance was a matter affecting the national economy. This way of framing the housewife was shared by social reformers and commercial interests alike. To make sure that she internalized modernity was thus crucial. If she liked the new products developed by the food industry and supported by research institutes such as SIK, Statens institute för konserveringsteknik (which translates into the State Institute for Preservation Techniques), then the country would continue down the highway to modernity.

In this context, her shopping habits and how she spent the family budget came under scrutiny. In the post-war world, the ideal prescribed that the modern housewife should want to spend her time in a rational manner and not lose time in slow counter service stores or in tiresome journeys to the city center where most market halls were located. She would want to do her shopping in a self-service store close to her home.

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5. See Niskanen, K., Karriär i männens värld. for the work of Karin Kock on the economic research about housework; Alëx, P., Den rationella konsumenten, for an account of the ideology of the housewife as “the minister of finance”; Åkerman, B., ”Korgens makta: kvinnorna och kooperationen”, Vi kan, vi behövs!, p. 75-96, for an account by one of the main figures in the social reform movement, and trade magazines like Svenska förpackningar nr 3-4, 1951, for contemporary stereotyped images of the housewife.
(Eventually this idea of proximity would disappear and the size of the store would be the determining factor).

Here she would peruse the aisles of the self-service store, her attention caught by various informative and colorful packages conveying the message of modernity and novelty to the purchasing manager of the home. Canned goods and semi-manufactures would rouse her interest. TV dinners and new household appliances would enter her home. More and more exotic products and elaborate packages would fill the self-service store, and allow her to always serve her coffee fresh: already roasted and grounded by the coffee roasters.7

As the self-service stores came onto the scene in the 1950s, fresh produce was no longer the most desirable commodity for the retailers to stock. The delicate fresh primary produce was difficult to handle in the self-service format. Fresh fruit and vegetables, meat and dairy, were difficult to prepackage and to preserve. Instead, the packaging industry and the retailers propagated an ideal of a consumer who demanded fast and rational ways of buying and preparing food, and who delighted in canned

and frozen foods, semi-manufactures, and instant meals, all bought at one-stop shopping – the self-service grocery store.8

The modern housewife did not always accept the changes envisioned for her, and there were many discussions as to how to convince the consumer of the benefits of the self-service store. A large survey was carried out in 1955 about packaging, self-service stores, and purchasing habits, to see what the consumer valued and longed for.9 But already in 1946, another study had been undertaken. Interestingly, before the actual introduction of self-service, the consumers did not place speed at the top of their list of requirements for choosing a food store. Instead, personal service, food quality, and price were ranked higher.10 Clearly, the definition of rationality as being the chief characteristic of quality was not anchored in the minds of the consumers, especially since economic rationality in terms of lower food prices was not part of the rationality package intended for the consumers.11

Eggs offer another example of how there was a mismatch between the rationalization of the food industries and the expectations of the consumers. Modern large-scale production meant that eggs could be had on a new scale than was possible previously. Not only could more eggs be produced, they could be produced all year round. Before industrial agriculture, hens only laid eggs during the spring and summer. In winter, there was not enough light, and consequently the hens did not lay eggs. With artificial light, hens could be tricked into laying eggs outside their natural season. The winter eggs provoked discussions of authenticity and

10. For a summary of the 1946 study see Vi går och handlar, Stockholm: Radiojänst, 1950, s. 11ff.
11. The fact that the Cooperative movement did not pass on the economic benefits directly to its members was due to the fact that they wished to retain capital for a conversion of all stores before the consumers would be able to take advantage of the savings. Also, it was a question of solidarity. The prices of self-service and counter service stores were at the same level, so that not only those fortunate enough to live close to the few initial self-service stores would take advantage of something that rightfully belonged to all the members. The initiative was applauded by Nils-Erik Wirsäll of the private retailers’ cooperative ICA. He liked the focus on time savings rather than economic savings for the consumer. That would help raise the profit margins for the hard-squeezed retailers. See Kjellberg, H. & Helgesson, C.-F., “The mode of exchange and shaping of markets: Distributor influence in the Swedish post-war food industry”, Industrial Marketing Management 36 (2007) 861–878.
quality. Were these actually *real* eggs? Would not the quality suffer? In a way, what we see here is how contending definitions of quality, rationality, and authenticity clash. The industrial fix of the biological limits of poultry was celebrated as a rational manner of handling food production. The consumer hesitated, and issues of authenticity took the center stage. Quality was here interpreted by the skeptical housewives, more in terms of authenticity than strict economic and practical rationality.

The delights of deep-frozen foods, or “froods” as one British company marketed their deep-frozen, ready-made dishes, were not as enthusiastically endorsed by the housewives as the experts expected. Trade magazines reported on the wonderful food stores without seasons, where you could have wholly fresh vegetables even on a cold February morning, strawberries for Christmas, and a rack of venison outside of the hunting season. There was no end to the joys of deep-freezing in the journal’s panegyric. The consumer, again, was hesitant. Deep-frozen foods had acquired a bad reputation initially, since many store owners and clerks were unfamiliar with the new technology and let the foods defreeze and refreeze again, which affected both the freshness and the taste. The consumer also was unfamiliar with deep-frozen foods and often did not have a freezer at home, which considerably reduced the advantage of the deep-freezing technique. But the consumer was a small obstacle in the grand scheme of things. And if the consumer did not know what was good for her, the experts did. In the social landscape where experts reigned, consumer politics were gaining increasing influence. Expertise was often funneled into formalized institutions, and progressive ideas of the small reform-minded elite were translated into practical politics. Hemmets forskningsinstitut, HFI, which translates into the Research Institute of the Home, is one such example. Here housework was studied in detail, designs for the most rational kitchen mapped out, and standards set for how a rational home should be organized. The message was convened to the public in informational films and reports. The staff working at HFI was well-connected with the social democratic officials, and they were often asked to partici-

12. Freidberg, S., *Fresh*, p. 86-121. The example comes from the US, but there is no reason to doubt that the same issues were under discussion in the Swedish context.
14. Of course, the conservative mindset of female consumers had been a recurrent complaint among (mostly) male reformers and inventors, as we have seen in previous chapters. For an account of the irrational female consumer as a threat to the rationalizing efforts of the retail trade, see for example Hermansson, K., *I persuadorernas verkstad*, p. 50-52.
pate in various reports on consumer issues. Modernity and rationality were manifest in every policy of HFI, and the ambition was to solve difficult household tasks and allow women more freedom to engage in more modern and rational activities.

The main figures in the Consumer Cooperative Movement were pioneers in this centralistic order of modernity, and actively took part in the discussions about the consumer and the new consumption opportunities. One way they exerted this influence was through the “experimental kitchen”. The experimental kitchen of the cooperative movement facilitated the introduction of new goods, and helped to educate the public in how to embrace modernity. Consumer politics thus had both an individual and a collective aspect, with the housewife as an emblematic figure of the new consumer and with the home and housework as the focal arena of consumer politics. Here rationality was celebrated as a core value. Through scientific investigations and industrial innovations, food preparation would be reduced to a minimum, and the consumer free to engage in more worthwhile activities.

Go West! Passion and resistance

The main source of inspiration and the favorite example for the food trade was the US. Numerous study tours were undertaken across the Atlantic to observe the packaging industry, the food industry, and the retail trade. Already in the 1930s, both the cooperative organization KF and private retailers from Hakonbolaget sent their representatives abroad to study retailing and wholesaling. The feature of the American retail experience that attracted the most vivid interest was the new self-service format. During the Second World War, the activities were more or less put on hold, but from 1946 and 1947, the interest in the self-service format was further intensified and study tours were again undertaken both by KF and by private retailers. Nils Erik Wirsäll, for example, traveled to the US on behalf of Hakonbolaget, and wrote accounts of his travels, which were later discussed in the Hakonbolaget regional councils. Trade maga-

zines did series on self-service in the US and Europe, and on the initial attempts in Sweden to assess the future of the format.\textsuperscript{17}

发送代表人员在研究旅游中的一种方式是中央组织的自我服务的引入。中央组织的Hakonbolaget和合作运动二者都相信在自我服务的格式是为未来。作为结果，它们正积极地自我服务在它们的成员间。\textsuperscript{18}因为它们的规模，合作运动和Hakonbolaget有对于瑞典零售贸易的巨大的影响。没有主动支持的两个大组织，自我服务的扩张自我服务的商店可能更慢。这也给予两个大角色，ICA和KF，的竞争优势比小型非附属零售商。另外，时间是成结果：它符合了福利国家的崛起，与它的社会工程师和信念在大，合理化的决策。理性性是它自己的质量。\textsuperscript{19}

然而，成员们并不如全部被说服是积极的作为管理在Hakonbolaget。多数的ICA成员相信自我服务有潜力，但是并没有它们。自我服务将是最在大城镇，并且更可能在新的住宅区域，所以现有的零售商将不会被赶出贸易。然而，一个强大的动机为许多的ICA的零售商是去介绍自我服务的系统前的消费者合作组织这样。\textsuperscript{20}

自我服务在开始被看作一种格式具体到美国，和不必要地被适应到瑞典条件。一个经常被引用的例子来自1943年的一篇ICA杂志，其中的编辑物对自我服务不会有一个未来的瑞典表达了担忧，因为瑞典人有与美国人们不同的性格。\textsuperscript{21}这样的差异在性格中似乎已经是一个广泛所认为的，目的是要解释对于美国创新的谨慎，甚至如果瑞典是美国化国家在欧洲，发展这里可能会有另一种不同的过程。\textsuperscript{22}自我服务的支持者Nils Erik Wirsäll并没有同意这一点。根据他，在那里并没有原因

\textsuperscript{17} Nyberg, A., \textit{Innovation in distribution channels}, p. 99-101. See for example Butikskultur, nr 2, 1946; Butikskultur, nr 3 1946; Butikskultur, nr 5 1947; Svenska förpackningar, nr 2, 1948; Svenska förpackningar, nr 3-4, 1951; Fri köpenskap, nr 35, 1953; Fri köpenskap, nr 36, 1953; Fri köpenskap, nr 49-50, 1953.


\textsuperscript{22} ”Efter super: super-duper”, \textit{Butikskultur} nr 10, 1948.
to fear that Swedish housewives would react any differently than American housewives, who had fully embraced the self-service format. But in order for the self-service format to prevail, the packaged goods had to become the norm.23

The old local food regulations had to be lifted as well. In fact, the strict hygienic rules and regulations were no longer necessary. Innovation in hygiene and packaging, along with modern equipment and machinery, rendered the old rules superfluous. But a more unified and rational distribution was hampered by the old rules in other ways as well. Since different rules might apply in different ways, depending on the local rules of cities and municipalities, it was impossible to achieve economies of scale when you had to adapt to diverse legal frameworks.24

Wirsäll voiced the arguments for a rational retail trade more in harmony with the new possibilities offered by innovations in the packaging and food industry. Much of the innovations in packaging and food industry were inspired by innovations in the US, and the US was perceived as the epitome of shiny modernity and economic success - an example for Sweden to follow.

But not everyone was dazzled by the modern US example. The new self-service format was contrasted with the existing counter service store system, and the comparison inspired fear of losing the personal touch. The conviviality of the manual store would perhaps evaporate in the new self-service stores, where there would be fewer vendors to talk to and old people might have difficulties adapting.25 The fear of the new format was linked to fear of social change and altered social relations. Would the social fabric be torn asunder, and friendly small talk relegated to a remnant of the past? Would the conservative consumers really accept performing tasks hitherto undertaken by clerks?

The response of the intended consumers to self-service was initially undecided. Consumer interest groups feared that consumers would not be able to handle the self-service format, and would overspend in the beginning of the month when the control of the retailer disappeared.26 But the subsequent reports seemed to counter the initial fears. With headlines like “Self-service is the future” or “No nervous 60 year olds in the self-service stores”, and encouraging success stories of conversions to self-service, the trade magazines presented an image of a consumer who

quickly adapted to the new format. In fact, counter service stores reported that they had difficulties handling customers serving themselves as if in a self-service store. 27

There was resistance from producers and retailers against the self-service format as well. The resistance was both psychological and technical. The producers saw no reason to change their packaging practices and start producing packages destined for the final consumer. They were quite happy delivering their goods in the existing packaging that was used to protect the goods as they were transported from the manufacturers to the store. To produce consumer packages would demand a lot of new investments. The retailers were anxious to keep the costs down and had no wish to pay for the fancy equipment of food manufacturers. In their view, the staff might as well do the repackaging of staples like sugar and flour into the prepackaged store wrapping that was common in the counter service stores. This was considered a good way of using the slow times so as to not pay the staff for doing nothing. 28

The resistance was thus both on the level of the retailers and of the manufacturers and producers. This new packaging business seemed to demand an awful lot of investments, new routines, and offered no tangible advantages. As a matter of fact, the actual packaging technique was not mature enough until the 1950s, when it finally was possible to show how using packages and self-service would lead to reduced distribution costs and greater profits. From 1950 to 1951 there is a giant leap in the volume of packaging, especially paper and carton packages which doubled in a year. 29 Traces of the resistance to packaging can be seen in the pervasive communication strategies by the leading packaging company in Sweden, Åkerlund & Rausing. They produced a trade magazine on Swedish packaging, Svenska Förpackningar, from 1937 to 1958. This period corresponds in large to the great packaging and self-service expansion. The fact that the packaging industry felt the need to present the new packages and explain the cost savings and increased sales due to proper packaging can
be interpreted as a sign of the reluctance among food producers to invest in the new machinery necessary. But self-service was gaining momentum and its technologies presented as the most rational response of retail in these modern times.

**The self-service format**

The Piggly Wiggly Corporation is often said to be the first self-service store ever. The man behind Piggly Wiggly, Charles Saunders, held a patent for the design of his Piggly Wiggly stores. Saunders’ idea was to move the stock-room out into the actual store and to display the goods in a tasteful and tempting way. The stores were small and organized like labyrinths. The customers had to zigzag through the store and pay at the exit (see photograph 6.1 on page 141). Saunders applied for a patent in Sweden as well, and was granted patent number 53964, class 37:f on the 13th of October 1920. However, the attempt to patent the idea of self-service on a worldwide scale failed. What is interesting about this attempt is that the idea of letting the customers serve themselves seemed so revolutionary at the time that a patent was actually granted.

The cooperative movement KF developed what can be interpreted as the precursor to the self-service store already in the 1930s. This store was called the “triple store”, and it consisted of three stores adjacent to one another: one selling milk and bread, one selling dry goods, and the third selling meat. This was a solution to the health regulation which stipulated that milk, for example, could not be sold in the same store as other goods. The triple stores often had glass walls and swinging doors between the three separate stores to make the division between the stores less noticeable. This also helped in breaking down psychological barriers between the different lines of trade. Often the triple stores were converted into self-service stores and the walls between the three stores simply taken down to accommodate the new format.

The first self-service store which opened in Motala in September 1940 was abandoned when the rationing system was introduced. Another self-service store was opened on Odengatan the following year, but it was not

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31. If a store had sufficiently large floor space, the health regulations could be lifted and food items of different categories sold in the same store. It was then called a “hall store”. Five hall stores were built in Stockholm by the cooperative movement during the 1930s, but they were not very successful. They can still be seen as a form of precursors to the self-service stores of the post-war era. See Brunnström, L., *Det svenska folkbensbygget*, p. 204.
7.2 The first self-service store on Odengatan 31. KF-arkiv.

until after a remodeling that this store opened in 1947 under a new name, “Snabbköp”, which translates into “Quick Buy”. This is the store that is usually referred to as the first self-service store in Sweden.

By the beginning of the twenty-first century, self-service stores have been the norm for decades, and the word is no longer in use. A self-service store has become just a store, a normal store. Let us then examine what distinguishes the self-service store from the traditional counter service store. In the counter service store, the customer was served by a clerk. The clerk could only serve one customer at the time and the other customers had to wait in line in order to be served. This meant that they could overhear everything that was going on between the clerk and the customer who was being served. The customer could not handle the goods, but had to wait for the clerk, who did all the measuring and showed the customer all the goods except for certain items, the staple foods that had been pre-packaged by the clerks in advance. Two elements were central to the self-service format: transfer of the picking function from clerk to customer, and making the goods accessible to the consumer. This demanded more initiative and competence on behalf of the consumer, who would not be
able to rely upon the skills and knowledge of the retailer to the same extent. 

It also meant a lot of freedom. The customer had the possibility to stroll around and just look at things without buying anything, pick things up and put them down again, check the prices and reconsider without having a crowd listening in on the decisions made. It opened up for more spontaneity and impulse buys, but the vendor was no longer able to direct the customer’s attention to a certain commodity or suggest an additional buy. No longer was the vendor a mediator between the customer and the commodity, instead the commodity needed to speak for itself and catch the consumer’s attention.

One of the most crucial aspects of self-service was that when the customers were supposed to pick things out by themselves, the store architecture had to give the customers the directions the vendors no longer provided by displaying the commodities in such a manner as to induce the customers to buy more. When self-service stores were first introduced, the store itself became the main attraction. The chief concern was to expose the modern new store; the goods were secondary. The desire to display the store itself may be interpreted as a sign of commodity affluence: there was a mass of commodities on sale and this meant that the store became a competitive device.

But we can also see this as a continuation of an older tradition, because even in the counter service store the layout and the decoration were important. A successful counter service store had fewer goods on display, and consequently had to think about how the counter looked, and have a nice floor to make a good impression on the customers. In self-service stores the commodity plays another role. Today the commodities are central to the self-service stores. It is all about how they are best displayed and how they make the store look. If the self-service store was enough in itself when it first appeared, once the novelty had worn off and self-service had become the norm, the self-service stores had to think about

36. One of the most salient examples is the classic handbook of the retail trade: G. Törnqvist, S. Carlson & G. Berg, (eds.), *Detaljhandels bok*. See also Savás, G., *Från handelsbod till stormarknad*, p. 64.
what to convey and to display the commodities appealingly. The period 1950-1990 also corresponds to a time of increasing affluence and increasing trade across the climate zones, which meant that the assortment increased dramatically.  

The role of the staff changed with the new organization of retail. In self-service stores, the same skills as before were no longer required, or rather the way the clerks were expected to interact with the customer changed. In order to make this transition as smooth as possible, there were handbooks and instruction films on how to be a good salesman in the new self-service context. This was actually the continuation of a process already in place. Educational literature on the art of being a good salesperson had appeared for the counter service stores from 1903, even if they did not become truly popular until the 1930s, when more sales people were recruited from more varied backgrounds than before. Most of the handbooks were translations of US material. The US was the role model for sales techniques, marketing, and advertising, as well as for store formats and packaging. The retail revolution relied very heavily indeed on the developments in the United States.

The positive image of the US and the success of self-service in the US were used as leverage to argue the case for self-service in Sweden, even if the economic and social factors in the two countries were different. Still, the US example made way for the Swedish introduction of self-service. Nyberg, who has studied innovation in the distribution channel, defines the introduction of the self-service format as “arguably the biggest and most pervasive innovation in Swedish grocery retailing.” The impact of the innovation was such that the previous counter service format fell into oblivion. In part this might be attributed to the fact that the self-service very quickly took over the Swedish retailing scene. In the US, the success of self-service started off during the recession years in the 1930s, while in

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37. Just as an example, Mayo shows how the number of food items in a supermarket increased from an average of 3,000 items in 1946 to 5,800 by 1959; see Mayo, J. M., The American Grocery Store, p. 180. The same tendencies characterize the entire Western world, and increasingly affect other regional areas as well.


Sweden self-service took hold during one of the most spectacular periods of affluence and growth ever.\textsuperscript{41}

Mayo, who has studied the evolution of the US retail landscape, points to how the shift was mainly a shift in focus towards a mass distribution of food, referred to as mass food retailing. The business techniques of mass food production were applied to mass retail distribution. But in order to do this efficiently and rationally, a massive volume of sales was necessary.\textsuperscript{42} In Sweden, it was the cooperative movement KF and the affiliated independents in the retailers’ cooperative ICA who managed to achieve the same economies of scale as the chains in the US. The Swedish chains were mostly small and local. KF first discovered the value of a systematic store design as a way of rationalizing retail. KF and ICA gradually destroyed the market for small independent food retailers outside their own domain. It was also a question of handling the massive increase in food products produced by the food manufacturers. Here small stores were inefficient since the shelf space needed was greater than before. As consumers bought cars and refrigerators, this altered their shopping habits and they could buy more food more seldom in bigger shopping areas outside the central expensive locations.

**Self-service triumphs**

From the beginning, the self-service stores were mostly small stores where former butcher, dairy, and grocery stores were joined into a small self-service store. In general, smaller stores suffered from several shortcomings: they were ill-designed, had inadequate advertising, poor stock inventories, and difficulties in predicting demand. But worst of all, they had inadequate surface area to meet the new food product lines developed by the food manufacturers. In the 1950s and even more so in the 1960s, the new establishments were big from the beginning, with a wide assortment. The cooperative movement, which opened the first self-service store, continued to lead the development of self-service. For example, the cooperative movement opened self-service stores within their department stores that quickly became big attractions. The cooperative movement was the first to act upon the fact that bigger stores attracted more customers. In fact, there was a correlation between store size and profits, where bigger

\textsuperscript{41} This can be compared to the introduction in another country that is also highly developed, Great Britain, where the transition was less smooth. See for example Gay, P. du, “Self-service: Retail, Shopping and Personhood”, *Consumption, Markets & Culture*, 7:2, 2004, 149-163.

stores led to larger profits. Often this meant that the small cooperative stores nearby had to close down when a new, bigger store opened. 43

The cooperative movement strived to achieve in setting up as rational and functional stores as possible to better serve its members. Since it was a top-down organization, it could push through changes, as long as the members were content with the development. The private retailers closely watched the cooperative movement’s development of the self-service format, and how the cooperative movement increasingly went for bigger stores. From the mid 1950s, top management in ICA defined the size of a store as the most important factor for profitability. Whether it was a self-service store or a counter service store did of course matter, but the most

43. Savås, G., Från handelsbod till stormarknad, p. 56.
crucial factor was actually the size of the store. Often a young retailer bought up his competitors to form one large store. This was said to be advantageous for the older retailers, who could then go into retirement. The small stores were not so profitable, and competition was harsh, which made retirement more appealing.44

The share of sales of self-service stores relative to traditional manual stores is not well documented, but in her study of innovation in the distribution channel, Nyberg has attempted to make an estimate. Her figures are quite astounding. In 1951, only 6 percent of total grocery purchases were made in self-service stores. By 1952, this had increased to 8-10 percent, which represents an impressive increase in such a short period of time. Still, it is the figures from 1958 that reveal how the structural advantages of the self-service format have really started to show. In 1958, as much as 25 percent of the total grocery purchases came from self-service stores, but the number of self-service stores only accounted for 15 percent of the total number of stores. Two years later the comparative advantage of the self-service format continued to show. Self-service accounted for 36 percent of the grocery purchases, with 25 percent of the total number of stores being self-service stores. By the end of 1962, half the grocery purchases were made in self-service stores. In 1970, as much as 90 percent of the total grocery purchases were made in self-service stores.45

There has actually been an extraordinary rise of the self-service format in a comparatively short period of time, and self-service very quickly accounted for the majority of the total grocery sales. The sales were higher than the relative number of stores, which may be attributed to self-service being a more efficient sales format, but it was also the effect of size. Bigger stores invested in self-service technologies because they were able to do so, and because now with increased size it was possible to profit from structural rationalizations of self-service.

What helped the rapid introduction of the self-service format along? The improved packaging technique played an important role, as did the increased use of refrigeration and transportation. A permissive food regulation further speeded up the transition. All of these innovations were intimately linked. The food regulation could only become more permissive once the need to uphold the old rules had vanished. When sensitive foodstuffs were properly packaged and protected, the need to have a separate milk store, for example, had no grounds. Refrigeration technique also meant that the food regulation took another direction. Properly packaged and protected in safe coolness, the main concern was to ascertain

44. Nyberg, A., Innovation in distribution channels, p. 113-114.
that the store had sufficient refrigeration capacity and that the right temperature was kept. The improved packaging also meant that foodstuffs could be transported over greater distances without harm. The introduction of the container made transportation costs sink drastically, which also opened up new commodity markets.

The standardization of the retail landscape touched upon every detail. The actual room also changed with the self-service store. Floor displays which had hitherto been stacked with foods placed on shelves along the walls, were replaced by the gondola shelf system, where the customers could serve themselves from both sides. The grocery shopping cart was invented by Sylvan Goldman in 1937, and it was continually improved to serve the needs of the housewife. These innovations on a small scale
mirrored the changes on a grander scale. The store was seen as the compilation of standardized modules, from the gondola shelf system, to the actual buildings themselves. It was taking the prefabricated and letting it permeate every aspect of the store and its culture. The same architects who designed factories, designed supermarkets. In Sweden, KF and its architecture firm were leading the innovation process. Private retail followed.

These developments were in parallel and fueled one another. The container revolution was actuated by the efforts of an enterprising truck company in the USA, and it had most far-reaching consequences for the cost of transportation. This in turn revolutionized the trade patterns and the global division of labor. But without the support of government-financed infrastructure for better roads and highways, or the subsidized fuels, the container revolution might have taken another turn. The same kinds of structures were in place in Sweden, and in other parts of the Western world as well, where the container revolution had an enormous impact

47. Levinson, M., The box.
on the entire chain of production, distribution, and consumption. Cheap transportation fuelled the mass consumption society of the postwar era.

The introduction of the self-service system ran very smoothly and rapidly once it all began. The Cooperative Movement and ICA were supported by the city planners, who were operating at the orders of politicians who wanted to make sure the citizens could buy their food without too much inconvenience at reasonable prices, and with all the necessary safety and hygienic standards. The producer-led cooperatives' and the food industry's move towards an increasingly rationalized mode of production was aided by the packaging industry in getting their products on the market. Self-service was presented as the solution to the problem of distributing and selling food in the most rational way. All of this meant that the market hall appeared to be more and more outmoded, with its small units, and its slow way of selling food by manual counter service.

**Structural rationalization backfires**

Sweden can be seen as a leading country in Europe when it came to structural rationalization of the food distribution sector in the 1950s and 1960s. This development affected not only the retail end of the food distribution, but the wholesale sector was also transformed. This is hardly surprising since the two lines of business became so closely interlinked. The number of wholesale warehouses decreased dramatically during this period, and the size increased manifold. Even in the period from 1970-75 the structural rationalization continued, and the number of wholesale warehouses decreased almost by half, from 90 to 53.48 By the mid-1960s there were still 27 independent wholesalers in colonial produce. There were also a number of wholesalers in spices, coffee, and fruits from the south. By 1973 there were only eight left, and they were too small to compete with ICA or KF. Eventually they were bought by the DAGAB Company, and the market was divided into three big actors, the so called blocks. In this way, the Swedish food distribution had become consolidated into three giant trade blocks that divided the market in between themselves.49

The historical roots that paved the way for this development are interesting. What we see is actually how a number of food retailers and wholesalers, who started to take control over the market in the 1930s and 1940s became increasingly powerful. When the state tried to counter the oligopolistic tendencies of the food market, the retail trade quickly adapted.

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The strategies devised in the 1930s and 1940s were then replaced by a series of new tactics in the 1950s, which were not prohibited by law.

The structural rationalizations of the 1950s continued and were accentuated over the following decades. The number of full-service food stores dropped almost by half from 21,000 in 1952 to 11,000 in 1973, whereas the turnover doubled during the same period.50 Between 1965 and 1985 over 15,000 stores disappeared, and only 4,700 new stores were established. One reason for this was that the size of the stores had increased. The larger store allowed for economies of scale, which included longer opening hours, greater assortment, and more rational goods handling, especially regarding the unpacking and displays of goods.51 From the 1970s and onwards, stores of surface areas greater than 400 square meters had become the norm, and smaller stores had become the exception, whereas previously the small stores had dominated.52 The tendency of increasing size has continued into the twenty-first century, even if size has become a more complex measuring device.

Efficiency was further enhanced in the 1970s, when the system of entire pallets of goods was introduced. However, there are limits to the advantages of increasing scale, and it is also very dependent on existing structure and future increases in population. Where do people live? How are their disposable incomes distributed? Where will there be new housing constructed? Where is there room to expand shopping centers and hypermarkets? Will there be parking and sufficient transportation opportunities to the desired location for the hypermarket? This in turn is determined by the infrastructure the municipality is prepared to provide and plan for. The municipalities also have the right to decide which companies and what kind of business are welcome to establish themselves in the area, and how much space each will be allotted.53 To set up a food store has thus become a more complex, and the barriers to entering the market have been raised since the stakes are so high. This is a gradual development that was accentuated by the introduction and rise of the self-service store.

The movement towards standardization of the retail trade was further accentuated during the period 1970-90, when the retail trade became even more homogenous. All the big chains offered longer opening hours.

51. Hultén, S., Omvandlingen av dagligvaruhandeln 1970-89, p. 84.
and more hypermarkets. Their assortment became more uniform, and the design and layout of the stores more alike. One of the reasons the retail trade in Sweden has become so uniform is because the actors monitor the strategies of their competitors, and copy whichever strategies seem profitable. For example, all the big Swedish food retailers invested in real estate and retail chains outside the food sector from the 1970s and onwards.  

The fact that the Swedish food market has been under the influence of such a limited number of actors who strived to reduce competition may account both for the unity of the food market and for the comparatively high food prices in Sweden relative to other similar countries in Europe.  

The long period of stability in the Swedish food retail landscape

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55. The European countries can actually be divided into three different categories with respect to their development in the retail trade, where Sweden ends up in the top segment along with Germany, France and Great Britain as the most developed.
goes well beyond the period most commonly associated with Fordism, i.e. mass production and standardization. This accentuates the strength of the oligopolistic trade structure of the Swedish food industry and retail market.

The parallel development of retail and wholesale towards an increasingly rationalized, large-scale business model initially seemed to condemn all other forms of retail into oblivion: the open air market, the small, specialized food shops, and the market halls. Manual service seemed to have no place in this new consumption landscape drawn up by the three giants. But the same factors that enabled the success of the structural rationalization of the retail trade also held the elements leading to its distress. Ultimately, the standardization and the homogeneity of the retail market made the giants blind to other possible options. In due course, it also opened up pockets of resistance.

The strict structural rationalizations failed to deliver the results the big actors sought to achieve. Instead of rational consumers adapting to the retail models best suited to the needs of the retail chains, allowing them to maximize their profits, the fickle consumer wanted something else. Departing from the environmental movement, there was a general critique of a consumer society alienated from social and environmental values. The anti-consumerist tendencies actually also spurred a resurgence for the small-scale, for the artisanal, and in the long run, for exclusive products. Personal service, which had been shunned as a sign of servitude and strict social control, had by now acquired a nostalgic allure. The time was ripe for the market hall to step out of the shadows.

Out of the shadows

In fact, the dominance of self-service and efficient rationality was not complete even during its most spectacular rise. On Sunday December 2, 1956, one of the biggest morning papers featured a portrait of Östermalm market hall, calling it “the temple of the costermongers”. The old term costermonger, which had been used so derisively during the early twentieth century, now took on a different meaning. The old market hall was lovingly described as the antithesis of the quick pace in the self-service stores, where you had to wait, getting your feet cold on Fridays and Saturdays. But the customers in Östermalm market hall seemed quite content, as good things come to those who wait. And they got good advice by observing other people’s purchases, the authors explained. Stock-

with a high concentration in the retail sector. See Tufvesson, I., Varuhandeln: igår, idag, imorgen, p. 130.
holm still had a few picturesque market halls left, and Östermalm stood out as an oasis for all who value specialties, quality, trained vendors, and old-fashioned, bourgeois atmosphere. It was not cheap, and it had no modern convenience. But it represented a Stockholm bustling with life, and it would make anyone desolate to lose this only to make way for the modern subway system. The article was clearly referring to the urban regeneration plans being discussed at this point in time, where the old market hall was to be replaced by a subway station. The suggestion provoked a storm of protest and the hall was eventually saved, but for several years its fate remained unsure.

The atmosphere and the architecture of Östermalm market hall were celebrated in the article. But the architecture was not only under external threat, the enemy was also working from within: one of the fishmongers was about to tear down the beautiful balustrades with the elegant signboards in black with white letters. Ostentatious, vulgar sign-boards inspired by the commercial aesthetics of self-service with neon signs were creeping in, polluting the beauty and atmosphere of the old hall. Modern facilities like refrigerated display counters were welcome of course, but the vulgar commercial language ought to be kept out of this unique building, the authors lamented. The old was contrasted with the modern, but it was primarily the aesthetics of the old that were celebrated and the idiom of the new that was censured. Neon was vulgar, and out of character in the venerable old building. The association with the new self-service was also a negative for the neon sign.

The tone of the article, published on a Sunday, revealed in all that was old, attributed graceful elegance to things that were not cold and rational, modern, and streamlined. In 1956, the urban regeneration of Stockholm was well under way, and the dissident voices were still weak. Most seemed content and delighted by all the latest conveniences. But there were signs of nostalgia on the rise. The vendors for one thing were optimistic about the future, and explained that the elegant customers were returning. The journalists hoped that Stockholm would be able to keep the old market hall, which combined business with pleasure in such a delightful way.

56. Colomba & Björn Berg, ”Till mångarnas tempel i Östermalmshallen”, DN Sunday 2 December 1956. Incidentally, behind the signature Colomba we find journalist Eva von Zweigbergk, daughter to journalist Annastina Alkmans, who wrote about her fond childhood memories of the Östermalm market hall. The fondness seems to have been passed on to the daughter. For an account of Annastina Alkmans memories, see von Zweigbergk, Eva, ”Ur Annastina Alkmans minnesalbum”, Samfundet S:t Eriks årsbok. 1959, p. 22.
57. Colomba & Björn Berg, ”Till mångarnas tempel i Östermalmshallen”. Neon signs were older than self-service of course, but the negative association was still made.
Let us keep some remnant of the Oscarian past, some superfluous ornaments in rational, modern Stockholm. Again the same reference to a social system of social distinctions, class inequalities, and servitude: the Stockholm of Oscar II.

The 70th anniversary of Östermalm market hall two years later inspired more nostalgic stories in the newspapers. The good old days were illustrated by the anecdote of a 14 year old girl, who on coming home at eleven thirty one night, was greeted by her mother, who in worried tones asked if she had closed her stand before leaving. This anecdote occurred ten years later, but by then the girl was said to be the mother of one of the original vendors in the market hall, the time was changed into midnight, and it was the grandmother who hoped the girl had not left without closing up. What this anecdote intended to illustrate was the lively commerce at the open-air market, which peaked after eleven o’clock at night, when the well-to-do returned from the theatre. It also celebrated a time when there were few regulations, and people had to work long hours, which meant that there was service to be had at all hours of the day. Up until the late 1960s, the opening hours of stores were strictly regulated by law, which may explain the wish for more liberal opening hours.

A recurrent theme in the celebrations from this time on was the atmosphere in Östermalm market hall. The atmosphere was defined as friendly, which was reflected in the doings of vendors and clerks. It would be nice to see more of this pleasant and respectful familiarity in our hectic and overly brusque times. The journalist described the visual impressions, and the sense of taste and smell which abounded in Östermalm market hall, along with special and exclusive primary produce, delicacies and semi-manufactures like canned goods from Findus. The market hall sourced from Sweden and abroad, and served customers from all over the country. Orders by telephone were equally well attended to as the face-to-face interactions.

These become common themes that have been repeated over the years, and can be said to have become an integral part of the market hall lore. A mediated construction of the specific market hall atmosphere that can be recycled at will by journalists and upheld by vendors. One thing that

58. Colomba & Björn Berg, “Till månglarnas tempel i Östermalmshallen”.
59. Oscar II was king of Sweden 1872-1907, which also corresponds to the high period of the Swedish market halls.
61. Findus is a brand for canned goods and deep-frozen foods.
deserves mentioning is how the Findus trademark had not yet acquired the supermarket connotation that would expel it from the market hall at this point in time. The details in the descriptions may thus vary, but the themes have remained fairly constant, which mirrors how the constructions of quality have evolved and how new attributes are coded as quality.

Five years later, the 75th anniversary was celebrated in honor of the venerable Östermalm market hall. Famous journalists and TV personalities such as the food writer Ria Wågner professed their love of the market hall. The love was expressed as the antithesis of the modern world outside, with its demolition craze and excavator psychosis, mercilessly driving away all that was unique about Stockholm. What was celebrated in this eulogy to the market hall was again the theme of the authentic,
represented here by the fresh produce and the primary produce. This was
where you could find the real, fine bread, the beautiful and abounding
greengrocers offering exotic fruits and greens. This was where you could
buy herring from barrels the way it used to be sold in the old days. You
should never buy herring in any other way: it is delightful to watch as the
silvery herring is fished out of the brine. Here you could see the lobster
cauldrons steaming in front of the fishmongers’ tidy stalls. The faces of
the vendors spoke of friendliness and a desire to give the customer the
best and the freshest produce possible. The market hall was the last out-
post to preserve the love of fresh, fine foods.63 In this definition of quality,
authenticity was definitely given primacy over rationality.

Östermalm market hall was presented as a popular and unique place,
so unique in fact, as to attract tourists from other parts of Sweden, travel-
ing by air only to visit the market hall. The air flights were fairly expen-
sive at the time and signaled exclusivity in itself. This big, friendly food
market was defined as a stronghold of fresh produce, delicacies, and spe-
cialties, but also of good everyday food. The assortment was varied and
exciting, a mix of Swedish and international specialties such as smoked
locusts, French truffled foie gras, and genuine hash of offal grain from
Norrland. But again it was the fresh produce that truly represented the
market hall. Flowers, vegetables, fruit, cured meats, and provisions – often
made by the owners from secret recipes – as well as meat, fish, shellfish,
poultry, and wild game. It was the fresh produce that the thirty compet-
ing vendors offered as an antidote to the plastic and canned foods of the
self-service stores. The vendors of the market halls wanted their custom-
ers to take their time and make their choices from the quality foods beau-
ifully displayed in the tempting counters, behind which competent staff
awaited their orders. These were vendors who truly knew food, and who
were willing to give correct answers and discuss food for weekdays and
Sundays.64

Persimmons and avocados were mentioned as examples of the foods
for sale, but avocado needed explanation at this time, that it was a salad
ingredient with a buttery fruit pulp. Chicken had become everyday food
by 1963, but grouse was falling out of popularity due to the high price.
Turkey was gaining some popularity for Christmas, even if many still pre-
ferred their Christmas hare. Hungarian, Polish, and Italian sausages were
sold next to Swedish specialties like the Skälby sausage from the Kalmar

63. Wagner, R. “Jag älskar saluhallar” In Stockholmskan en julhålsning från företagarna i
64. Holm, C., ”Hallen runt på 80 minuter. Crick Holm flanerar och presenterar” In
area, made from an old country recipe by the 75 year old sisters le Grand. Embassies and legations were regular customers.\textsuperscript{65} The international and exotic elements were used to create the kind of market hall lore of exclusivity that has remained fairly stable since the beginning of the market hall renaissance. Still, what elements are perceived as exotic and elegant can change. The changes depend on what is perceived as everyday or commonplace, and what is perceived as exclusive and authentic.

The stressed out man of the 1960s only ate food like pork chops, steak, braised rolls of beef, and sliced liver. Gone are the times when you bought an entire sucking-calf and dealt with all the parts yourself, complained one of the vendors. Now ingredients like heart of calf or beef, lamb liver and mutton tongue were used for dog food, also sold at the market hall in quantities of 300 to 350 kilos. The demand would probably increase when the nearby subway station opened.\textsuperscript{66} The longing for the good old days was manifest in the article, as was the complaint that people no longer knew how to cook or do things from scratch. The cooking from scratch metaphor would only gain in importance along with the increase in ready-made dishes.

Another of the writers in the commemorative book concentrated on the food and its nostalgic dimension, the promise the past was in fact intact, and that you could find pockets in time and go back to the good old days where all was the same as before. The market hall remained true to itself, always the same with its gingerbread works and jovial vendors. Just think about Mrs Kohlström and her scraped raw beef in her black fur hat, the Lisbeth Janson clan in their green satin coats offering the best garden produce in town, the Elmqvists selling fish in the corner, von Schewen with their crisp, fresh bread or miss Britta who sells the world’s most delicious meatballs. The choice of recipes presented in the article says something about the time period, and speaks of the same longing for nostalgia intertwined with the exotic: crab salad, lobster in mayonnaise, grilled turbot with green garlic butter and French fries, smoked rainbow trout with chives and remoulade sauce, eel prepared the Scanian way, kidney served flambé, asparagus, fennel, black radish, fired egg-plant, avocados, celery mayonnaise, and Italian salsa di pepperoni. “Did you know that there is an oyster bar in the market hall now? It makes you dream of Paris…”\textsuperscript{67}

\textsuperscript{65} Holm, C., ”Hallen runt på 80 minuter. Crick Holm flanerar och presenterar”, p. 13.
\textsuperscript{66} Holm, C., ”Hallen runt på 80 minuter. Crick Holm flanerar och presenterar”, p. 13.
\textsuperscript{67} Österling, K., ”Kort om gott” In Stockholmskan en julhälsning från företagarna i Östermalmsshallen, 1963, p. 15.
The oyster bar received attention in the media and was heralded as a sign of quality. Östermalms market hall was also described as a meeting place, a space where different social classes would go, like cab driver Arne Bjelkestig and the maid of honor to the queen Brita Cederström. It is an oasis of cheerful atmosphere, changing, but with the sense of quality intact and the pleasure of meeting an old acquaintance behind the counter. People of all ages shop in Östermalms market hall, and there are more gentlemen here than in your average food store. To illustrate this, the articles showed a picture of two young gentlemen, Lars Rembjer and Manuel Neme, perhaps ten years old, who had just discovered that they could spend some money on a couple of ounces of smoked shrimp. Other distinctive features worth mentioning were the food store for dog food, the unsweetened German bread (at a time when Swedish bread culture was at its lowest point, with only sweetened loaves to be had). Organically grown vegetables were also part of the unusual produce that deserved mentioning. Regular customers were part of the market hall lore represented here by the actor Martin Ljung, director Ingemar Bergman, and poet Erik Lindegren. The vendors were also given special star status, like Otto Rietman, who was referred to as the cover boy for the gastronomes of Stockholm. Again, all of these elements are still part of the market hall lore.

In 1968, a magazine decided to celebrate that “the cathedral of food” turned 80. A color photo of all the vendors in Östermalms market hall covered the center-spread. The text described the old vendor families like aristocracy. To have been in the game for a long time was a way of obtaining status. To prove this, you needed tales of how you bundled up radishes or sold the wing-tips of woodcocks as a six-year-old, or proof of having been a vendor for at least 53 years. To be the third or fourth generation vendor was another way of acquiring status. All of this displays the need to anchor the market hall in the past: not only the building, but the ven-

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68. It is interesting to note that when the self-service store was first introduced, it was said that gentlemen would feel more inclined to shop there since they felt more at ease in an environment where they could shop around in peace. The novelty and the exclusive seem to be the domain where gentlemen could engage in the mundane activity of food shopping without risk of lost status.

69. Young gastronomes spending money and effort on food is another recurrent image in the market hall lore. Perhaps it is used as a reassurance: there will be new customers.


71. Unidentified magazine clipping celebrating the commemoration of the 80th anniversary of Östermalms market hall in 1968. In capsule Ö1 at the Market Hall Administration.
dors as well were part of the same institution, the hallmark of quality and authenticity.

Perhaps the reason for the return of the market hall can be found in the intensity and rapidity of the transition of the retail system. The vague uneasiness could be detected in infinitesimal signs. In 1966, the biggest morning paper had a series on the new commodities in the “Affluent Society”. The competition in the new affluent society was very tough. Innovative products and product development were the only ways to remain in business and avoid the cut-throat price competition. Every year 250 new food items were placed on the market. Within the first year, 100 had disappeared. The life cycle for a product used to vary between five to ten years, but it was steadily getting shorter. So what did the manufacturers do? They resorted to changing the packaging design to attract attention and increase sales. They had to find new fields of application for old products, or simply improve existing products. Entirely new products were another way of meeting the competition. Half the products on the market in 1966 did not exist five years earlier. This massive inflow of products was not depicted in the same positive tones that the met the flood of goods in the 1950s. Back in the 1950s, the novelty overshadowed most objections, as industrial food was chic and modern. By the mid-1960s, a growing environmental awareness called industrial utopia into question. Never-ceasing product innovation was perhaps not a good thing in food.

While the new industrial food was getting negative publicity, coloring matter, additives, decaying habitats, and natural disasters were getting onto the agenda. In Östermalm market hall, a health food store prided itself on its organic produce, excellent quality, and first-class service. The presentation was a feast for the eyes, with fresh, fragrant vegetables that had nothing in common with the plastic wrapped specimens in the supermarkets and self-service stores. But the true secret was the human dimension: the market halls were devoted to personal service and to endeavors to make the customer happy. The gimmickry of the supermarkets was contrasted with the authentic arrangements to serve the customers that you would find in the market halls.

The new retail technologies and the new retail formats with prepackaged foods were contrasted with the image of “the lady in the market hall”, who would give advice to the ignorant young wife about what she

73. Unidentified magazine clipping celebrating the commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the Östermalm market hall in 1968. In capsule Ö1 at the Market Hall Administration.
could use the different cuts of meat for and which seasoning would be a good choice. Sauces and braising had been replaced by the anonymous display of prepackaged pieces of meat. The tight link between quality and rationality which had been so pervasive was now gradually being challenged by contrasting definitions, where quality and authenticity were reinvented. The fresh, the natural, the unaffected were celebrated values, as contrasted with the industrial fixes and hyper-rationality of the supermarkets. The market hall was about to begin its renaissance.

Coda

Decline of rationality

There are several differences between the US and Europe, and also within Europe. However, the US influence on the development of the retail markets in Europe, especially after World War II, is undeniable. In general, we can see that Americanization is much more evident in Northern Europe than in Southern Europe.¹ For example, the self-service stores and the supermarkets appeared in Northern Europe earlier than in Southern Europe, and still today, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Southern Europe shows different patterns as regards the forms of distribution. The tendency to mimic the US development started much earlier in Sweden than in the rest of Europe.² Sweden, which had been very successful in rationalizing its industry, lagged behind in the retail sector. The distribution and the retail trade were perceived as problematic and backwards, and numerous official reports were commissioned to address the issue. Not surprisingly, the structural rationalizations of the distribution and retail sector in the US were observed with great interest from Sweden.

One explanation of the rapid change in Sweden compared to the other European countries might be that there were strong actors on the retail

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² O’Dell, T., Culture unbound, p. 1-16. O’Dell of course problematizes the assumption of Sweden as the most Americanized of the European countries, but also points to the cultural influences.
markets. The cooperative retailers in the KF movement and the private retailers of the ICA movement gained prominent positions and in many respects spurred the development on. Local politicians endorsed the initiatives from both KF and ICA, which further advanced their positions. Old food regulations were lifted when food safety issues were solved by new techniques. In fact, several innovations within the retail business occurred during this time period. On the consumer side, the rising standards of living meant that people increasingly had access to refrigerators, and later on, to freezers. This meant that they could plan ahead in a different way and buy larger quantities. As car ownership became more common, going to out-of-town locations with good parking opportunities to buy food at lower prices and in larger quantities became more commonplace. All of this contributed to changing the face of the retail landscape.

This period also saw the rise of the packaging industry. More and more goods were prepackaged in standardized package sizes. The consumer packaging often preserved the food in a more efficient way than the food packaged by the retailers themselves. The standardized package sizes corresponded well to the overall rationalization trend in Swedish society at the time. The package and its trademark replaced the good name of the retailer for the customer, who learned to trust the package and its signs of safety and quality, such as the expiry dates of food. More and more goods were also industrially prepared in various ways. New cake mixes where you only added water, and practical instant soups were some of the new products competing for the customer’s favor. The canning industries expanded their assortment into the deep-frozen segments and the ready-made dishes. The brand Findus became synonymous with the modern, rational working woman who served her family modern, rational meals prepared by the burgeoning food industries, and stored in the new housing complexes with their carefully measured, rational kitchens.

The transition was probably also facilitated by the fact that Sweden is a small, relatively homogenous country, where networks of key actors from academia like Gerhard Tönnqvist, and from the private trade and industry like Ruben Rausing, or people who moved between the two worlds like Nils-Erik Wirsäll, were able to gain a vital influence and together with politicians and public servants, they shaped the Swedish retail landscape.

Another reason that helped the transition run so smoothly was that it took place during a time when the standards of living were rising steadily. The increasing prosperity was associated with modernity and rationality. Dissident voices were ignored, and the common good of a new rational society triumphed.
Yet another reason can be found in the historical circumstances in Sweden that very early on had already paved the way for production and manufacturing of food which was highly concentrated. With such a high degree of concentration, large-scale reforms and standardizations were easily introduced since it conformed to the business models of the large-scale actors in the food industries. But standardization and rationalizations were also perceived as the most desirable outcome of the modernization process by many of the political reformers in power from the 1930s. Issues of authenticity in the sense of regional variety or different production methods were not identified as signs of quality, whereas uniform, standardized large-scale rationality was. When all seemed to have tipped in favor of hyper-rationality, the tide began to turn, and contending definitions of quality, where quality was associated with authenticity and nostalgia, resurfaced. The small-scale craftsmanship of the market hall was the new black.
Part 3
Prelude

Dreams of nostalgia: the return of the market hall

Let us now turn to a discussion about the foundations of the current consumption landscape. In 1971, ICA invited thirty experts on food distribution and retail to give their view on the Swedish food scene in ten years time. The experts were mainly presidents of different retail stores, but also journalists and representatives for various trade organizations. One of the experts presented Sweden as a possible test market for foreign companies interested in gaining new knowledge about future developments, as Sweden must be considered as "the most developed country in Europe in the field of distribution." Several of the experts talked about the value of personal contact. The experts warned that the mechanization of many of the largest stores and hypermarkets might make the atmosphere there cold and unpleasant. It is interesting to note how the return of personal service was presented as a core value.

The sheer number of commodities had multiplied in the decades following the end of the Second World War, and this had made consumption a more varied activity. This new consumption landscape altered the significance and the foundations for food consumption. Food consumption was no longer a question of making room for the bare necessities of

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life; it also offered a variety of choice that was hitherto unheard of. In this ultramodern, hyper-rationalized foodscape, the consumer was left alone to search for the food desired. The mechanization of the food retail had been stretched so far that nostalgia, even a yearning for the small scale, was again possible. This coincided with a mounting critique of consumer society. Here packaging and processed foods were interpreted as signs of the ills of consumer society, and contrasted with organic and biodynamic foods as bearers of more natural and sounder values.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the big stores adapted to the consumers and their desire for more personal contact by adding more manual counters in the stores. At the same time, new market segments appeared, as mentioned before. The concentration of vendors in the retail sector continued, even if there was room for small complementary actors in food retail, such as open air markets and market halls. The economy had moved towards what some call the post-Fordist era, and what others call the experience economy. From the 1970s and onwards, this tendency has magnified, and the retailers have reinvented themselves accordingly.

In the 1990s, expressions like “space management” became commonly used in the stores. The idea is to design shelves and find the right dimensions that will create the optimal size and appearance to appeal to the customers, and thus maximize profits and minimize costs. This concept was introduced by the suppliers, who had access to a central trade organization that supports its members with skills and information about the latest trends in retail management. Both suppliers and retailers were interested in new ways of displaying goods. One such technique is using just a few podiums. Another technique, “shelf space management,” involves inducing customers to buy more by displaying goods at cheap prices in a shelf next to other tempting offers with larger margins. The most important goods get the premium placing in the shelf. Another strategy called “category management” is to divide the different products into categories. According to established retail wisdom, this increases the customer satisfaction and reduces the costs.

Words like “space management”, “shelf space management” and “category management” are the responses of a line of business under pressure. They are also the linguistic reflections of larger transformations in late capitalism. Management has entered the vocabulary of more and more areas in society. To handle, or rather to manage, the complex nexus

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3. For an introduction of post-Fordism see Jessop, B. & Sum, N-L., Beyond the regulation approach. For a presentation of the experience economy, see, Pine, B. J. & Gilmore, J. H., The experience economy.

of economic, technological, social and cultural change, a certain level of simplification is necessary. A turbulent world demands reassuring formulas, if we are to navigate it without losing our bearings completely.

But it is also a question of what values are commercialized. The formal versus the informal, to choose the right kind of commodities, to find what stands out in a sea of sameness, to find that uniqueness in the midst of the mass produced. Often, a historical connection can give a seemingly familiar feel to a commodity. We can trace this search for the authentic and the unique, the personal and the informal, back to the 1960s. That was when the social sphere moved from the focus of the 1930s and 1940s on how to be a good citizen by arranging home and urban space in an orderly, rational fashion, to a focus on the inner lives of the citizens, of intimacy and genuine authenticity.5

The values being commercialized continuously interact with the surrounding society. In this new setting, there is a tendency to recreate the rural in the urban setting. Romantic notions of the rural are iconized in farmers’ markets and in the small-scale, local producers. Essential to this tendency is how the experience becomes part of the product, but also how the products tell their own stories about where, who and by whom they were produced, in an attempt to ease and soothe any uneasiness the consumer might feel about how our foods were produced.

In this new consumption landscape, that is not as new as it might first seem, but rather is the continuation of previous developments, the construction of consumers is under reformulation yet again. The consumer who had embraced the self-service format was now faced with an “embar- ras du choix”. The increased competition in the food retail sector also altered the way supermarkets look at customers and service. Supermarkets are trying to maintain their place and gain advantages in the current consumption landscape by practices like customer specific marketing. The dominant store formats are facing competition not only from discount stores and convenience stores, but also from alternative food distribution formats such as farmer’s markets, box schemes, and, to a certain extent, country shops. The blessings of the current food consumption landscape are unevenly distributed, and there are food deserts in the midst of our affluent societies.6 The effects are even greater of course when we look outside the Western sphere. In this new consumption landscape, the market hall has emerged as an emblematic figure of quality foods and authentic

6. Food desert is a term used to describe areas of cities where inexpensive and nutritious food is virtually unobtainable.
experiences, an antidote to the cold rationality of large-scale industrial foods.
Setting the Scene

Most articles describing market halls begin with the wonderful atmosphere created by the visual impressions, the scents, and the buzz. All of this attracts a crowd that is “just looking”, but also, of course, there are consumers out to make a buy: tourists, occasional customers, regular customers. They all go to market halls for different reasons and with different intentions, and they choose which market hall to patronize depending on temperament, desires, chance, and habit. Departing from a cultural geographic perspective, the purpose of this chapter is to set the scene to introduce the market hall and its place in the urban fabric in the beginning of the twenty-first century. What is the allure of the market hall as an institution?

The chapter provides more detailed descriptions of the three market halls in Stockholm: Hötorget, Östermalm, and Söderhallarna market hall.¹ The purpose is to discern the meaning of place, i.e. the meaning of market halls and their position in space, that is, in the city. What do their different positions in the city mean for how each market hall is perceived? What do their different architectural designs mean? These questions will be analyzed in the light of the different character of the three districts

¹ The descriptions and the analysis of this paper are founded on various sources: fieldnotes, interviews, articles, web pages, anniversary publications. It seeks to detect the culturally significant images that may serve as a background to the larger study where the social worlds of the market halls will be investigated more in detail.
in which the respective market halls are located. The three districts City, Östermalm and Södermalm have different histories, different architecture, and a different ambience. The ambition is to trace the differences that emerge from a cluster of conceptions about what the districts mean, and how this in turn influences how the market hall in each district is perceived, experienced, and imagined. The physical environment is a perceived and an experienced environment, as well as an imagined environment.

The spatial dimension

City, Östermalm and Södermalm: three neighborhoods

To understand the market halls, we need to look more into their place in the city of Stockholm. The current division of Stockholm into boroughs is more of an administrative function than anything else. The areas also have their own internal subdivisions into neighborhoods, which are more or less known to outsiders, and which have historical roots. These neighborhoods have names other than the administrative boroughs, and are used in everyday language by the inhabitants of Stockholm. It is these neighborhoods that have a social and cultural meaning. What is most often referred to as the inner city today is comprised of the boroughs of Norrmalm, Östermalm, Kungsholmen and Södermalm, but the borders of the inner city are expanding, and among planners and politicians there is a strong wish to see an expansion of the inner city, and more development of inner city architecture close to the present borders of the inner city.²

The desire to expand the inner city merely reflects the renaissance of traditional inner city architecture, and the kind of urban environments celebrated by scholars like Jane Jacobs and the New Urbanism movement. The urban regeneration is part of a larger movement related to the global economic restructuring in the Western world from the 1980s. Cities all over the world are increasingly competing for the same economic niches and the same global capital. In this power game, cities want to attract high-end economic activities, and there has been a focus, in particular among planners and urban management consultants, on creative industries as a replacement of the old manufacturing industries.³

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³ Richard Florida is one example of a scholar who has become a household name for politicians and authorities anxious to master the forces of globali-
The need to present the city as an attractive, progressive place, and thus attract the buzz of “creativity, innovation and entrepreneurialism” has become the mantra of city authorities, politicians, and policy makers to compel the forces of intra-city competition. One element in the creation of a new city and the perceived need for an urban infrastructure that caters to “the new creative classes” is food: restaurants, cafés, bars, delicatessen, and upscale food shops. This is where we can place the market halls of Stockholm: in an ambition to create an attractive city, offering the urban charm so necessary to the cities of late modernity.

If we look at the three neighborhoods where the market halls are placed, they are all located within the inner city: Hötorget market hall in City/Normalm, Östermalm market hall in Östermalm, and Söderhalarne market hall in Södermalm. These are three very different neighborhood. Florida uses the concept “the creative classes” to describe cities and globalization. The concept is compelling, but the empirical foundations are less convincing. See for example Florida, Richard L., *The rise of the creative class* or Florida, Richard L., *Cities and the creative class*, p. 34-42.

4. T. Hall & P. Hubbard, (eds.), *The entrepreneurial city*.
5. Urban regeneration never affected all parts of the cities on an equal scale, and there has been critique against the urban regeneration initiatives for diverting funds from the economically disadvantaged to the economically successful without the expected trickle-down effects being realized.
hoods regarding architecture, population, and that intangible something we might call atmosphere. Atmosphere is part of how place is perceived; it has as much to do with imagined qualities as with real circumstances or historical background, and it determines what self-presentations are possible for the different market halls.

City and Hötorget market hall

The core of old Stockholm is primarily the Old Town and the area next to it, downtown Norrmalm, or City. Downtown Norrmalm was completely remodeled during the 1960s, which is when it got its name, City, even if some of the changes started already in the 1950s. The restructuring of the City district has been much criticized. The neighborhood most affected was the district of Klara, where old houses were replaced by modern office buildings and gigantic department stores. This meant that a lot of the apartments in this area vanished, leaving the City district quiet and empty at night. In particular, Klara used to be a very densely populated area, which makes the contrast between the old Stockholm and the new City after the restructuring all the more evident. The restructuring of the City area has been documented in several books, and the nostalgia for old Stockholm is kept alive through photographs and exhibitions. The uniformity of the architecture of the City district of today is contrasted with the photographs of the old battered houses, and the stories of a Stockholm more vivid and more diverse.

Hötorget market hall is situated in the Klara district, right in the middle of the city restructuring. The old market hall from 1882 was demolished in 1954, and the new building inaugurated in 1958. Today, the City area is more of a daytime area, but there are pockets of housing in the vicinity, and just a block away from Hötorget market hall there are quite a few apartment buildings. In the past few years, there have been attempts at re-introducing residential buildings to alter the character of the neighborhood. Also, the fact that Hötorget market hall is very close to the central node of the subway system, T-centralen, means that people from the suburbs arrive to this central area both on the subway and on the commuter trains. As it is a centrally placed shopping and business district, it attracts a daytime crowd from all over Stockholm. The Grand Central station is fairly close as well, which means that many visitors first encounter this part of the town.

However, the City is still a place for visitors, a place for daytime activities, and for passing through, but not for living. There are new initiatives from city planners and politicians to reverse this trend. The city area is currently under investigation and urban regeneration plans are under way. Nonetheless, the local patriotism associated with Östermalm and Södermalm is not present in City. It is not village-like in the same sense as Östermalm and Södermalm; instead it represents another conception of the city: the crossing point, the intersection, the international transit place, belonging to all and none at the same time.\(^7\)

The original market hall building, which was constructed in 1882, was demolished in 1954 to give way to the new modern HötorgCity. HötorgCity was the name given to the area between the square of Hötorget and the square of Sergels torg and the street connecting them, Sergelsgatan.\(^8\) This was one of the most ambitious parts of the transformation of the inner city. The five skyscrapers were often portrayed and referred to as a sign of modernity entering the capital. The architect behind HötorgCity, the legendary David Helldén,\(^9\) also made the design for Hötorget market hall itself. This area was the height of modernity, a real tourist attraction, and a sign that Stockholm had entered a new era. Pedestrians were supposed to walk safely away from the traffic on the street of Sergelsgatan, shopping in the many stores located there, and eating at the many restaurants on the terraces on top of the low buildings next to the skyscrapers.

During four years, a temporary market hall was constructed directly in the square of Hötorget. This meant less room for the open air vendors, but it seemed to cause little debate. Instead, the focus of the debate was on whether Hötorget market hall would be reconstructed at all. Eventually it was reconstructed, but had to move below ground, next to car garages for the shopping district of HötorgCity. The trade in fresh food was not deemed profitable enough to claim a place at the ground level in

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7. The vivacity of the Klara district has been called into question by the urban scholar Bosse Bergman, who claims that images of Klara were just imaginaries of something lost which was in fact never there. See Bergman, B., *Klara 1950: gator och näringar i en citystadsdel.*

8. According to an interview with the founder of H&M, Erling Persson, it was his suggestion that the new city neighborhood should be called HötorgCity and not The New City, which was another suggestion. *Företagminnen 2006:1,* p. 26. The name, however, is very rarely used. HötorgCity became City for short.

9. David Helldén was very famous, and appreciated in the 1950s and 1960s. By the time his six skyscrapers for the university area of Frescati were being constructed, his popularity had waned, and he was seen as the representative of the destruction of the inner city.
the new modern city environment that was envisaged by the politicians and city planners of the 1950s. The current market hall at Hötorget was inaugurated in 1958 as part of the transformation of the city district.

The main entrance of Hötorget market hall is not very noticeable; you almost have to know it is there to find it. It drowns in the surrounding ocean of signs. What dominates the building is the logotype of the cinema chain, SF.

Just inside the main entrance doors there is a small space with a couple of benches overlooking what you can see of the market hall down below. Colorful neon signs of foodstuffs ornament the opening down to the market hall. This might be both a reference to the love of neon signs in the 1950s and a reflection of the neon art so popular in public adornment in Stockholm in the 1990s. To reach the present day market hall, you need to take the escalators down below ground. As the escalator descends, you see a butcher shop and a cheese shop on the left, and the state-run wine and spirits shop right in front. The scents and the noise of the market hall meet you well before you have reached it; a blend of cheese, meat, spice, tea, and coffee.

The fruit and vegetable stand and the fish stands are still in the same position as in 1958. However, the number of shops has decreased while the number of restaurants has increased. Apart from cheese, there are no standard dairy products, and groceries are rare, other than for specialty products. Hötorget market hall has a surface area of 1,800 square meters for the 32 shops and restaurants, and another 1,800 square meters of storage and kitchen surface are below. It was renovated in 1995, when the building above went through changes, as it was transformed into one of the largest cinema complexes in the Nordic countries, Filmstaden Sergel.

Apart from the big renovation in 1995 and rearrangements to accommodate the liquor store in 2001, there is continual maintenance going on. 

10. In Sweden, alcohol is only sold in the licensed state wine and spirits shops. Self-service was not introduced until 1991, and the transition to self-service stores was slow, even after the first store had opened. As of 2009, the vast majority are self-service stores, but there are still counter service stores where you buy over the counter. The store in Hötorget market hall is one of the remaining counter service stores.

11. From 2001, the state-run liquor stores were given permission to stay open on Saturdays, which had until then been prohibited. The new store in Hötorget market hall could thus not have opened before 2001, since all stores have to be open the same hours inside the market hall. The new rules and regulations reflect a more open climate towards alcohol in Sweden, inspired in part by the membership in the European Union.
on, but it could be said that Hötorget market hall is the most run down of the three market halls in Stockholm. This impression is reinforced by the fact that you have to descend below ground to reach the market hall. Set in the commercial City district of Stockholm, there are few residential buildings in the vicinity, and the customers come from the surrounding offices or are passing by on other errands. Hötorget market hall prides itself on being the most international of the three market halls. Here you find a number of fast food and kebab places, all of them operated by immigrants, mainly of Turkish descent. You also find a lot of delicatessen and specialty shops with Mediterranean and central European foodstuffs, both fresh and dry goods.

This is also the only market hall where you find Halal meat. Many of the stores are run by immigrants, and they cater to more unusual demands such as goat meat or teff flour to make the Ethiopian and Eritrean flatbread injera. A mixture of products that can be defined as more “traditional”, such as panela (a kind of unrefined sugar common in South America) or dulce de leche (a kind of caramel-like spread also common in South America), and more recent industrial products like Negrita (a special kind of Nestlé chocolate bar that you only find in Chile). Sodas
from South America are other examples of products that do not fit into the mainstream supply of the large supermarket chains.12

Due to the number of fast food places, you see more people walking around eating something in Hötorget market hall than in any other market hall. People grab a kebab for lunch or before going to the movies, or young people come in to buy something nice and cheap. Hötorget market hall consciously uses this image on its website by declaring it to offer “a gastronomic journey, a place where different food cultures meet”.13 There are actually gastronomic tours in Hötorget market hall by a guide who offers what he calls “food caravans”, a kind of culinary walking tour, where he guides people to ethnic food in Stockholm.14 These kinds of tours – eat and drink your way through a neighborhood – have become quite common in many parts of the world, following the general gastronomic trend. The gastronomic tours could also be interpreted as signs of how ethnicity is managed and enacted.

Lots of factors contribute to the ambience of Hötorget market hall: location (in the commercial city district, with the concert hall and the cinema palace attracting crowds at night, but with few residential buildings); the lively open air market on the square outside (with a strong presence of immigrants and a large flow of people passing by); architecture (modernist 1950s architecture renovated in the 1990s as part of a second wave of urban renewal of the City district); and the place in space (below ground). This ambience attracts certain customers and vendors, and frightens others.

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12. The large supermarket chains are also beginning to diversify their supply to cater to consumers with various ethnic backgrounds. The retail trade organization for the Swedish retail, Svensk Handel, has started a cooperation with the multicultural center in Stockholm, Mångkulturelt centrum, to make sure the shopkeepers get information about various high festivals. For example, Eid al-Fitr, which marks the end of Ramadan, has a large commercial potential for the retail business. The Persian New Year celebration is another festivity that could be turned into an advantage, according to Svensk Handel. Helena Sidenwall “Svensk Handel vänder upp och ner på almanackan” Tema FSA, Företagens samhällsansvar www.paraphprosjektet.se/intressanta-exemplet/svensk-handel-vander-upp-och-ner-pa-almanackan/ Accessed Oct 21, 2006.
8.3 The panorama of Hötorget market hall as seen from above. The Market Hall Administration.

Shops in December 2005

- Hellbergs Fågel & Vilt (fowl & game)
- Sandins Frukt & Grönt (fruit & vegetables)
- Systembolaget (wine & spirits)
- Fiskelåget (fish & catering)
- Hav - Fisk & catering (fish & catering)
- Melanders Fisk (fish & catering)
- G Nilsson Livs AB (meat)
- Österqvist’s (delicatessen)
- La Gazelle (meat)
- Pallas Delikatesser (delicatessen)
- Pierias Livs (dried fruits, oils, etc.)
- Prima Livs (delicatessen)
- Latinamerikanska Livsmedel (Latin American meat & specialities)
- Mi Esquina Deli (Latin American delicatessen)
- Jacksons Ostafå (cheese)
- Osthörnan (cheese)
- Tråget – brödspecialisten (bread & pastry)
• Himalaya Te & Kaffespecialisten (tea & coffee)
• Teboden Charabang (tea & coffee)
• Cholato (chocolates)
• Saluplats 30 (delicatessen & catering)
• P & B Quality delikatesser (chocolates, oils, mustards, jams)
• Guvagott deli (delicatessen & catering)
• Bosphorus Meze-Store (Turkish delicatessen & catering)
• Buon Gustaio (delicatessen & catering)
• Piccolino Bar (café)
• Kajsa’s fiskrestaurang (fish restaurant)
• Sushibar Maru (sushi restaurant)
• Master Kebab (fast food)
• Izmir Kebab (fast food)
• Hizar Burgare & Salladsbar (fast food)
• Turkiska Delikatesser (Turkish fast food)

Östermalm and the Östermalm market hall

Östermalm is a neighborhood with a very distinct character, and it has acquired a reputation for being the most posh part of Stockholm. This reputation dates back to the 1880s, when the central parts of Östermalm were developed by the wealthy merchant classes and members of the aristocracy. The central parts of Östermalm are what used to be the old limits of Östermalm, even if the administrative borough of Östermalm extends beyond the old borders. The imagined place of Östermalm clearly differs from the administrative space, and to a large extent also from the perceived and experienced Östermalm. The boundaries of the imagined, perceived, and experienced Östermalm are more narrowly defined than the administrative construction.

The imagined Östermalm is that of old, distinguished people in big apartments with large fortunes. If we look at the statistics for Östermalm, this picture is to some degree confirmed. The average income for all of Östermalm is higher than in both City and Södermalm. What is interesting is that the number of small flats is among the lowest in the entire inner city on central Östermalm, 37 percent, and an astonishing 25 percent of the apartments have five rooms or more. In the rest of the inner city, small flats are clearly predominant. The percentage of old people is higher here than in the other inner city area, at around 20 percent. This imagined Östermalm and the statistics that support this picture do not reveal the entirety of the place, of course. Just like any other part of the

city, this neighborhood reinvents itself, and represents itself in a myriad of superposing images.

Östermalm was planned to be the next target in the restructuring of the inner city, but much of the area was saved from demolition, and Östermalm market hall was among the buildings defended by fierce public opinion. Östermalm market hall was often referred to as the “crown jewel” by the Stockholm Market Hall Administration. Östermalm market hall, which was built in 1888, is the oldest market hall building preserved in Stockholm, and this gives it a unique position among the three existing market halls. The two architects behind Östermalm market hall were quite renowned, and would become even more famous over time. In 1880, Isak Gustaf Clason was an assistant city architect. A year later he set up an architectural office with the other architect of Östermalm market hall, Kaspar Salin. They had undertaken a study trip to Germany, Italy, and France in 1883-1886. They were much inspired by the brick constructions in northern Germany and the cast-iron constructions in France, and these can be seen in Östermalm market hall.

16. The Market Hall Administration was integrated into Fastighetskontoret, The Real Estate Administration, in 2005, and hereby lost much of its specific focus. This is part of the re-organizational frenzy of the City Administration. It may be a sign of a declining engagement on behalf of the City authorities in the future of the market halls. Then again, time will tell.
The clientele in Östermalms market hall does not only come from the area of Östermalm, but also from the Northern suburbs of Stockholm. The precise location, on the square of Östermalms torg, close to the metro and several pedestrian streets and commercial and shopping streets, guarantees a steady flow of people, even though both vendors and the Market Hall Administration complained that the lack of parking space hindered some of the suburban customers from coming in. Östermalm market hall is a massive brick building with the main entrance facing the square of Östermalms torg. This main entrance has the shape of a tower. It is often compared to a cathedral or a temple of food. More than a cathedral, the architecture brings to mind a medieval castle housing a glass and cast-iron construction.

The building was threatened with demolition in the 1960s to give way to a parking garage, but it was saved and given practically the same status as a listed building. To a certain extent, this hampers the remodeling of the market hall. Even the basement, which is not visible to the public, is not easily remodeled. Up in the actual sales area, the Stockholm City Museum would like to restore the original colors with blue and red décor, and more unified lighting arrangements. This, however, runs contrary to the vendors’ desires for distinction of their own stores. In late 2005, Tysta Mari and Beirut Café remodeled their stores, and the display counters were not fashioned after the other vendors’ with their wooden lined counters. Instead the counters have their own, individual looks: the Beirut Café plays with the Oriental touch, while Tysta Mari uses small turquoise tiles to match its Mediterranean theme. At the same time, history is now an asset which the vendors exploit very consciously, especially on Östermalms market hall’s website. If we look at the self presentation on the website, it clearly uses history and tradition to promote the market hall of today:

Östermalms Saluhall – A tastier world.

You’ll find a different, far tastier world in Östermalms Saluhall. This fantastic building had barely opened its doors back in 1888 when its business began to blossom into a real asset for Stockholm’s many lovers of good food. Soon anyone who really appreciated good food and the finest ingredients flocked here. Chefs and restaurateurs who were purveyors to the royal household mingled with ordinary folk, standing in the same queue at their favourite stall to buy from one of the many dedicated traders.
A stall, restaurant or café in Östermalm Saluhall soon became a much sought after place of honour. Once you had one, you had to hold your own against stiff competition for the customers’ favour. Knowledge, experience and quality were the order of the day. And the “fair fight” continues today, with no chance of cheating. The rules are the same as they always have been, with visitors to the Food Hall being judge, jury and winners every time.17

This has very little to do with history or historical facts, but it shows the importance of using history. The use of history is also reflected in the names of the stores in Östermalm market hall, where quite a few stores use “Successor” in their name. It is however, a delicate balance between reverence and innovation. How are new customers attracted? Östermalm

market hall has so far successfully managed to maintain this balance by sometimes admitting new exotic additions to the existing mix of stores, such as Beirut café at the end of 2005. This is a Lebanese caterer, which is connected to a stylish Lebanese restaurant in the area of Östermalm. It thus brings in a bit of exoticism, but safely chic and approved. Even in the case of each vendor’s supply, there needs to be a careful balance between the traditional and the innovative, which becomes more critical here than in the other market halls, as Östermalm market hall thrives on nostalgia and tradition.

Östermalm market hall has a reputation for being snobbish and for attracting a highbrow clientele, with a fair amount of celebrities and royalty. This reputation is often confirmed by both customers and vendors, as well as by the Market Hall Administration. Many people spontaneously say that the three market halls have very different ambience and character. When asked to define the three market halls, people often describe Östermalm market hall as more snobbish (if they disapprove) or more stylish (if they approve). Among staff, this characterization comes up quite frequently. Östermalm market hall is also perceived as the most traditional and the most "Swedish" of the market halls, both by vendors and customers. What this Swedishness consists of is harder to determine. It seems to be a conglomerate of old day nostalgia and proud nationalism. It is here in particular that you find the dishes that were iconized by the legendary Swedish chef Tore Wretman in the 1960s as the national cuisine, such as herring-rissole with currant sauce, steak Wallenberg, or salmon pudding. The sense of Swedishness is also articulated in pride of the safety of Swedish food regulations and animal welfare, which translates into a spontaneous certainty that anything produced in Sweden must be of superior quality, simply because it is Swedish. This sentiment is not limited to Östermalm market hall, but it is more frequently expressed here.

In Östermalm market hall there is greater concentration of ownership than in any of the other market halls. In total there are nineteen stores and restaurants. The Melander and the Elmqvist group are the biggest entrepreneurs in Östermalm market hall, and both groups also have ventures outside the market hall, such as restaurants and catering. Apart from their own store, the Elmqvist group control Gerdas fisk, Husmans deli, and Planet food. In addition to this, the Elmqvist family is related to Birgitta Åhs, who runs one of the smaller shops, and are said to support her by buying fish at more reasonable prices. The Melander group controls Tysta Mari, and almost took over the store now held by Beirut Café. Both bakers’ shops actually belong to the same company, which in turn controls all the bakers’ shops in all three market halls.
However, in 2005 and 2006, Östermalm market hall did have the most elaborate website (the only one in both Swedish and English), and there are also a number of books published on the history of Östermalm market hall, which is not the case for the other market halls. The Market Hall Administration commissioned a company called Infobolaget to produce a book on the market hall. This was done in connection with the renovation of Östermalm market hall in 1998 to celebrate the 110th anniversary of the market hall.

Shops in December 2005

- Nybroe Smørrebrød (restaurant)
- Amandas Brödbod (bread & pastry)
- B Andersson Fägel & Vilt (fowl & game)
- Betsy Sandberg Choklad (chocolates & confectionery)
- Systrarna Anderssons Hembageri (bread & pastry)
- Birgitta Åhs Fiskaffär (fish)
- Sushibaren Östermalm (sushi restaurant)
- Gerdas Fisk & Skaldjursrestaurang (fish restaurant)
- J E Olsson & Sönner Frukt, Grönsaker & Konserver (fruit & vegetables)
- Lisa Elmqvist Fisk, Skaldjur, Delikatesser o. Rest. (fish & restaurant)
- Lisbeth Janson Eftr. Frukt & Grönt (fruit & vegetables)
- Melanders Fisk, Vilt & Catering (fish, game & catering)
- M Seger Eftr. Kött & Ost (meat & cheese)
- Beirut Café Deli (Lebanese fast food)
- Husmans Deli AB (delicatessen & catering)
- Planet Food (healthy fast food)
- Roberts Coffee (coffee & tea)
- Tysta Mari Restaurang, Butik & Catering (bread & pastry, cheese & catering)
- Willy Ohlsson Eftr. (meat & cheese)

Södermalm and Söderhallarna market hall

Södermalm was the working class district par excellence in Stockholm well into the twentieth century. The map does not reveal the geographical specificities of Södermalm, namely that it is situated on a mountain, which made it more inaccessible and harder to develop. In the eighteenth century, Södermalm was still very much the countryside, where rich people had country houses, grew vegetables, and did a bit of light farming. A
few proto-industries were located in Södermalm as well. The essentially rural character of Södermalm prevailed long into the nineteenth century, long after the wealthy had abandoned their urban farming schemes. Factories and shanty towns developed in their place. The shanty towns were replaced by more orderly town houses, but the living standards were low and poverty endemic.

Well into the 1940s, Södermalm was considered to be a rough area by members of the bourgeoisie from other parts of Stockholm. At this point, more positive images of Södermalm and working class people in popular culture began to replace the notion that Södermalm was a place of misery, crime, and violence. Instead, Södermalm was portrayed as the symbol of happy working class insouciance and charm. The working class identity was supplemented by an artistic and bohemian identity. Södermalm had 111,640 inhabitants in 2006, which makes it the most populous part of the inner city. The average income is lower than in City or Östermalm. From the mid-1980s, Södermalm has been experiencing a wave of gentrification, but the imagined place identity of Södermalm continues to be that of working class and bohemian casualness, even if this interpretation is waning.

The most recent addition among the Stockholm market halls is Söderhallarna market hall, inaugurated in 1992, right at the height of the 1990s recession. The plan for the market hall began during the 1980s boom, and can be interpreted as a way of following the general international trend of urban regeneration. The original design was leaning much more on an earlier tradition in the design of market halls, with large glass and iron constructions in the style of the Crystal Palace. The large glass arches were dropped in the final design, but above the miniature market hall the ceiling is just as high as in Östermalm market hall, with shops and offices in arcades around it. This actually harkens back to the early market halls on the continent and in Great Britain, dating as far back as the seventeenth century, where elegant shops were sometimes built around the market hall as the center of trade. However, in Söderhallarna market hall this attempt at buying into tradition is lost on many consumers, who associate the non-food shops in the floors above to modern shopping malls and galerias.

There are only eleven shops (four of which serve food) and four restaurants in Söderhallarna market hall. The square outside livens up during

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18. These are gradual changes and merely reflect how a working class area is recasted in new ways. The same tendencies are at work in other cities, and are most often discussed in terms of gentrification.
the summer, but there is not the same commotion and trade as at Hötorget. Only one florist is there permanently, much to the dismay of the florist inside of Söderhallarna market hall, since the open air florist sells flowers at lower prices (albeit with lower quality). Söderhallarna market hall is part of a larger zone with shops, restaurants, cinemas, and offices in the twin buildings that form Söderhallarna market hall. The market hall is but a small part of this, but it has a central placement, and the revolving doors pass people directly into the market hall from the square outside, even if there are several other entrances to the market hall from inside the twin buildings.

The market hall was conceived for the new residential area of Södra station which is directly behind the square of Medborgarplatsen. When this area was built, it raised debates on the gentrification of Södermalm, which is a traditional working class area of Stockholm. For the market hall this is positive, as more people with larger disposable incomes move


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8.6 Interior of Söderhallarna market hall. The Market Hall Administration.
into the neighborhood, often the new residents may be characterized as part of the gastronomic middle classes. There are quite a lot of businesses and offices in the neighborhood around Söderhallarna market hall, as well as apartment buildings. It is also in a fairly central location on Södermalm, with the subway station just next to it and a commuter train station in the near vicinity.

Of the two remaining farmers’ markets in Stockholm, the one on Södermalm is decidedly the largest and the most successful, in addition to being the first in Sweden.21 In part because the vendors need to establish their market hall as a “genuine” market hall and in part because they need to carve out a niche for themselves in the Stockholm foodscape, the vendors in Söderhallarna market hall focus more on presenting the breeders and purveyors of their foodstuffs than the vendors in the other market halls.22 They display them on their counters, and use them on the website: “The products in the market hall come from carefully selected breeders and purveyors. Each vendor has specialized in one line of trade and consequently possesses special competency on his products.”23 This feature is particularly salient with one vendor, but due to his central location in the market hall, this reflects on the neighboring vendors who follow suit and display their purveyors as well. When asked, one vendor told me that many of the customers have their summer houses on Gotland or Öland and like to buy products that they recognize from their summer holidays: “Oh, how nice! Rosas chark (Rosa’s pork-butcher’s), we always buy our sausages there when we’re on Öland”.

The focus on small-scale purveyors and artisanal products justifies higher prices, and convey notions of authenticity and safety. Food is no longer anonymous, as there is a producer with a name and face behind the product. The tendency to upgrade the small-scale and the genuine is perhaps a way of countering the lack of “market hall feel” which some accuse the modern Söderhallarna market hall of, or perhaps it is just a

21. Farmers’ markets in Stockholm in the present form were introduced in the 1990s by an Englishman living in Stockholm. They can be interpreted as a wish to reconnect to older traditions. At one point, there was also a farmers’ market at Kungsholmen, but this one vanished in a couple of years.
22. A new shop opened in Hötorget market hall in August 2007 which slightly alters this characteristic: it calls itself The Farmer’s store and markets small-scale regional products from various parts of Sweden. The tendency to upgrade the local has generally taken on a greater significance after the fieldwork for this study was completed.
response to perceived and imagined customer preferences. At any rate, it contributes to creating the ambience of Söderhallarna market hall. This focus on the producer is also very much a phenomenon of the late twentieth century and beginning of the twenty-first century, and can be found in other retail situations as well. The name and photograph of the breeder on the package when you buy chicken in the supermarket is just one such example outside the market hall context.24

Since Söderhallarna market hall is part of a larger business complex, the business association has more resources here than in any of the other market halls. They actually have a person employed to take care of marketing and events, which may explain why Söderhallarna market hall has

more events than the other market halls. Every spring and fall there is a party in the market hall part of Söderhallarna to promote the entire shopping center and attract new customers for all shopkeepers. These parties are arranged by professionals who have their guest lists and try to create the right ambience with a selection of celebrities. The vendors and business people of the entire shopping center are also allowed to invite people for these parties. Who should be invited and why may give rise to diverging views. Not all vendors have the same idea of how this should be managed. However, most of them are happy with the publicity they get.

Sometimes the vendors initiate events. During the election campaign in 2002, people were invited to a “pie-in-the-sky-party,”25 where politicians from the different parties entered a cooking competition while discussing politics to attract voters. This also reflects the spirit of the neighborhood of Södermalm, “söderanand,” which is supposed to be witty and folksy, full of good intentions and solidarity. This may contribute to giving Söderhallarna market hall a less snobbish air, despite the fact that the prices are more or less the same as in Östermalm market hall.

Shops in December 2005

- Söderhallarnas blommor (florist)
- Grönsakslandet (fruit & vegetables)
- Himalaya Te & Kaffe (tea & coffee)
- Ingelsta Kalkon (delicatessen with turkey meat as specialty)
- La Petite (bread and pastry)
- Lulles Fågel & Vilt (fowl & game)
- Melanders Deli (delicatessen)
- Melanders fisk, butik & restaurang (fish & restaurant)
- P&B Delikatesser och Goda Presenter (chocolates, oils, mustards, jams, etc.)
- Sandströms Kött och Catering (meat & catering)
- Södercheesen (cheese & cured meats)
- Södermanna vegetarisk restaurang (vegetarian restaurant)
- Kebabköket (fast food)
- Söder Espresso (café)
- Fresh Café & Salladsbar (fast food)

25. A play on words is the double meaning of “valfläsk,” as election promises and the more material aspect of “fläsk” as “pork.”
The temporal dimension

The market hall is often portrayed by vendors and customers alike as an institution which always remains the same, a symbol of continuity and tradition. But if we look into what is going on we see a rather different picture, that the market hall is constantly renewing and reinventing itself. There are several ways of adapting to the present. What vendors define as the most pressing need is that of finding alternative ways of making money when the everyday shopping in the market halls diminishes. Catering and parties arranged in the market hall itself are two examples of how the market hall has adapted to the competition from the conventional food chains. Whether there has ever been true everyday shopping in the market halls in the past is not a relevant issue. To the vendors, there is the sense that they are losing ground, and that they need to adapt to the competition.

Companies are the primary target audience for big parties, but clubs and private parties also ask for all sorts of events, such as in connection to an annual meeting in a club, or to celebrate a stag party, or a birthday celebration. Sometimes the different vendors offer to teach something such as how to filet a fish, and then cook with a chef, or to cut up meat and then stay and cook. Companies are also targeted for the gift vouchers or the various gift packages to offer clients or employees. But the backbone of the market halls today remains the lunches, sometimes referred to as the market hall savior, and the take-out and ready-cooked meals by the vendors and the market hall administrators alike.26

The market hall is sensitive to changes in time, season, and weather. There is a distinctive rhythm to the day, the week, the month, and the year. The mornings are busy preparing for the day and displaying the foodstuffs in the most tempting manner before the market hall opens. In Östermalm market hall, the customers can come in before the opening hours, thus making the morning more of a show than in the other market halls. There is a difference though. Before opening hours the vendors sometimes listen to the radio, which never happens during official opening hours. In the Söderhallarna and Hötorget market halls the music is much louder, the talk and jokes are louder and cruder. The customers do not gain access to the market hall before the official opening hour. There is a rush around lunch time, especially for those selling take out food. Slow afternoons are followed by a rush before closing time.

26 Incidentally, when the self-service stores opened, the ready-made dishes helped boost profitability. See for example "Självbetjänings i Stockholm... och i Gävle", Butiks Arkiv, Nr 4 1950 p. 20-21.
beginning of the week is slow, and most of the time is spent waiting and preparing for the commerce of the weekend.

This tendency can be seen in other retail stores as well; especially the big supermarkets outside town show the same pattern. People tend to spend less on food, entertainment, and other consumption articles toward the end of the month before the next paycheck arrives. The tendency is the same in the Söderhallarna and Hötorget market halls, even if there is little or no such tendency in Östermalm market hall. The year is more important with the big holidays being the most important times of the year. But this rhythm is upset if the weather is bad, or sometimes if it is too sunny and warm the customers skip the market hall.

Christmas is by far the busiest time, but the New Year celebration is judged as the most profitable. In Östermalm market hall, one of the fish vendors has set up a special lobster basin for New Year’s. The twelfth day celebrations are especially profitable for the florist, since many people are invited for dinner and like to bring elegant flowers to their hosts. Easter is a tricky season, and the fact that the school Easter holidays are now the week before Easter has had a negative effect on trade according to the vendors. If Easter is too early or too late, this is said to have negative effects on the sales. Ascension and Whitsun are dependent on the weather. Midsummer is fairly good. After the Swedish midsummer holiday, there is virtually no activity until August, when the crayfish and the fermented Baltic herring seasons start.

Both shopping according to and in opposition to the seasons could be seen as ideals. Frozen berries, for example, are marketed as being “picked at the right season”. This is a way to overcome the time constraint of the seasons, while still paying attention to their importance for quality. The traditional starting date for crayfish has disappeared, much to the dismay of some vendors who would prefer to have an official date that could mark the beginning of the crayfish season, and thus give occasion to celebrate and commercialize the celebration. Fermented Baltic herring still has an official starting date, and depending on the initiative of the vendors, this can be turned into an event. Fermented Baltic herring is an acquired taste, and its pungent smell makes marketing events difficult. For some reason, the middle part of October (week 41) seems to be a bit of a boom time, at least in Östermalm market hall.

Some vendors claim that the hunting season has a detrimental influence on sales in the market halls since “everyone who knows how to cook is out hunting”. Other vendors think it is just the opposite, that

27. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Thursday December 29, 2005.
The benefit of comparisons

There are many things that are common to all three market halls. The act of sale in all three market halls is defined by sellers and buyers, as opposed to a generalized picture of the anonymous supermarket. That is, shopping for food in the market hall is an exchange, a negotiation, a social institution. By shopping in a market hall, you may also enact who you are. Since it can be seen as part of an identity project, the visual and the social are important. Both the visual and the social are important aspects

of how a place is perceived and experienced. The physical room of each market hall offers specific settings for how the meaning of the place can be perceived, experienced, or even imagined. The market hall is defined as a lifestyle. To work in a market hall is offering time, allowing things to take time, presenting something related to another time or place. It is where the instinct of craftsmanship is still valued. In a sense, this is also a stereotype, a story that the vendors tell themselves about themselves.

To shop in a market hall is placing yourself in this context, as well as participating in creating the context. In the market hall there are cultures of waiting, there is a clear ideal of allowing things to take time. At the same time, there are always customers who are in a rush, for whom special orders have been prepared in advance. But being in a rush seems to be anathema to the market hall, and even the customers who come in to pick up their preordered shopping bags allow themselves to exchange a few words with the vendors before they move on. Only the fruit and vegetable stand seems to invite customers to start picking things themselves. Perhaps it is the fact that this is the only place where the foodstuffs are displayed in such a way that customers can touch them.

However, there are differences in how these values are enacted. This defines how notions of quality are acted out, how consumers define themselves, and how the vendors present themselves. In Östermalm market hall, tradition and nostalgia play the most important part. In Hötorget market hall, it is more a question of shopping for exoticism and authenticity. In Söderhallarna market hall, the focus is on producers and purveyors, on the artisanal and the small-scale. In all three market halls, place has a meaning, and their place in the city defines the limits of this meaning.
Customers: the consumers

There are many different ways of looking at the consumer in the academic literature. In The making of the consumer. Knowledge, power and identity in the modern world, Frank Trentmann and a number of other scholars examine the elusive consumer, and how this concept emerged as a master category alongside concepts like “consumer society”. Starting with various examples, ranging from Victorian tea consumption to contemporary multinational stores in China, the authors demonstrate that the consumer as a concept is by no means self-evident. The consumer in this analysis turns out to be the result of historical circumstances. Another important point is that the consumer cannot be seen as the result of a linear historical progression, nor as a single universal category. Instead, Trentmann speaks of “multiple and changing boundaries of the consumer”.

These boundaries are constantly renegotiated: “Languages of the consumer (like other core identities) are situated in beliefs and practices. In different contexts these can be mobilized in different ways, which, in turn, influence perceptions of the consumer.”

This is central to understanding the consumers in the market hall in the beginning of the twenty-first century. Consumers in the market halls

are engaging in certain practices, and they hold certain beliefs as will be seen in this chapter. But how they articulate these beliefs depends upon what is possible and meaningful to say at this point in time about who you are as a consumer. Not every consumer or every act of consumption is a conscious statement; it ranges from a taken-for-granted attitude to an extremely reflexive stance towards consumption. There are also different ways of defining what constitutes the act of consumption itself. Consumer theorist Susan Willis states that:

In advanced consumer society, the act of consumption need not involve economic exchange. We consume with our eyes, taking in commodities every time we push a grocery cart up and down the aisles in a supermarket, or watch TV, or drive down a logo-studded highway.¹

If we accept Willis’ definition of consumption, the people who are “just looking”, and who are described from time to time as leeches (just consuming the atmosphere but never contributing to commerce) are also part of the consumer culture of the market hall. According to Pine and Gilmore, in their much cited The Experience Economy, there will be ways that these types of pleasant experiences can be turned into a commodity - a money generating activity in the future. It is all about turning use value into exchange value. Pine and Gilmore claim that this is the new economy.²

The market hall, with its strong emphasis on the visual, is very much part of what can be interpreted as the experience economy. How the commodities are presented is the first cue to attracting the customer, but the market hall is offering this visual vista for free as no one is obliged to buy anything upon entering a market hall. Nevertheless, the passive onlookers, i.e. the consumers of atmosphere, can be interpreted as contributing to the very same atmosphere and enhancing the value of the experience of others - contributing in a different currency to the market hall economy.

Shopping is ... adventure, safari, carnival, and contains unexpected ‘risks’ in what you may find and who you may meet. It is a kind of self-discovery. And by its very nature it possesses theatricality: one dresses up to go out and one shops to acquire the

new persona, to modify the old one or to perfect the setting in which one is seen and known.\(^5\)

This description of shopping as an adventure positions the consumer as an active, competent sign-manipulator, who navigates in a re-enchanted world where consumption is an adventure. This view of consumption and consumers is in line with a post-modern tradition where the consumer is king, and where consumer choices are about exploring difference, acting out identities, and seeking pleasure.\(^6\) However, which routes of exploration are open or meaningful, and which identities are possible to take on, are not unlimited or arbitrary.

Giving more weight to groups and structures, Bourdieu explains taste in terms of habitus. The consumer has learned to seek certain pleasures rather than others, certain commodities rather than others, and certain experiences rather than others.\(^7\) Habitus may also be interpreted as an ongoing identity project. Food bought in the market hall can thus be interpreted as one possible part of an identity project. It is one way of displaying who you are, since consumption “is crucially about the negotiation of status and identity – the practice and communication of social position”.\(^8\)

**Why lifestyle?**

When we talk about market halls, the word “lifestyle” tends to come back into use, both by the consumers and by the vendors. Consumers claim that it is a lifestyle to shop in a market hall, and vendors claim that it is a lifestyle to work in a market hall. What they mean by this varies, depending on who is making the claim. It is used to communicate a value, to signal that you are a special person. In this chapter, it will be seen how this concept is used to characterize an ideal of a certain way of life. The Swedish ethnologist Magnus Mörck has written extensively on lifestyles, and in his book *Spel på ytan* he traces the origins of the concept itself to the interwar period, when it was developed in parallel to the Gallup poll. It has been used ever since by academics as well as by marketing people in a variety of ways, the key feature being that goods are ascribed a symbolic value.

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value, which consumers use to express their lifestyle choices. The fact that a multitude of consumers had choices coincides with the beginning of the democratization of food. Only then does it make sense to speak of lifestyle choices in food in a broader sense, even if preferences in food and taboos have always existed. The notion of lifestyles also affects the way quality, rationality, and authenticity are constructed as meaningful entities.

Lifestyle, the way Mörck uses the concept, is defined as something that is always physically anchored somewhere: in the daily routines, in objects, and in time schedules. Gender, age, social class and ethnicity – all contribute to determine which lifestyle is possible for the individual to adopt. Lifestyle is what we live and enact in our everyday routines, which affects how values like quality are perceived. But lifestyle is also a concept used in everyday life. It is also used in the media in a casual, matter of fact way to describe life. Mörck’s main points are: 1) that the value of the concrete examples, i.e. the people who are allowed to exemplify a certain lifestyle, are useful because the personal and the individual allows us to understand something about our different collective realities, which are otherwise illusive and difficult to grasp; and 2) that the clear spatial dimension anchors the concept of lifestyle in a physical reality.

Another scholar who has used the concept of lifestyle is marketing scholar Jonathan Schroeder. He uses the concept of lifestyle particularly in relation to consumption. He argues that we need to pay more attention to other phenomena than is generally allowed by the “modernist, rational, physical product-based view of the market.” By adding lifestyle to the analysis, it can be seen how this affects the market and the competition. Schroeder explains that we live in a “hyperaffluent society”, where lifestyle choices in fact have a more decisive role in determining which products we ultimately consume. Different products compete not only against other products of the same kind, but also against different categories of products where “each might contribute similarly to a consumer’s image and each may be marketed as products or services that exemplify desired lifestyles.”

In this chapter, Mörck’s definition of lifestyle will be used to explore how the practice of consumers is reenacted in the market hall. The perspective presented by Schroeder, where lifestyle is seen as part of an identity formation, will also be utilized. Lifestyle here can be seen as a way

to show who you are, how you live, and how you perceive and present yourself. This attitude towards consumers and lifestyle assumes that the consumer has a real choice, and that consumption is an enjoyable activity, not an everyday drudge. This excludes consumers for whom consumption or shopping is more a question of making ends meet, rather than a gratifying identity project. The pressure to consume and to be a consumer is extremely strong in the twenty-first century. The ideal of the active consumer permeates society, and adds to the stress of those who cannot fully participate or live up to the ideals of the happy consumer.

Luxury consumption and deliberate choices as identity markers have become an ideal. More and more stores are buying into the concept by selling the semblance of luxury at discount prices, and opening up for “luxury consumption,” as attainable for all and hereby further emphasizing the duty to consume. Still, despite or perhaps because of this tendency towards a democratization of luxury for all, consumption is made meaningful within certain boundaries. The lifestyle concept needs to be put into a more collective framework of habitus and social worlds to explain what the market hall consumer finds relevant to his or her identity project, and how a meaningful repertoire of actions is formed.

Who are the customers?

In 2003, the Stockholm City Council and the Stockholm Board of Trade commissioned a report on how the supply and demand situation looked in the Stockholm area regarding food. In the report, open air markets and market halls were grouped in the same category. Not unexpectedly, the actual turnover of products sold at the open air markets and in the market halls was quite low. The consumers who most frequently patronized the open air markets and the market halls were affluent, 55+ years of age, and living in the inner city. If we look at the three market halls in

14. The result is not surprising; it corresponds fairly well to what several vendors say, and to the observations made in the market halls over the year. A research report from a project about consumers 55 years of age and over in Sweden, ”Den mångdimensionella matkonsumenten. Värderingar och beteende hos konsumenter 55+”, Vem, växthus och vänkapt, co-authored by a group of researchers from several different disciplines, presents behaviors, values, and attitudes among this age group of consumers. Especially of interest to this study are the cultural studies oriented approach by Brembeck and the business economic approach by Ossiansson, as they focus on the values held by the group of consumers who make up the greater part of the market hall clientele.
this study, many customers define themselves as conscious consumers, i.e. knowledgeable about food and interested in food and gastronomy.

One such customer is a career housewife I met in Östermalm market hall. As I interviewed her, she defined herself as someone who enjoys cooking and knows quality. Her delight in cooking came gradually, from studying restaurant menus and good cookbooks, and of course from constant practice. She reverted to the theme of quality all through the interview. For example, she told me that excellent raw material is the basis for cooking, and that she had learned to recognize good quality by living in Switzerland. Here references to Switzerland and restaurants may be interpreted as her way to convey that she knows luxury and thereby quality.15

This is not unique to Östermalm market hall, but it is expressed in a different manner in Hötorget and Söderhallarna market halls. For example, in an interview with an architect I met in Hötorget market hall, he explained that he had always taken an interest in food; it dated back to the 1970s when he was living in a commune. He later joined the counter movement against industrial food produced by multinationals, “Mudimums”,16 and he told me that he was vegetarian for a while, as a reaction to large-scale factory food production. For him, the market hall in some ways resolved the paradoxes and ambiguities he felt when confronted with the modern food system. The market hall offers just about anything your heart desires, and hopefully the food there is more respectful of the environment. At least it is not so large-scale and industrial, he concluded.17 Here the market hall embodies notions of both quality and authenticity.

Yet another customer, a woman in her late fifties, explained to me that she and her family take a great interest in food, and they never eat finished products or semi-manufactured products. She enjoys that the vendors know so much, and that you can discuss recipes and provenance of food with them. “It is like an agreement, just by being in a market hall, either as a vendor or as a consumer, you are interested in food. They know and you know: you all care about food.”18

15. Interview, Friday, September 9, 2005.
16. Mudimums, which is an acronym for Mat Utan Djurindustri Mat Utan Multinationella Storöretag (food without animal industries food without multinational companies) was founded in Gävle in the 1980s as a critique of large-scale industrial food production. It is linked to the environmental movement and the Friends of the Earth society.
17. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Friday, November 4, 2005.
18. Author’s fieldnotes, Söderhallarna market hall, Wednesday, April 19, 2006.
As these examples show, shopping in a market hall is often indirectly referred to as a lifestyle choice, as something you do because you are concerned about the quality and the flavors of the products, the authenticity of the products, and the actual shopping experience, - the provenance of the food. To a lesser degree, concerns about the environment are expressed in a preference for organic foodstuffs. In this sense, shopping in a market hall is shopping for various values: the good, the bad, the healthy, and the filthy are all expressed according to habits and prejudice. These conceptions are rarely logically coherent systems of thought; there is ample room for contradictions. One customer spoke of how fresh all the products were in the market hall, lavishly describing the fish and then in the next sentence voiced concern about the meat in one of the butcher stores, as it might have been there for “god knows how long”. She was in her late twenties and not a very frequent shopper, only coming in twice a year or so. She also did not eat meat, which may explain her mistrust of the butcher store.\textsuperscript{19}

These kinds of inconsistencies in matters of lifestyle choices are common though, as Mörck demonstrates in his interview survey on lifestyle choices.\textsuperscript{20} As we have seen, consumers display various attitudes and give certain reasons for shopping in market halls. Their explanations include definitions both of who they themselves are and who the other market hall consumers are.

In Östermalm market hall I talked to a woman in her late forties, who had just been to Hötorget market hall to look for bacalao. She explained that Östermalm market hall has more “feeling” than Hötorget market hall, which she qualified as more “anonymous”, but at the same time “more international”. She told me that she knows she will always get “quality” when she shops in Östermalm market hall, even if it is “awfully expensive”. Besides, it is much more likely that she will meet somebody she knows in Östermalm market hall. It also reminds her of her childhood, when she went food shopping with her grandmother.\textsuperscript{21} In expressing her preference for Östermalm market hall in comparison to Hötorget market hall, she positions herself as someone who has roots in the Östermalm neighborhood, that is as someone with ties to the place and ties back in time. By attributing quality to the place, she hereby indirectly inferred quality to herself.

Sometimes, the definitions include who the non-market hall consumers are. They are then used as contrasts to who the market hall consumers

\textsuperscript{19} Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Friday, November 11, 2005.
\textsuperscript{20} Mörck, M., \textit{Spel på ytan}.
\textsuperscript{21} Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Friday, November 4, 2005.
are. “Not everyone cares about food. Or maybe I should say, not everyone has the opportunity to shop here. We are privileged, we can afford it and we have the time.” The reference to the consumers who are not shopping in the market halls is sometimes more implicit, as when a middle-aged woman, who defined herself and her family as “foodies”, contrasted the assortment in the market halls to the assortment in the conventional super market chains, where the food is sold in bulk, highly processed, and without scent and flavor.

But this self-definition can be very explicit as well. In Östermalm market hall I met a man who defined himself as a regular customer (and so did the vendors I observed). He kindly explained to me that we may divide the customers in Östermalm market hall into three categories: the tourists, who are mainly coming in to have a look, and who, quite frankly, can get in the way of the real consumer. Then there are the occasional customers, who buy food mainly for Christmas, and perhaps for other special occasions. The final category is the habitual customers, the regular customers, like himself, who come in all the time.

The three market halls offer different values to the consumers. They chose a market hall depending on which value they prioritize, and which value they assign to a market hall, even if more practical grounds such as geographical proximity may influence the choice. The consumers are in a sense occupied in a classificatory work, assigning certain values to each market hall, and often using these categorizations to explain why they chose a particular market hall over another. Consumers are not only actively partaking in the definition work, they are also subject to categorization by vendors, who in turn place consumers in each respective market hall into different categories. This categorization assigns different values to the consumers. Vendors speak for example of “invoice customers”, who are usually large customers that place telephone orders and collect bags with pre-ordered goods when pressed for time.

On a Friday afternoon in October, I watched a father coming in with his son and daughter in tow. The father was wearing a navy blue top-coat and a discreet burgundy scarf; the children looked equally well-dressed and well-bred, in navy-blue with blond curls and clean faces. The father joked with the staff about how delicious it all was last week, and how he

23. Author’s fieldnotes, Söderhallbackarna market hall, Wednesday, April 19, 2006.
24. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Friday, October 14, 2005.
hopes the lobster will be up to their usual standard. I happened to catch a glimpse of the invoice: 2,600 Swedish crowns.25

Then there are the regular customers, who do not use an invoice system, some coming in all the time, others mainly during the weekend. They display a calm reassurance and demonstrate their acquaintance with the vendors in the various ways described below. In general, the same kind of assurance is not displayed by those who come in buying with a gift voucher, even if regulars also shop with gift vouchers sometimes. The customer with the gift voucher is generally more careful, asking advice and trying to discern the rules of interaction in a buying situation. This might be the first time they ever come into the market hall to shop.

Then there are the occasional customers who shop only once or twice a year, especially around Christmas. When I have talked to them, they explained that time, money, and convenience are some of the factors that prevent more regular shopping. Still, many of the occasional customers expressed a yearning for the specialist, the nostalgia, and the freshness they believe is part of the market hall: “I wish I would come here more often. It looks so fresh. I don’t think you get the same kind of foodstuffs, not as fresh, in the supermarket. Besides, you can always ask people if there is something you want to know about the preparation.”26 The freshness is presented as a quality associated with the more genuine, authentic foods on display in the market halls, and the quality of the produce is associated to both the market hall itself and the shopping experience.

We could interpret the categorization work performed by the customers and the vendors in terms of the market hall as a social world. In his article “The nature of social worlds”, the sociologist David R Unruh explores how the concept of social worlds can be used in various contexts. Since social worlds are more a loosely knitted network, Unruh distinguishes between four typical forms of involvement which define social worlds: voluntary identification, partial involvement, multiple identification, and mediated interaction.27 In the case of the market hall, we can see how some people chose to identify themselves as market hall habitués, while others who similarly enter the market hall do not. In this sense, it

25. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Friday, October 21, 2005. Just as a comparison, in 2009, the estimated costs for a month worth of food for a family of two adults and two children age between 6 and 9 amounted to 4,650 SEK according to the Swedish National Board of Consumer Policies. www.konsumentverket.se/privatekonomi/Hushallets-kostnader/ Accessed April 21, 2009.
26. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Friday, November 11, 2005.
is a voluntary identification, which is the first form of social involvement according to Unruh.

If we consider the second form, partial involvement, it means that is impossible to take part in everything that goes on within the world of the market hall. The third form, multiple identification, is indeed very open, and it is doubtful whether this adds anything to the understanding of the concept of social worlds except to emphasize its open character. In today’s society we go in between several social worlds, and take on several social roles.

What is interesting is how Unruh opens for the possibility that even those who do not consider themselves as members of the social world may still analytically be defined as part of the social world. As for the fourth form, mediated interaction, this points out how, since social worlds do not rely on kinship ties, mediated interaction through the print media, as well as through the Internet, become important to spread information about what is going on in the social world. For the vendors in the market halls, articles, radio, TV, as well as advertisements, are important ways to communicate messages to the customers.

But what is of particular interest here is how Unruh divides the members of the social worlds into four categories: strangers, tourists, regulars, and insiders. The stranger is necessary for the group within the social world because this is the “other”, i.e. the point of reference, against whom the group can identify. I often heard market hall consumers define themselves as “not like the people who shop at any supermarket”, but this is even more important for the vendors, as we shall see in the next chapter. The tourist is someone who is involved only occasionally. They are “committed only insofar as it remains entertaining, profitable or diversionary”. The regulars, on the other hand, have a higher degree of commitment, but it is the insiders who take the greatest responsibility for the future of the social world. It is the insider who recruits new members, and it is the insiders who orchestrate the goings-on of the social world.

In the case of the market hall, the customers and the vendors can be seen as constantly working on the definitions of who is belonging to what category. Their categories are not always the same, when vendors speak of invoice customers, the customers themselves tend to use other definitions: “I’m a regular”, “they know me well here”, or “they have become friends now”. But invoice customer and regular customer are fluid cat-

categories, re-negotiated and re-interpreted, depending on the situation and on the actors involved as will be seen below.

**Regulars and originals: managing sociability**

There are certain conventions for how to behave when being a regular. Regulars are loyal to their special store, and in some cases, to their special products. This makes some vendors hide away specialties for customers, and bring in extra specialties, even when a certain commodity is not part of the regular supply. Regular customers also gain special favors, such as small gifts and occasional rebates. When one of the vendors rearranged the cheese counter, he explained to me that he hides a special kind of cheese since he knows that there are a number of customers who like this particular cheese, and since he does not have that much left, he prefers not to expose it to everyone. This way he can save it for those who truly appreciate this cheese. This makes the customers who do know the cheese feel more exclusive, and the vendor offers an additional value to the cheese that enhances the sense of quality as well as of authenticity.

The loyalty claim builds on a system of obligations and benefits. Being a regular implies that you should patronize the store of your choice on a regular basis. Some regulars explain their absences to the vendors: “I have been away on a holiday”, “my husband has been away on business”, or “we are going to the summer house for the weekend”. The loyalty claim is not absolute, and it may become subject to jokes, as when a woman who usually buys take out from one store, suddenly patronized another. A vendor from her regular store passed by, and she smiled apologetically and wondered if he was annoyed with her for not coming to his store. He replied that he was not annoyed. Just disappointed, and he showed a face of mock disappointment. The customers have an interest in upholding their status as regulars; the vendors have an interest in keeping them as regulars to ensure a steady market. In this game they also affirm one another; it is a sense of community that can be both reassuring and demanding.

But the benefits of being a regular are greater than the perceived obligations. For example, customers do not always have to wait in line even when there is a massive crowd. In the midst of the worst Christmas shopping, on Thursday, December 22, at around four in the afternoon, a man in a camel-hair Ulster coat catches the eye of the owner of a store in Hö-

31. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Thursday, April 20, 2006.
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torget market hall: “Just a quick question, before I stand in line, do you happen to have chestnut purée?” The owner smiles, of course they do. The man takes a queue ticket, but the owner has already started serving him, holding up a can of chestnut purée and asking if he doesn’t need more of the truffles salami, but the man laughs and says he must have bought the entire stock the other time, do they really have any left? He buys his chestnut purée and strides off towards the fish mongers.32

A similar scene takes place in Östermalm market hall during the Christmas rush, where an old lady is immediately attended to as she steps up to the counter. The vendor compliments her on her hair, and she explains that she’s just had her hair done. The lady knows exactly what she wants: a few slices of ham, thin slices of ox-tongue, chipolata sausage, and liver sausage. Just a few delicacies for herself, and although she will spend Christmas with her children, she wants to indulge a bit tonight.33 There are benefits on both sides in this kind of relationship, even if the emotional strain usually is higher on the vendor than on the customer. When the vendor and the customer establish a more personal relationship, they can step outside a more routine interaction, and become something more than their respective roles of vendor and customer. In a sense, this can be perceived as the antithesis of superficial, artificial, routine interactions. It reveals a desire for authenticity in social relations, but the authenticity need not be authentic as long as it fulfills the social contract between the customer and the vendor as being authentic enough.

Many vendors, especially in Östermalm market hall, testify to customers waiting to be served by their personal favorite among the staff, but this is also part of the market hall lore of the importance of personal relationships. Vendors recount with astonishment that some people actually really seem to care about being remembered. Part of the astonishment is due to the fact that the vendors explicitly regard some of these customers as being socially higher up in the hierarchy than themselves, and thus having no reason to oblige the vendors. Class is rarely mentioned explicitly; instead their position as wealthy or in jobs with high status is referred to, when vendors recount the attentions they receive or the customers they serve.34 On a number of occasions I have seen customers coming in and referring to how they bought this or that the other day, in order to establish themselves as regulars. Sometimes customers explicitly ask if the vendor remembers them before going ahead with the actual buying.

32. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Thursday, December 22, 2005.
33. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Friday, December 23, 2005.
34. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Monday, May 8, 2006.
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A young couple in Babour coats comes in to Östermalm market hall on a Friday afternoon. The woman says “Hello, do you remember me?” The vendor says yes, and they both thank him for the venison he sold them yesterday. Today they want fillet of beef, and the vendor recommends the neighboring store: “They have the best meat, if you want well-hung fillet of beef”. The young couple wanted to remind the vendor that they were there the day before, and thus potential regular customers, or at least good customers desirous of good treatment.

On another occasion, an older gentleman opens his conversation with one of the vendors by thanking him for the venison he bought last time. It was truly delicious. Today he wants another ready made dish, and he asks how he should heat it. The vendor, who seems not to recognize the man, or give him any kind of preferential treatment, explains that the microwave is not such a good idea, and suggests fifteen minutes in the oven at 175 degrees Celsius instead. This time the vendor refused to acknowledge the customer as a regular, even if the customer tried to establish himself as a customer coming in on a regular basis. Perhaps the reference to the microwave put the vendor off, or perhaps he had just had a very long day. Service work is emotional work, and the fatigue sometimes makes vendors less prone to deliver that personal little extra that the customers so avidly seek.

Social relationships, once established, are maintained by continual re-assertions. Expressing concern for a customer is one way of maintaining a vendor-customer relationship. An old lady with a walker receives all sorts of attentions. The vendor, a woman in her fifties, comes out to take the order and also to place the purchases in the walker’s basket. As she does, she pats the old lady gently on the shoulder. They exchange a few commonplace pleasantries after the purchase is completed. The vendor has given more than what could be expected. She has performed what Hochschild would call emotion work, it is not part of her job description, and indeed could not be put into a work description, but it is certainly part of what makes Östermalm market hall boast of its “personal service”.

A Friday afternoon in October, I observe an older couple who chit-chats to the vendor about the weather and the various cuts of meat they might buy. As they stand by the Melanders wild game counter, one of the vendors from the fish counter calls out to them and jokes about the time the couple spends deciding: “You have to hurry up now, or he will sell everything” says the vendor from the fish counter, and points to the vendor.

35. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Friday, October 21, 2005.
36. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Tuesday, February 22, 2006.
37. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Thursday, April 13, 2006.
in the wild game counter. The couple waves this joke away smilingly. The wife asks for the price of the fillet of venison. She then shows that she knows the price of the fillet of elk. This gives rise to a joke from the vendor in the wild game counter that she should come and work there, as she already knows the prices. There is a familiar tone between the vendors and the couple, and they inquire after the health and whereabouts of a vendor who has not been working for quite some time. The vendors from the fish counter come over and take up the order directly from the husband, who stays by his wife’s side just in front of the wild game counter. 38

A joking interaction between vendors and customers does not require that the customers are regulars. One of the vendors explains to a customer that she can squash the tuna fillet a bit before serving the tuna carpaccio. Another vendor, the owner of the store, then invites the customer to come by the store and squash his vendor flat instead. “What makes bosses behave that way?” the vendor exclaims, and points theatrically at the owner. Another customer waiting in line intervenes: “isn’t that what turns them into bosses?” As the customer who intervened is served by yet another vendor, the joke continues. The new vendor asks the owner if there is any codfish left. The owner wonders how many he needs, perhaps five? He holds up two fingers in the air and makes a funny face. “No, eighteen please”, and the vendor holds up five fingers in the air. The customer just smiles and seems to enjoy the scene. The owner, the vendor, and the customers all interact and joke together. But all the while, the work continues, and the customers are being served without delay. 39

The sociability can take other forms as well. The market hall can almost serve as a communication hub for the customers. A lady in her forties stops by in the lunch hour rush and asks if her mother has been by to shop for dinner that night. The vendor nods yes, the mother has been there today to pick up some venison. “Excellent, I just wanted to know what’s for dinner.” She smiles and looks pleased. “And please give me some chicken for lunch as well. I just need a small chicken breast, thank you.” She buys her chicken and strides off. 40 This way she establishes herself and her mother as regular customers, and the market hall becomes an extension of their family circle, that is, an arena where they interact and leave messages for one another. Not quite their kitchen, but not far from it.

38. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Friday, October 22, 2005.
39. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Thursday, December 29, 2005.
40. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Friday, November 11, 2005.
However, there are limits to acquaintance, and the vendors usually talk about the importance of not asking too much, of keeping the customers’ privacy, and even if they may admit to celebrities being regulars, there are clear lines about how much may be revealed to journalists or to researchers. It is a question of trust: the regulars have a right to their privacy, and the acquaintance and the relationship with the vendor is based on respect for privacy. The relationship is not necessarily an equal relationship. One vendor explained to me that you need to be careful and not ask too much, or else the customers will be upset. On occasion, the acquaintance may turn into friendship, but most often it stays just a semi-personal, semi-professional market hall relationship of friendly small-talk, mainly centered on food. The Swedish ethnologist Lars Kaijser, who studied country shopkeepers, found the same kind of intricate semi-personal, semi-professional forms of acquaintance among the country shopkeepers and their customers. The semi-personal and the semi-professional demand a setting in which there is time to develop relationships: where you meet on a more regular basis, and where you have time to chat. It also demands that the customer can locate the vendor, and find the same vendor over and over again. The vendor, who sells a commodity, a service, and an experience, and is paid for this (or has a financial profit to make in doing so), has to make the greatest effort to uphold the relationship, but it is not a simple one-way effort. The vendor is not without power in the exchanges. The relationship also holds its own rewards, and it can render a monotonous work day less so.

Difficult customers and negotiating complaints

The Christmas rush in particular puts a great strain on the vendors. At the same time, this is described as the most fun part of the year. The days are long, and the stress is more or less constant. In this hectic period, jokes are often used to handle difficult regular customers. Criticism of the customers is delivered in a joking manner: “haven’t I always done everything for you? Haven’t I always tried to give you the best Christmas hams? Haven’t you always refused to take my advice? Look at your husband! He is hiding now, because he is so ashamed of you! Come now, take this ham and you will be so pleased. This is the best.” This is said after at least fifteen minutes of showing different hams and discussing their

41. Interview, Monday, January 9, 2006.
42. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorg market hall, Tuesday, February 7, 2006.
43. Kaijser, L., Lanthandelare.
relative merits with a regular customer who finds something amiss with every ham.\textsuperscript{44}

Christmas stress might bring the most fretful and arrogant customers, who are pressed for time, feeling warm in their winter clothes, and who might take advantage of the opportunity to let out a bit of stress on the market hall vendors. Sometimes it is just a demonstration of arrogance, like the lady in her late forties who is buying cheese while talking on her cell phone. She has a very haughty manner, and points at everything she wants and tastes ten different cheeses without getting off the phone or without ever saying a word to the vendor. When her husband and daughter join her, she immediately turns to them and only addresses the vendor to give him orders about what she wants, also in an overbearing voice.\textsuperscript{45}

Customers may feel that since the prices are higher (or perceived to be higher, as is sometimes the case) they have the right to demand special services (we want the steak, but we don’t want to pay for the bone), and to argue over the price. Just before Christmas, I notice a couple in their sixties who wants to buy a salted leg of mutton. They ask for a small one. The smallest one weighs 1.7 kg, which they think is too much. The man asks the vendor if they could buy just half the leg of mutton, because they don’t want to pay for the bit with the bone. The vendor kindly explains that they could hardly sell the bone to someone else and that unfortunately they can’t sell them just half. Another customer, a woman in her thirties, who is carrying several bags from the various shops in Söderhallarna market hall, overhears the conversation and tells them that she got her salted leg of mutton from a neighboring store which sells them without bone.\textsuperscript{46}

The attempts at negotiating prices are not limited to Christmas time. Another example of such an incidence occurs in Hötorget market hall a Thursday afternoon at the end of November. A man in his sixties comes in. He does not wait for his turn, but immediately engages one of the vendors in conversation. He explains that he is a good customer who buys a lot if he is pleased with the service he receives. Here he makes a pause to observe the reaction of the vendor. The vendor simply nods his head and looks at him. The man continues. He loves lamb: do they have a juicy rack of lamb? The vendor starts to show different racks to the man, who looks

\textsuperscript{44} Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Wednesday, December 21, 2005.

\textsuperscript{45} Author’s fieldnotes, Söderhallarna market hall, Thursday, December 22, 2005.

\textsuperscript{46} Author’s fieldnotes, Söderhallarna market hall, Thursday, December 22, 2005.
at them critically. Well, yes, I would want that one, he finally concludes. Can you remove the bone for me? The vendor replies of course, and puts the rack on the scale. No! Says the man, I don’t want to pay for the bone you know. The vendor tells him that in that case the price is different, and points to racks of lamb with the bone already removed.

The man at first refuses to pay, but then grudgingly agrees. He reminds them that if he is pleased, they will be rewarded, and that he knows a lot of people, so it is in their best interest to serve him well. Throughout the conversation, the man addresses the vendor in an overbearing tone. The vendor, who can be very charming, keeps the interaction at a minimum, simply answering the direct requests but not engaging in any small talk. After the man has left, I ask the vendor about this interaction, and he says that you just have to forget about it, some customers are arrogant upper-class bastards, who think they can treat you like dirt.47 If the arrogance and the refusal to pay full price becomes too outrageous, vendors may retaliate, but in general vendors negotiate and explain their case in a kind, patient, but compelling manner.

It is not only the price that can give rise to heated discussions. One of the vendors tells me that many customers think they have the right to abuse you and discredit you, especially if you are a young woman: “Do you really know the difference between this commodity and that? Do you know anything about how to prepare this commodity? I want a rebate, because the former owner always gave me a rebate. If you don’t give me a rebate, I will never come back.”48 What is at stake here is primarily the gastronomic competence and legitimacy of the vendor as an expert on the commodities sold. The customers who chose to challenge the gastronomic competence of a young and female vendor are often older and male, so it is more than just gastronomic competence in the balance. It is also an opportunity to act out differences in social position with impunity: to use your position as an older man to enhance your privileges as customer. Not revealing fatigue and irritation might be part of service work, but holding your ground might also be essential when establishing yourself as a new vendor.

When customers come back to return something or complain about something bought earlier on, most vendors are very understanding, and seek to find a solution that pleases the customer. However, the customer is not always right. Due to the professional skill and the expertise of the vendor, the customers sometimes bow to the vendors’ superior knowledge. This alters the service relationship in favor of the vendor. The cus-

47. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall Thursday, November 24, 2005.
48. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Thursday, April 20, 2006.
customer, who clearly does not know how to prepare a roast, needs to be educated. The vendor, who clearly knows how to cook and who can vouch for his raw material, can tell that the customer must have made a mistake.49

Here the notions of quality come into play again. According to the vendor assuming the role of the expert, Gouda and Grevé are boring, ridiculous cheeses that exist only because the customer knows no better.50 Taste becomes a tool of discrimination, a way of protecting the vendors, who are sometimes abused by arrogant customers, and exhausted by the hard and sometimes unrewarding and emotionally demanding service work, and therefore in dire need of salvaging their self-esteem and dignity.

The carefully staged scene of the market hall is sometimes subject to intrusions and transgressions of market hall sociability. On a Thursday afternoon, I stumble over a box filled with salmon a little to the side of one of the counters in Östermalm market hall. I later ask one of the vendors why the salmon is kept in the box outside the ordinary counter. He explains to me that the salmon is not so aesthetically pleasing, but that there is absolutely nothing wrong with the taste, it is really good. But it does not look so good. He smiles apologetically. The price is low, only twenty-five Swedish crowns for a bag of salmon with two or three butterfly cutlets. Two men who have been choosing from the bags demand help, but the staff is not as accommodating as usual. The men have to wait while they serve others first.51

There is something intangible, but the two men do not really fit in Östermalm market hall. Perhaps it is the fact that they have been searching the box on the side, or perhaps it is something in the way they were searching the box for the non-aesthetic, low-budget salmon. Or perhaps it is the way the vendors treats them. One customer told me that he stopped shopping in Östermalm market hall because he felt so mistreated by the staff. “They only pay attention to celebrities! As soon as there is one coming in, you stop existing! And I don’t put up with that. I am a good customer. I demand to be treated with respect. Now I only shop in Hötorget market hall. They are much more humane.”52

The preferential treatment given to some customers, and the special privileges which turn the market hall into such a delightful place for the customers receiving the attention, naturally excludes others. Some laugh

49. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Friday, October 14, 2005.
50. Author’s fieldnotes, Söderhallarna market hall, Tuesday, November 22, 2005.
51. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Thursday, April 13, 2006.
52. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Thursday, May 11, 2006.
about it. A woman in her fifties explained to me that she once used a
famous writer to get the attention of the vendors in Östermalm market
hall. “I just asked him, so what do you have to do to get service here? And
he immediately made sure a vendor attended to me! He is such a gallant
man!” This customer still prefers to shop in Söderhallarna market hall or
in Hötorget market hall because she feels she is trespassing when she is
in Östermalm market hall: “There is something about the place. I can’t
really pinpoint what it is. But I much prefer the atmosphere in the other
two market halls.” The atmosphere of the different market halls makes
regulars of one market hall feel like they are intruding, even when they are
not perceived as intruders by the vendors.

The intangible quality of atmosphere

When asked what attracts customers, a man in his thirties replied that
he came for “The delicatessen! The scents! The atmosphere! Just look
around and see: this place is fantastic! Have you ever been to Barcelona?
Their market hall is wonderful!” We discuss the respective virtues of Bar-
celona’s La Boqueria and Hötorget market hall for a while, with regards
to atmosphere, namely the visual impressions of the colorful and abun-
dant supply, the scents, the noise, and the pure pleasure of just observing
it all. Then he justifies his going to markets by saying that “But I mostly
come here for the delicatessen actually.” A unique supply and the pos-
sibility of finding rare products is defined both as evidence of quality and
as a positive attribute in its own right, but abundant supply is also seen as
part of the mise-en-scène that you can expect from a market hall, which
contributes to creating something extra - a special atmosphere.

The atmosphere is often mentioned as a reason for going to a market
hall. In this sense, atmosphere proved to be yet another intangible value
which is defined in relation to context and self-presentation, or lifestyle
choices. Even if consumers mention values such as the convenience of be-
ing able to always find something savory and ready-made, such as a sauce
with morels or nice little piece of duck liver mousse, or special ingredi-
ents, such as sweetbread, the intangible aspects of the market hall, the
je-ne-sais-quoi, seem to be what most customers value when asked why
they actually shop in a market hall, and why they shop in this market hall
rather than in one of the others. In Östermalm market hall, the old world

53. Author’s fieldnotes, Söderhallarna market hall, Wednesday, April 19,
2006.
54. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Friday, November 11, 2005.
55. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Monday, November 7, 2005.
atmosphere plays an important part, while in Hötorget market hall, the multicultural air takes the fore, and in Söderhallarna market hall, the atmosphere is small-scale artisanal and neighborly.

A study of the catering business from 1988, Working Lives in Catering, helps to understand the value of the atmosphere in Östermalm market hall. In this study, a club that had opted for a décor of old world nostalgia was described as: “a whole range of intangible products, a place where important contacts can be made, where guests can be offered hospitality, where information can be exchanged, where certain rituals can be preserved and daily re-enacted. The very anachronistic nature of the club is part of this appeal; it is the appeal of the old. As a time capsule of a bygone age, it preserves in miniature all those qualities that modern industry has dissolved, qualities which linger on in memory, without probably ever having existed.”

The same old world nostalgia can be found in the venerable milieu of Östermalm market hall. As Gabriel illustrates here, what is sought after is that which cannot be rationalized, that intangible something which amounts to ambience.

Many customers speak of the sense of stepping back in time when they go to Östermalm market hall. It is not only nostalgic memories of childhood visits to Östermalm market hall to watch the live lobsters. It is also the feeling of going back to a time before the self-service grocery stores dominated the urban landscape. A man who is working in advertising tells me that he used to go shopping in Östermalm market hall with his parents as a child. They only bought the Christmas ham in Östermalm market hall, and perhaps something on special occasions. But he clearly remembers how fascinated he was as a child with the live lobsters in their aquarium.

Another customer, a woman in her fifties, also speaks fondly of the live lobsters, and of coming to Östermalm market hall as a child with her grandmother. She thinks there is something in the atmosphere which you don’t find today in the modern supermarkets. Perhaps it is not surprising that the live lobsters often come up in discussions with customers about Östermalm market hall, as this is what they remember of the market hall from the old days, and forms part of Östermalm market hall lore. Live lobsters in aquariums do offer a vivid picture, almost like an anti-thesis of the modern supermarket.

58. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Friday, October 14, 2005.
59. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Friday, November 4, 2005.
In Hötorget market hall, which dwells underground, the atmosphere is quite different, as we have seen in the general descriptions of the market halls. What customers mention as the reason for going to Hötorget market hall is most often its international character. The word international is used both in the sense of multicultural or ethno-chic, and in the sense of urbane sophistication. I witnessed an encounter with two musicians. One had been to a rehearsal in the Concert Hall just close by Hötorget market hall, and the other was currently playing somewhere else. They were exchanging news about the music world and gossiping about friends and acquaintances. One of the musicians was joined by his wife and children, who had been to another part of Hötorget market hall to buy other foodstuffs, and they were all shopping for food at this particular shop where there is a great variety of foreign delicacies. They all kept changing languages, among themselves, to the children and to the vendor. The husband spoke English to the children, a mixture of English and Swedish to the colleague and the wife, and French to the vendor. The couple was asking for special olives with reference to olives they were always buying when in Spain, and the Serrano ham they enjoyed. They discussed with the vendor and the colleague how Hötorget market hall is the only place where you can find these olives. “Hötorget market hall is such a wonderful place! Thank you for all that is good and delicious!” the wife exclaimed before leaving.  

This scene was almost the embodiment of the international couple shopping for global food in a multicultural atmosphere - the essence of urbane chic and the new global citizens.

In Söderhallarna market hall, the atmosphere is not so often referred to as a reason for going there. If so, it is usually as in what the atmosphere is not: not being Östermalm market hall, which is too snobbish, or not being Hötorget market hall, which is too noisy. Instead it is Söderhallarna market hall, something in between. Some say it is because it is in Södermalm that it has a different atmosphere. A famous Swedish actor shops here and he enjoys paying taxes, a customer once told me when I asked about the atmosphere, and what were the defining characteristics of Söderhallarna market hall. That he, a well-known, well-paid actor, has chosen to live in Södermalm, is used as proof by this person that Söder has its own atmosphere where solidarity still counts.

However, most of the time the spirit of Söder - Söderanan - is mentioned to define and explain Söder as a place where people are more relaxed, not as snobbish or noisy as in the other two market halls. This

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60. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Monday, March 6, 2006.
61. Author’s fieldnotes, Söderhallarna market hall, Wednesday, March 22, 2006.
idea of Söder dates back to what is now more of a mythic past, and a celebration of a working-class culture. This is a popular culture which is not necessarily linked to the present day social, cultural, or economic structure of the neighborhood. The iconic status of Söder as a more bohemian, a more open, a less formal area, still lingers. In guidebooks of Stockholm, such as Lonely Planet, Söder is described as the trendy area with a mixture of artists and working class. A socio-economic analysis of Södermalm would most probably give quite a different picture - one of increasing gentrification.  

Still, the images of Södermalm, and the idea of the spirit of Söder, are sufficiently persuasive to be used both as a marketing device and as an identity marker. The people who shop in Söderhallarna market hall live in the neighborhood or come in from the southern suburbs. The atmosphere is defined more in terms of where in the city the market hall is located, i.e. in Södermalm, than in terms of the characteristics of the market hall itself. It may be that it is so close to the shopping mall of Söderhallarna market hall, being so small and so indistinct, that the atmosphere is less specific and less easily characterized than the other two market halls.

As we have seen above, atmosphere is part of the construction of the place, and the identity of the place. Each market hall has its own design, its own sociability or etiquette. This is expressed both in physical and cultural characteristics. How the vendors interact with the customers is part of the atmosphere, as is how the customers interact with one another - the sociability of the market hall. Some customers, especially in Östermalm market hall, have almost iconic status: the vendors use them almost like icons. They are the celebrities the vendors mention when journalists or curious researchers ask who the customers are. Royalty like Princess Lilian and Prince Bertil are often mentioned in connection with Östermalm market hall. What is enacted in the ambience of the market halls is a certain form of urbanity: it could almost qualify as a familiarity with the ways of the world as lifestyle, a way to signal that you are part of the new global cosmopolitanism, the gastronomic middle classes.

The elusive character of quality

The notion of quality is pervasive in the entire market hall context. Customers and vendors alike spontaneously mention quality, as well as ‘supreme primary produce’, when they speak about the market hall. It is often one of the first things they mention. “Supreme products are essential to preparing a good meal, without excellent quality produce, you can’t do anything” as one customer put it in an interview. How you recognize supreme quality is another matter, and this ability is essentially something that customers and vendors claim they have, even if others don’t. To judge and recognize quality is an integral part of gastronomic competence. To actually define quality turns out to be a difficult exercise for both customers and vendors.

One customer tries to explain that quality is a question of how it looks. Vegetables and fruit have to look fresh, crisp, and luscious. She smiles uncertainly and turns instead to explain in what other food stores she likes to shop. She lists a number of upscale supermarkets that belong to the main chains, but that still offer a more upscale assortment than the standard. The visual is clearly part of what constitutes quality. Both the aesthetic quality of the built environment and of the food displays in the counters is often referred to by customers and vendors as part of the appeal of the market hall. When the customer in the above example compares the assortment in the market hall with the assortment in other food stores, she is trying to place Östermalm market hall within a gastronomic landscape of upscale food retailing, in order to categorize what she perceives as the high quality food outlets in Stockholm. This is also a way of ascribing quality to herself as a knowledgeable customer with a feeling for food.

To shop in a market hall is also often compared to what it is not, especially in relation to quality and definitions of quality. The same customer explains that she used to shop at a discount store before, but that she felt cheated. The packages were so big and seemed so cheap, but she ended up wasting half of the contents. Besides she could never be sure of the quality or the taste, which also resulted in a lot of waste. That never happens

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64. Interview, Friday, September 9, 2005.
65. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Friday, November 4, 2005. For the readers familiar with the Stockholm food scene, the shops mentioned were ICA Kungsholmstorg, ICA Esplanad on Karlavägen, and Sahis in the shopping mall Fältöversten. All addresses are posh, and the first store mentioned often comes up among the most expensive in surveys of the retail market.
when she goes shopping in the market hall, she explains: “If I’m pressed for time I always go to Östermalm market hall, because at least there I know that I don’t get anything bad or inedible. It might be expensive, but I never get cheated.” To buy food at the market hall means that you pay for the assurance of receiving goods that live up to your and your guests’ high expectations. Here quality translates into paying premium prices for premium produce. To highlight this, the market hall is favorably compared to the discount store, and quality is thus defined as something that belongs to certain places and not to others.

Most of the time the notion of quality and what good quality means is implied rather than stated. However, in the interaction between customers and vendors, the question of what constitutes good quality sometimes arises. A young man asks the vendor for some really expensive, really good meat. The vendor asks him what he means by good meat. The young man looks a bit taken aback and answers after a short hesitation, “Eh, well, good, tender, tasty meat”. They then agree that tender meat is good meat, and the vendor cuts up three pieces of beautifully marbled meat, tenderized entrecote. The vendor explains to me later that it is really difficult to judge the quality of a piece of meat simply by looking at it, but the main problem is that customers don’t know how good meat should taste, as they have had their taste buds spoiled by industrial meat and its bland taste. Besides, many customers don’t know how to handle the meat, and even if they do, it is easy to ruin a piece of meat. He shrugs his shoulders. The standardized, industrial meats of the big supermarket chains are here portrayed as the villains, corrupting the taste buds of the unsuspecting consumer. The consumer is left with some of the blame; the consumer’s lack of knowledge and unwillingness to pay the price of first-class food has led to a society of gastronomic dupes.

To have the knowledge, the taste, and the ability to recognize quality are the chief characteristics of a good vendor, and an integral part of the professional identity of a vendor. Vendors sometimes try to establish a consensus on what quality is, or rather they try to find out what the customer thinks is quality. In the negotiation over quality, the customer does not always come across as the most knowledgeable. The vendors reserve the gastronomic capital for themselves - they are the experts, who know how to handle the first-class produce they sell, and they deplore the fact that not all customers share their passion for quality.

66. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Friday, November 4, 2005.
67. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Friday, October 14, 2005.
68. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Friday, October 14, 2005.
Vendors and customers emphasize that one of the reasons for going to a market hall is the supply of supreme quality products. When asked to come up with definitions of quality — what is “good” meat for example? — most customers hesitate and start using words like “fresh”, “looks nice”, and “tastes good.” Then they start talking about how they know good quality when they see it, and that buying in a market hall is in itself a guarantee for supreme quality. One customer explained to me that it is a question of assortment. She has her summer house in Östergötland and deplores the state of the food assortment in this area. She even goes as far as claiming that there is a severe shortage. Then she goes on to enumerate all the products she can’t find: game, fine tender meat, lamb, veal, and fish.

For this customer, freshness and perishability are important attributes to define quality. If food is truly fresh and not treated with preservatives of any kind, then it perishes very fast. She speaks of Switzerland as a good example. There the food does not last more than a day or two, and that to her is a sign of quality. She explains to me how she returned raspberries to Östermalms market hall once because they still looked fresh after a week in the refrigerator. Here good quality is associated with products that are perishable, and thus fresh and natural, whereas bad quality is defined by durability that presupposes preservatives or chemicals of some sort.

Quality is partly linked to time, as in knowing when a cheese is perfectly ripe to eat, and to seasons, as in knowing what fruits and vegetables are in season. In all three market halls, customers talk of seasons, especially for asparagus, strawberries and other berries, and for shellfish such as lobster, and in particular, crab. With fruit and vegetables, provenance is important for the early produce like asparagus. “It is asparagus from Gotland, I hope? I trust the asparagus is from Gotland? Is the asparagus from Sweden?” But in Östermalms market hall, some customers smirk at the Swedish asparagus, and say that only German asparagus is worthwhile. This is a way of demonstrating gastronomic competence.

How this gastronomic competence is best demonstrated, or what knowledge is valued, is the result of constant negotiations. A customer expressed concern over how the quality of food was harmed by long transportation and how this affected the environment, but at the same time he bought venison from New Zealand. The same customer also told me that he tries to respect the seasons and eat accordingly. This can also be

69. “Jag kan inte säga att maturbudet är bra [emfas] i Östergötland. Jag har ju sommarställe så att jag kan... och är även i Norrköping och det är en stor bristvara.”
70. Interview, Friday, September 9, 2005.
interpreted as a form of gastronomic competence, to eat according to the seasons, because, as another customer explained it: “Some food just does not travel well. I think it is much better to leave the exotic fruit for when I go traveling and eat it where it is grown. Ah! The mango and the guava in Brazil... There is just no comparison!”

Yet another customer also emphasized the importance of eating according to the seasons, at least a little bit. Again, this was done with a reference to the quality as being quite superior when the food in question was in season. This customer also enjoys growing certain things in her own garden, and talks of the pleasure of eating your own potatoes, as you know then that they really are fresh. A nexus of time, provenance and proximity are sometimes the determining attributes when the quality of a foodstuff is to be judged. This is then justified with reference to both taste and the environment. The equation between on the one hand what is locally grown and in season, and on the other hand what is perceived as high quality will probably increase. The price for the locally produced food is rising at the moment, and we see a global trend of local and seasonal food as the most exclusive.

But quality continues to be the emblematic feature of the market hall for both vendors and customers. On a slow afternoon, one of the vendors is engaged in conversation with a customer. The customer complains about the big retail chains, and how you never know what they sell you. The vendor agrees, and explains that there are vendors who really don’t know what they’re doing, and who don’t care about quality at all. Then of course there are those who really do care. And most of the time you find those who care in the market halls. There are vendors who care in other stores as well, but that is more unusual. The customer nods in agreement and they both look rather pleased. Here both customer and vendor affirm each other in their common concern for quality, and this very action, to embrace quality, is thus transferred to the customer and the vendor, who become connoisseurs of quality.

71. Author’s fieldnotes, Söderhallarna market hall, Wednesday, April 19, 2006.
72. Interview, Friday, September 9, 2005.
73. Morgan, K., Marsden, T. & Murdoch, J., Worlds of food.
74. Author’s fieldnotes, Söderhallarna market hall, Wednesday, March 22, 2006.
Expectations of craftsmanship

The market hall may be said to be part of an experience industry, as much as being a retailer of goods. What is sold is a service that also has a commodity feature to it. Vendors sometimes speak of offering a total concept for the customer. A total concept may be manifested by providing a special service such as cooking in the customer’s own ovenware, or arranging cold-cuts directly on the customer’s own serving dishes. Most of all, it is a question of attitude, where pleasing the customer is key, and where no wish is impossible to satisfy. This at least, is the ideal, and part of the market hall lore.

There are examples of vendors stretching very far to satisfy customers’ desires, and helping out on very short notice. One client called and asked if she could have crêpes with a filling of sweetbread for a large party with very short notice. The vendor said yes, but explained to me that he would never, ever do this for another client. Not on such short notice, and not such a tiresome task. She is an excellent customer, but she always makes requests at the last minute. This means the chef does not really like her, as she upsets the tight schedules of the kitchen. Not all vendors have their own kitchen, and this means that they need to schedule time when they can use the kitchen. A last minute order puts a lot of strain on the staff, especially if it is a big order, which is often the case with this particular customer, the owner of the shop explains to me.

Pine and Gilmore claim that the divisions between distribution of commodities and production of services are increasingly blurred. If we look at the market hall, what is then provided? A commodity, as in the ready-cooked dish, or a service, as in preparing it in a special container? When staff remembers whims and peculiarities of regulars, it adds to the sense of service, but it is also a commodity prepared in a certain way to be offered.

Many customers use the market hall as a center for expertise. Just before Christmas I witness the following interaction. A man who speaks with a French accent goes to the bakery and asks what bread goes with the foie gras he bought from the neighboring store. The man and the bread vendor discuss various alternatives, and he ends up buying fairly coarse bread made from sourdough, with some acidity to match the softness

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75. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Wednesday, December 28, 2005.
76. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Tuesday, February 22, 2006.
of the foie gras and the sweetness of the wine he intends to buy. He then goes down to the wine and spirits shop to get his bottle of Sauternes.\textsuperscript{78}

Customers expect vendors to be able to discuss recipes, to give advice, and to answer questions: how do I cook this? What goes with this? One of the chefs at Melanders discusses food with a middle-aged couple. The woman in the couple explains that her mother used to cook hen in a way so as to hide the taste of hen, and make it taste more like chicken. They then discuss how to make a sauce, and the chef says that it is important to strain the sauce, especially if there are juniper berries in it. She asks if he thinks that she should use any particular salt with the fillet of deer they are buying. The chef then explains that he would never use anything but sea salt, not since he watched a program on TV and realized that ordinary table salt is not natural. It is chemically produced, he tells her disapprovingly. She is surprised and finds this new piece of information revolting. “Chemically produced!” she exclaims. “Yes, it is artificially produced” the husband interjects. “It is not natural” the vendor concludes.\textsuperscript{79} This is both an example of how ideals about the desirable (the natural vs. the artificial), and ideals about how a rewarding market hall sales interaction could be enacted. The vendor is the expert, but some of his expertise is reflected by the customer, who is gratified. The vendor has provided a service of craftsmanship and expertise, which the customer expected from him.

Time and expertise confers status and authority on the vendor, as well as a sense of craftsmanship, and confirms the quality of the products he sells. But this is not a one way interaction: customers are also teaching vendors things, explaining old recipes, or telling about dishes eaten abroad.\textsuperscript{80} At times vendors seem to allow customers to teach them things they already know.\textsuperscript{81} This could be interpreted as part of the vendors’ role to enhance the customer’s sense of being a knowledgeable gastronome. This places customers and vendors in the same community of gastronomy, as culinary competent members who exchange information, and in this way consolidate the community of gastronomy itself. Together they are exchanging knowledge, and making a difference. For example, selecting foie gras from duck rather than from goose, or caviar from Iran rather than from Russia, establishes norms and definitions for quality in

\textsuperscript{78} Author’s fieldnotes, Söderhallarna market hall, Tuesday, December 20, 2005.
\textsuperscript{79} Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Wednesday, December 21, 2005.
\textsuperscript{80} Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Wednesday, December 21, 2005.
\textsuperscript{81} Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Thursday, April 20, 2006.
this community of gastronomy, and securely places the members inside as knowledgeable. The outsiders might have the money to buy the commodities, but to truly be part of the community of gastronomy, knowledge is essential.

That the boundaries and definitions of what is good and what is gastronomy are constantly subject to change and re-evaluation has been mentioned before. All of this may just as well be part of an economy of expectations. But it is also an economy of expertise. There is a difference with the supermarket where there is no room, at least in a formalized sense, for these types of discussions or even products. At the same time, the upscale supermarkets do their best to imitate precisely the values enacted in the market hall.

In this economy of expectations there are certain criteria that need to be met and certain that need to be avoided. The artificial is generally defined as bad. What is defined as artificial varies, and may be renegotiated. For example, the customers may not expect meat balls to be vacuum packed, and the vacuum packaging is then experienced as artificial and foreign to the notion of authentic, home-made meat balls (produced by the vendor, but still qualifying for the attribute “home-made”). The artificiality of the vacuum packaged meat balls is not greater than it can be overcome by a confident reassurance by the vendor that the meatballs in the vacuum packaging are just the same as the ones in the counter, and that she would have vacuum packed them anyhow for the customer to carry them safely home.82

If we look at Söderhallarna market hall, their customers find small-scale producers they recognize from their summer vacations or small-scale producers they are induced to feel acquainted with by extension, through the stories told in leaflets and on posters.83 A couple in their sixties contemptuously dismisses the vendor’s proud assurance that his store only sells Swedish meat with a cold “Well, that is certainly no guarantee for good quality.” They are appeased by the vendor’s reference to the breeder, who is presented by name and with a story about the animals he raises, their breeds, and their living conditions through to the slaughter, all accompanied by pastoral images of calves grazing on green pastures. “Oh, I see, yes, Gotland. Now that is a different story. This seems like good quality.” The man nods and glances approvingly at the leaflet on the

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82. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Thursday, December 22, 2005.
83. Barbro Blehr uses the expression “to be acquainted with by extension” in her study of a small village in Northern Sweden. See Blehr, B. Lokala gemenskaper, p. 111.
counter. This concern about the producer can be interpreted as the concern about the home-made and the natural. What is sought after is something that seems trustworthy and reliable. Another type of behavior is expected in Hötorget market hall, and even within Hötorget market hall, there are different expectations depending on which store is patronized. The home-made and the authentic have a different articulation here.

There is an ambivalent attitude towards ready-made dishes. On the one hand, they offer better value for money than the raw materials themselves, and they are much in demand. On the other hand, they are the symbol of the changed role of the market hall. “People don’t know how to cook anymore! That is why they come here, to buy these expensive semi-manufactures. Yes, I call them semi-manufactures, even if we do make them from scratch. It is ridiculous! People have no culinary imagination anymore. They just want simplicity. But it is a false simplicity to buy ready-mades. It is so much easier just to cook a fillet of fish, rather than heating up a ready-made dish.” The vendor looks triumphantly at me and then goes on to bash the microwave, the true mark of the culinary decay of the modern times. A middle-aged couple, being served by another vendor, quickly explains that they never use their microwave. The vendor, who doesn’t even own a microwave, says that he always cooks, always. And then there is no real need for a microwave. The middle-aged couple agrees. The microwave is only good for defrosting things. In this way, they acknowledge and confirm one another as people who enjoy and know the noble art of cooking. This separates them from the unfortunates who are reduced to eating processed food for the microwave. They are, in contrast, part of a knowledgeable community of gastronomy.

The common ground of connoisseurship

Connoisseurship depends in part on ideals about who the consumer is. There is construction of the consumer as an ideal type – how the vendor wishes the consumer to be. In this case, the consumer needs to be someone who is knowledgeable about food, who is able to make distinctions, and who is prepared to pay for the special products carefully selected by the vendor. However, the prerequisite of connoisseurship is that the vendor and the customer have approximately the same kind of knowledge, and additionally, that both find the distinctions meaningful. Otherwise

84. Author’s fieldnotes, Söderhallarna market hall, Wednesday, April 12, 2006.
85. Author’s fieldnotes, Söderhallarna market hall, Wednesday, April 19, 2006.
the customer who seeks distinction just appears pretentious. Being a regular is sometimes associated with connoisseurship, in the sense that being a regular means belonging to a select few.

Some of the vendors are very skilled at making the regulars feel like they are gastronomic connoisseurs who are mastering the language of food and gastronomy. One vendor is particularly talented in this respect. A man in his early thirties asked him a question about food, and the vendor leaned over the counter to create a sense of intimacy. He then told him that “We both know that this is the best quality. Iranian caviar is better than Russian. Of course. But, the older generations don’t know this. They keep living by old rules, without open minds and true refinement of taste.”

Quality is also associated with certain countries: Sweden, Switzerland and France have good quality. Belgium and Holland can’t be trusted (even if some customers value Belgian chocolates). Food from Russia or the Baltic countries are judged as unfit for consumption. They simply don’t have the same notion of hygiene and contamination as we (Swedes) do, as one regular Östermalm market hall customer explained to me. The same concern is expressed by another customer in his sixties, who told me that the origin of food is very important, and that he has no confidence in the former Eastern block countries. Their food is so contaminated. They use too much coal, and this causes pollution that surely must affect their vegetables. He also brings up Chernobyl as an example of environmental problems that contributes to undermining his trust. “Think global, eat local” he explained to me after having purchased deer from New Zealand. This was justified, because the deer was raised in the open air, and thus “more natural”, which in this case was more important than the transport cost. The moral and gustatory aspects of food can also be said to play a part in the negotiation of quality.

Other concerns expressed on numerous occasions by various other customers and vendors were about what was perceived as natural, and if the places where the food was produced lived up to those expectations. Food from certain countries, and even certain regions within countries, was perceived as more succulent and more desirable than food from other countries and regions. Provenance plays a key part in many of the definitions of gastronomic quality.

86. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Wednesday, December 21, 2005.
87. Interview, Friday, September 9, 2005.
88. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Friday, November 4, 2005.
Countries and regions may sometimes play a role, even for wild game and fish. One customer asks where the eel is from, and looks very pleased when the vendor explains that it was caught and smoked on Dalarö, an island in the Stockholm archipelago. This might seem ironic, since the eel travels quite long distances to mate, and to speak of origin for an eel might not make sense. However, here it is probably more a question of asserting provenance in a different manner, with provenance as a sign of reassurance that the food tastes like it used to, and like it should. In this way, notions of place play an integral part of how quality is perceived. The relation is not straightforward though, and it might well contain contradictions since gastronomic space is most of all an imagined place. This means that some countries, especially in Eastern Europe, were placed in the category of unsafe food production, a gastronomic “no place”. Other countries, like Sweden or France, are ascribed gastronomic quality and gastronomic values, which turn them into preferred gastronomic spaces. But every product has its own trajectory and its own logic, much in the same way that Harvey et al describe when discussing quality as a social process.

Definitions of quality in the market hall context quite often hold a nostalgic dimension. This is particularly evident in Östermalm market hall, even if the other market halls have their fair share of nostalgia as well, even if expressed in a slightly different manner. If we look into what the nostalgic dimension of quality is all about, several customers mention a sense of community and belonging. One customer explains that she used to work with some one whose grandmother had a store in Östermalm market hall, and shopping in that store makes her feel that she has a connection to the past. The same is true for many of the customers in Östermalm market hall. They speak of “ties to the past”, the feeling of “having a connection”, “to know and to know of” or “being part of a select few”. All of these feelings could be seen as evidence of a community of gastronomy, where definitions of quality and knowledge about quality are paramount. In Söderhallarna market hall, nostalgia is less pronounced, but the nature of the assortment invites customers to dream of a more authentic past, provided here by small-scale suppliers.

89. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Thursday, December 22, 2005.
90. Harvey, M., McMeekin, A. & Warde, A., “Conclusion: quality and processes of qualification”, In M. Harvey, A. McMeekin & A. Warde (eds.), Qualities of food.
91. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Friday, November 4, 2005.
One of the components of nostalgia is the notion of a mythical past, where everything was done from scratch, and when the personal control over the food preparations was greater than in the beginning of the 21st century, with all its convenience foods and industrial ready-mades. This mythical past is present in all three market halls. In those days, people could flay a deer, pluck a fowl, or fillet a fish. They could handle proper primary produce, and they could cook. This knowledge has been lost in the maelstrom of modernity, characterized by the disappearance of the housewife, the subsistence economy, and intergenerational families. In the 1970s, the market hall was packed even on an ordinary Tuesday morning, one vendor wistfully explains to me. Needless to say, this idea of the past says more about the present. But then again, the purpose is not historical accuracy, but rather to create a sense of nostalgia and an urgency to preserve perceived pockets of the past.

The main idea of this nostalgia is that in the past people had time to make things from scratch, and that this ensured superior quality, in contrast to the processed industrial food of today. When asked to define quality of meat, for example, one of the former vendors explains that it was the way it used to look, the texture, the smell. The dry kind of meat you get today, when everyone is afraid of fat, would have been discarded in the past. People just don’t know quality anymore, the vendor laments. Of course, there is an inherent conflict here, since food without fat also defines quality.

Nostalgia also translates into certain ready-cooked dishes such as salmon pudding, steak tartare, herring-rissole with currant sauce, potato girdle cake and stuffed cabbage rolls. These dishes are nostalgic comfort food, for consumers in their fifties and beyond. Precisely these dishes were defined as the cultural heritage of homely cooking by the iconic Swedish chef Tore Wretman and his associates in the 1960s. This kind of food is sold in all three market halls, but it has the most prominent position in Östermalm market hall.

In a place like the market hall, nostalgia thrives, and constitutes part of both what is perceived as quality and what is perceived as authenticity. It is also the antithesis of large-scale rationality. The market hall prides itself in being a place where things are allowed to take time, where custom-

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92. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Monday, November 14, 2005.
93. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Saturday, October 22, 2005.
94. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Monday, November 14, 2005.
95. Metzger, J., I köttbullslilandet.
ers learn to “expect quality and service of a completely different standard to what would be expected from your average impersonal supermarket”. 96 Indeed, there are some undeniably service-oriented aspects of market hall sales: the counter service and personal sales, which are labor-intensive, and time-consuming, unlike the self-service of the supermarket. To rationalize the sales in the market hall by employing less staff, or by introducing self-service, would be to lessen the possibility for vendors to interact with customers and connect with the customers as important and valued clients. Or in other words, it would lessen their possibilities to perform genuine emotional labor, which is an essential part of the craftsmanship and the atmosphere which the customers associate with “quality” and “personal service”.

In this chapter, the perspective changes from the consumer to the vendor. Business is based on a relationship: there needs to be at least two parties involved. To show both sides adds to our understanding of what is going on in the market halls - what constitutes these elusive cultures of consumption? In order to answer this, we need to consider two questions: How do you create a business? And how do you run a business? Knowledge and competence are crucial in building the credibility you need in order to establish yourself as a legitimate actor in the market hall. How do you manage the values that are part of the market hall economy? What are these values? We may look at them in terms of personal values, social values, and finally, commercial values. These values are interdependent, and in this chapter the vendors and the market halls will be analyzed in terms of all three values.

This chapter looks at the notion of a specific market hall lifestyle from a vendor perspective. Certain concepts become crucial in our understanding of how the vendors talk about the market hall lifestyle. First of all, it is a question of craftsmanship. To be a good vendor is to be a good craftsman. But since the market hall is part of an experience economy, and what is sold is as much a service as a commodity, the element of showmanship is quite important as well. To understand how the craftsmanship and showmanship are acted out to establish credibility for themselves, it is possible to look at how the vendors use visual and spatial techniques such as lighting arrangements, food displays, and the actual handling of the foodstuffs, as well as images or articles in the press. This can be inter-
preted as a form of impression management, but also as a form of space management. Space management should be understood in the sense of managing the social space, but also as a way of managing tangible spatial arrangements: how is the store organized? What happens when other stores change? How is the counter laid out?

When looking at the market hall, it makes sense to speak of metaphorical trademarks. The market hall itself is a kind of metaphorical trademark. It is presented as a special form of work. The market hall is a form of knowledge tradition for food and gastronomy. To gain credibility, words are not enough. You need to perform to be part of this way of knowing. It is as much knowledge in the hand, as it is knowledge put into words. This chapter is ultimately about boundaries: who is in, and who is out. It is also about ideals and self-representations.

The ideals on how to run a business engender an economy of information and gossip. There are fairly strong ideals about how to run a business in the market halls. Since all vendors depend on the reputation of all the others, it becomes very important that there is a minimum standard, that customers do not start associating the market hall with dubious quality or over-pricing. That the vendors share a reputation while competing against each other brings on comparisons of either approval or contempt. “This vendor is really good.” “She/he runs her/his business just the way you should.” “That vendor is hopeless. It will never work out.” “That vendor is not completely honest.” The customer might not notice the difference, but those vendors are not working in the traditional way, they are not respecting how things should be done in a market hall.

There is a certain gender-based division of labor, which follows the classic restaurant division of labor, with men generally working as chefs, and women as cold buffet managers. The meat vendors are mostly men, especially for the cutting and other traditional butcher tasks, and with women selling rather than butchering. For fowl and game, there is a predominance of male vendors in Östermalm market hall and Söderhallarna, whereas it is mixed in Hötorget market hall. For fish, there is also a predominance of male vendors, except for the ready-cooked fish and cold-cuts. Vendors of Cheese and vegetables typically employ mixed genders, whereas bread vendors are almost exclusively female.

There are also certain ethnic divisions. In Östermalm market hall, almost everyone is of Swedish descent. One of the owners tries to explain this to me: “you have to be able to understand the codes, you know. Be able to understand the customers. This makes it harder for the immi-
grants; they don’t really have that... feel for it.” The expectations as to who can enter what line of work has left their mark on the market halls. The fast food places selling kebab are all run by vendors of Middle-Eastern descent. They are mainly located in Hötorget market hall, even if Söder-hallarna has a few fast food restaurants as well. Östermalm market hall did have a kebab place once, but today there is no room for that kind of fast food there. Instead they have a health-focused fast food place, which selling pricey smoothies, freshly squeezed juices, and wraps.

How to run a business

Working in the market hall is often referred to as a lifestyle choice. It usually entails working long hours. Some people come at five or six o’clock in the morning, and stay until an hour or more after closing time, resulting in days of up to fourteen or fifteen hours, especially for owners. This depends on the seasons, the days of the week, and the rhythm of the day. But even during slow times, the work is still hard, and the hours long. This is sometimes compensated by working half days when business is slower, but even so the working conditions do not suit everyone. The long working hours may sometimes create feelings of solidarity among the workers, and of community, but they also give people time to get annoyed with one another. All the time spent working closely together allows them to see what others are doing, and possibly find sources of irritation. One of the market hall administrators jokingly said that there are always more calls on slow days. “That’s when they have time to think about what is wrong with their store, their neighbors, and us.”

Before opening and after closing there is more room for jokes and bonding between staff. On a Wednesday morning in February I am invited into Hötorget market hall before opening hours. One of the vendors listens to music quite loudly and sings along as he sets up fish in the counters. On this day, one store is short of staff. In another store, one of the vendors has overslept, so they work mostly in silent concentration. This needs to be done quickly. There is still room for a few jokes and discussions about the latest from the horse races. The vendors check their displays: how does everything look? Should they move something? Some items are moved to make more room, and the glass counters are polished a last time.³

1. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Wednesday, November 23, 2005.
2. Interview, October 16, 2006.
The mise-en-scène and how the market hall is prepared for the public, are part of the impression management that all vendors engage in, with varying degrees of success. The visual and spatial arrangements are preparations for the social and cultural arrangements of the rest of the day when they interact with the customers. What goes on before opening hours are part of the backstage performance, and once the market hall is open, a front stage performance is required to uphold the expectations and the social contract between the vendors themselves, and between vendor and customers.  

There is some room for sociability among the market hall staff, even during the day: playing, going for visits, and buying from others. The small talk and the window shopping is a way to make time pass, but is also a way of maintaining sociability among the vendors. On a fairly calm afternoon, I start talking to one of the vendors. She is quite young and pretty. The male vendors working in the store next to hers are teasing her a bit as they walk past. She laughs and explains to me that they usually joke around like that, but only when it is slow.  

However, there are some forms of sociability among staff even in busy times. The Christmas rush demands their full attention, but to keep up good spirits, they find time to exchange a few words in between the waves of customers coming in. According to the market hall work ethic, it is essential to not let the socializing among vendors be more important than the customers. This can happen, nonetheless. For example, on one occasion, some members of the staff are so busy talking among themselves that they miss a few customers. Two of the people busy talking are actually owners, so this is not a question of lazy employees. Instead it is most probably a reaction to the overwork from the days before Christmas. It is late in the day as well, when their attentiveness can diminish.

There is more room for play at the end of the day. When you pick up the carts to take the food down to the basement storage rooms, you can sing or race with the carts, as long as the customers do not notice too much. You can also throw ice at your co-workers as you pass by. Some of the stores keep selling well after the closing time. The other stores have closed, and the staff makes jokes. They are quite loud and noisy when

5. Author’s fieldnotes, Söderhallarna market hall, Wednesday, March 22, 2006
6. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Thursday, December 22, 2005.
7. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Thursday, December 29, 2005.
8. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Thursday, April 20, 2006.
they bring up the carts for the foodstuffs they will bring down to the cold storage for the night. They slam the trays on the carts and sing at the same time. They turn off the lights in their stores to show that they are closed. The jokes among staff often circle around their own working conditions, or the way their co-workers run their stores: “I think I will work here for a while. Do you need me to come in and help you? Yes, sure, we need an apprentice.” The jokes continue, and are about staff who are lazy, who do not know how to sell, or who can’t come on time. The jokes are also centered on people who work or who have worked in the market halls, and what they do when they go into retirement.

Sociability among staff is not only about jokes. Just before closing time on Thursday of the Easter week, there are still some lunches left unsold. One of the vendors gives one to the girl working at another store.

“It won’t last until Saturday anyway, and we would have to throw it away so you might as well take it. Do you want one for your boyfriend as well?” The girl accepts and smiles. This can be seen as part of the fabric of favors among staff: you help each other out sometimes, and you give small gifts to one another.

One of the vendors explains to me that there are lots of seasonal workers in the market halls. She is one of them. “It is quite common, you know, especially among the young people. They work here from October to Easter. Then they move on and work the summers in the archipelago or on the West coast of Sweden. That’s the way the restaurant business works. It is seasonal work, and you get to know people, and there is always something to do. I have never been unemployed in my life. It’s nice to have many different jobs. You never get tired of any of them.” You never have any security either. But that subject did not arise in our conversation.

The seasonal character of the work can be seen most clearly around Christmas. There are special arrangements for Christmas. The decorations come up at the end of November. There is more staff, and significantly more customers. Working around Christmas is both described as the most fun, and the most demanding work of the year. One of the vendors explains how they all work in complete silence in the mornings to prepare for the long days. This silent concentration in the mornings has

9. Author’s fieldnotes, Söderhallarna market hall, Tuesday, December 20, 2005.
10. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Tuesday, February 7, 2006.
11. Author’s fieldnotes, Söderhallarna market hall, Thursday, April 13, 2006.
12. Author’s fieldnotes, Söderhallarna market hall, Wednesday, April 12, 2006.
its own beauty, he continues. We all know what we need to do, and we work really fast.\textsuperscript{13} This contributes to the closely knit working solidarity.

Around Christmas, most stores are full of extra staff, who may not know all the routines. Everyone looks a bit more tired, and the customer crowds seem to keep pouring in. To manage the crowds, the doors in one of the smaller entrances in Östermalm market hall are opening only one way to steer the crowds in the right directions. There are also far more gift baskets than at other times of the year. The opening hours are more generous as well. All of this puts a greater strain on the staff.\textsuperscript{14} After the Christmas rush, the vendors look really tired. The days in between Christmas and New Years, many stores are beginning to close a bit earlier. “We have so many orders waiting for us, things we need to prepare” many of the vendors explain to me when they notice that I look at my watch. A lot of the stores offer catering for New Years, so the work downstairs in the kitchens is often almost as demanding as for Christmas.\textsuperscript{15}

There can of course be busy times outside the big seasons. On the eve of the big spring party in one of the market halls, one store has a parallel event scheduled for the evening: “rent a chef”. In this case, this means to rent two chefs actually, because there will be around twenty-five guests and they all need to be entertained with some kind of cooking. This means they have extra work to do on a day that is already busy. One of the chefs lets me come with him as he plans the evening’s activities. The chef discusses the menu with the other chef. What do they need? Is there anything we need to buy before the guests arrive? They need to keep it simple enough, and still make sure the guests are happy. They finally decide to divide the guests into three teams. For this event, they have borrowed their neighbor’s kitchen as well in order to have more space.\textsuperscript{16}

They divide the responsibility between the two of them, and my chef brings me to collect some garbage bags from the storage room, which also serves as an office. It is a rather crowded space with no windows, and the chef smiles and explains: “The boss likes to say that if you keep the offices as unpleasant as possible, everyone wants to be in the store, and that’s where you make the money. And it’s true too!” We go upstairs

\textsuperscript{13} Author’s fieldnotes, Söderhallarna market hall, Tuesday, December 20, 2005.
\textsuperscript{14} Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Wednesday, December 21, 2005.
\textsuperscript{15} Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Wednesday, December 28, 2005; Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorg market hall Thursday, December 29, 2005; Author’s fieldnotes, Söderhallarna market hall, Thursday, December 29, 2005.
\textsuperscript{16} Author’s fieldnotes, Söderhallarna market hall, Saturday, April 22, 2006.
again to prepare the tables for the guests. They have borrowed space from
the big restaurant, so the guests can sit separately from the crowds at the
big spring party. The chef keeps doing small things everywhere, adding
something here, and picking something up there. Before the guests arrive
he takes a short break, to focus and relax before his performance begins.
This is the end of a long day, and he still has a lot more work to do.17

What is so appealing in all this hard work then? One of the vendors
speaks to me of the freedom she experiences. No one tells her what to do
or think here. She is her own boss. That is wonderful! The other vendors
neighboring her store are also such nice people. “It is such a friendly and
warm atmosphere here in Hötorget market hall, don’t you think? It’s not
like Söderhallarna or Östermalm market hall. Here people are real people.
Some people think it is expensive here in Hötorget market hall. But that’s
not true! It’s even cheaper than in ICA Maxi. Things have become much
livelier since the wine and liquor store opened up down here. It brings
more customers.”18

The vendors also define who they are and what their market hall is like
in relation to the other market halls, and also in relation to other sales
formats, like at the supermarket ICA Maxi. They also refer to atmosphere
as the intangible quality that renders hard work enjoyable. Likewise, the
customers cite the authentic atmosphere as a reason for coming into the
market halls, despite the fact that it might appear more rational from an
economic and a time point of view to shop in a supermarket. Authenticity
is translated into quality, and associated with the market hall.

It is quite common to find people from the restaurant business who
choose the market hall because to them it offers much better working
hours. One of the vendors explains that this is really good, since he gets
to see his family much more now. It is like working in the restaurant busi-
ness without the late nights. If you are used to being a chef, you never have
to confront the customers. It is a bit different when you stand in the store
and sell things. He likes it though.19 Another former chef says that he has
become much nicer customer now that he does not work late hours any
more. Before, if there was even the slightest problem, he would send back
his food. Now he thinks, hey, give the chef a break. This is still OK food.
He really enjoys working in the market hall. The salary is good, the co-
workers are great, and the working hours are comfortable. “The working
jargon is fun too, it’s a really excellent place to work!”20 When the hard

17. Author’s fieldnotes, Söderhallarna market hall, Saturday, April 22, 2006.
18. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Tuesday, March 21, 2006.
19. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Tuesday, April 11, 2006.
20. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Tuesday, April 11, 2006.
work of the restaurant trade is compared to the market hall working conditions, the trade off seems to be in favor of the market hall.

The market hall lifestyle

The market hall lifestyle is sometimes described by vendors and customers alike as happy food commerce. The liveliness, the buzz, the scents, the visual impressions contribute to this image, and it is reinforced by the market hall lore propagated by journalists. This description of the market hall lifestyle resembles descriptions of restaurants and the working cultures there. There are many other similarities between the restaurant world and the market hall world. A restaurant is also a combination of production and service of a perishable commodity, food, and this makes coordination of service and production crucial. There is often friction between the waiting staff providing the service and the kitchen staff providing the production/food, but the working conditions also seem to offer something intangible that make people stay and enjoy their work despite the strenuous effort required.

As an example, a study of a particular restaurant in the UK showed how the working conditions were poor, with extremely long hours and lack of flexibility. Yet there was no resentment among the staff, despite the obvious wealth of the owner. In addition, there was no unionization and little turnover of staff. The success seemed to lie in presenting work more as a way of life: working was not perceived as work, but rather work and leisure melted together. The staff spent much of their free time at the restaurant. Their friends and relatives came by, and the staff was encouraged to spend time with them if there were slack times. Punctuality was not so important, and staff was given freedom to organize their own routines for work. Where the service provided is leisure, this way of mixing work and leisure may be quite common.21

This mixing of work and leisure partly applies to the market hall as well, and may explain some of the enthusiasm of the staff. Presenting work as a way of life should not be considered as a simple exploitation device. Embracing work as a lifestyle actually provides gratifications and rewards for the staff. When discussing their working life, the vendors display a very reflexive stance. They know that what they engage in. Accordingly, there is a certain complicity between vendors and customers

that they are performing a market hall sociality. But the interactions still provide a sense of pride and pleasure over a work well-done.

The air and personality of the staff contribute to creating a stage with a gallery of characters that builds credibility in the market hall. The staff in one of the stores in Östermalm market hall demonstrates this most clearly. Several of the male vendors have tattoos, shaved heads, and a rough look about them, like the stereotype of old-school sailors and dock workers. They sell fish and wild game. This may not be intentional, but it still adds to the air of the store. We can see the casting of the staff as a form of play with the eccentric. This in turn can be linked to the discussions on the experience economy. To be a market hall vendor has a lot to do with defining oneself as a person with discriminating taste, and knowledge. To work in a market hall is a question of showmanship, as well as craftsmanship. To refer to yourself as a being a barista rather than just selling coffee, is a way of displaying your professional skill. To give the customers a good show is closer to the ideals of the experience economy, that is, to give the customer more than just the product.

The job is not always seen as a lifestyle, as sometimes it may also be a part-time job on the side. Even so, many of the part-timers still take pride in being good at what they do, at showing craftsmanship. There are exceptions to the desire to display knowledge and skill: those to whom it is “just a job” and no different from other jobs. Work is sometimes described as toil. The part-timers more often than the owners or full-timers speak negatively about the routine: standard interactions, standard phrases, monotony, and boredom. But the full-timers also talk about the effect of routine, and how sometimes the sense of aesthetics works more as a reflex, where you simply rely on habit and “the knowledge of the hand”. To reinvent yourself and take the time to consciously create something new demands more energy, but can be an essential antidote to the effects of routine.

The relationships between co-workers, and between owners and employees, are not always free from friction. When I ask one of the vendors about feedback, he bitterly complains about not receiving praise and acknowledgement for his hard work: “The boss never says anything unless he has something to complain about. He never encourages us. It’s

23. Author’s fieldnotes, Söderhallarna market hall, Tuesday, November 22, 2005.
so unfair when all hear is how unhappy the customers are. And let me
tell you, not everyone here is good at giving advice. I won’t mention any
names, but it was somebody else who made a mistake and the boss told
me off.”

There are some silly comments that customers repeat several times a
day. The vendors still smile politely at these jokes which recur frequently,
such as: “Are the greens green today?” But the vendors do not always
endure this simply by smiling. Sometimes they joke back: “I love joking
around with children about the rabbits. We tell them they are rabbits we
found in the ads for free. Sometimes we say they are cats. It’s so funny.
The kids never know what to think. They see the little bits of fur and get
all worked up. I mean, hey, what do they think meat is anyway? That it
grows in bushes?” This can be interpreted as a way of letting off steam,
and by directing that ire towards those who are perceived to be lower in
the social hierarchy, like children, it could be said that the vendors mini-
mize the risk of affronting the real customers. The same types of jokes
can be extended to consumers who are not real customers, like the pre-
school teachers coming in with children to look at the food. “I love when
he does that, tell the kids they can play with the fish if they want to! You
should see the looks on the preschool teachers’ faces!”

The vendors talk amongst themselves sometimes and complain about
stupid customers. Vendors from two different stores exchange complaints
about customers coming to fish restaurants to have wild game or chicken:
“why even bother?” This helps the vendors to keep a professional attitude
towards the customers who can be very exacting at times. The vendors
vent frustration over the stupid questions they get: why do people ask
for fresh prawns on Mondays? “Of course there are no fresh prawns on
Mondays. It’s not like the fishermen work on Sundays!” Other vendors
complain about customers who expect them to stock every possible sau-
sage in the world, even when there are only one or two buyers. “How could
they? It’s impossible!” Another source of irritation is customers asking
for foodstuffs that are out of stock, and refusing to take no for an answer.
“It is not as if I’m hiding things! I would sell if I could and it comes again
on Friday. Why don’t they listen?”

24. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Thursday, December 29,
2005.
25. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Friday, April 21, 2006.
27. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Tuesday, November 22,
2005.
28. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Tuesday, February 21, 2006.
29. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorg market hall, Monday, March 6, 2006.
It could also be complaints about customers who refuse to buy from anyone but their favorite. It is Wednesday of the Easter week. As the afternoon draws to a close, people are lining up to buy lamb for Easter. A lady in her later sixties is waiting to be served by the owner. She is quite adamant that no one else will do. The owner takes his time saying goodbye to the customers he is serving before turning to serve the lady, who is pleased once she has his attention. She wants to buy baby lamb and this matter needs to be discussed with the owner. How should she prepare it? Which one should she choose? Later on I ask the owner about this, and he is not very pleased. “The customers should be able to buy from anyone and not have favorites like that.”

It is a slow Monday morning in Söderhallarna. A few customers stroll around among the stores. The staff is mostly engaged in preparing for the lunch guests who will start arriving in about an hour. A father and his daughter are walking around looking at the goods in the counters. The little girl wants to know what the ox tail is. The father explains in a hushed tone. It is as if the entire market hall is wrapped up in cotton-wool. The usual sounds and scents are less apparent. This is time at its slowest, a tedious, grey monotony. Mondays are slow days, once the tidying up after the weekend, and the deliveries have been taken care of. Tuesdays and Wednesdays can be even slower at times. This is also part of working in a market hall: to know what to do with yourself if the pace is slow.

On one of these slow afternoons I hang around one of the vendors until closing time. The vendor cuts up meat. From time to time, he goes to the storage rooms to get things. He also rearranges the various boxes in the refrigerated counters, and looks at invoices and order forms. The movements are erratic. He slams the doors. He complains about how tedious it can be at times to just be here when you want to be somewhere else. Sometimes you just feel worn out. The customers are very demanding this particular afternoon. It is as if they sense that he is not quite his usual self, and they become even more exacting than normal.

The slow times can lead to worries. One of the vendors complains to me that it is always slow on Mondays. I order new things, fill up after the weekend, and plan ahead. But I worry. The weekends are not enough. I speak with another vendor who also complains about the slow times. “I

30. Author’s fieldnotes, Söderhallarna market hall, Wednesday, April 12, 2006.
32. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Tuesday, February 21, 2006.
33. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Monday, March 6, 2006.
worry about my family. I never see them, I just spend my days here, waiting for customers who never show up. The authorities keep coming with new rules and regulations. There are so many bills to pay. Taxes to pay. Rents to pay. Always something to pay. My body just aches from standing on these hard stone floors all day, carrying heavy loads, and doing heavy work. I have cramps and my joints ache and my feet hurt. The days are too long and I have too much responsibility. I wish I could change my life. The tedious slow times and the hard work are contrasted with the time spent at home.

How the slow times are interpreted to some extent depends on the season and the weather. Spring has definitely come to Stockholm, and most people are outside enjoying the sun. It is already the beginning of May, and the market halls are unusually quiet and sleepy. “Oh, the customers? They are out in the sun, eating ice cream and on the weekends they go to their summer houses. We won’t see them here until midsummer. Unless they need some catering or meat for their barbecues.” I notice a couple of boxes filled with catering food that are about to get picked up for delivery. There are a few stray customers who buy ready-mades, but most seem anxious to get out into the sun again.

**Competition, cooperation, and conflict**

There are numerous arenas where the vendors need to cooperate. It is not only about the daily work of finding the right kind of routines in order to make sure that every one’s needs are met, it is also about shared space. Since all the vendors work so close to one another, part of the cooperation is about the common front, in other words, the common trademark of the market hall. This common trademark can be interpreted on metaphorical terms. It is the Market Hall as a general idea, as a special form of work, compared to big retailing chains. Trademark in this sense is both about how you interact with customers and about the quality of your products. Since what they are selling is actually both a product and a service, the value is quite intangible.

Cooperation can take all sorts of forms. It might be that you share experience related to how to redecorate your store. “This is the supplier I have used when I renovated my store. Here is the information he gave me. Do you want to have a look? I think it is much roomier now.”

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34. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Tuesday, March 21, 2006.
37. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Tuesday February 7, 2006.
an interview with one of the administrators, who has experience from all three market halls, he explains that the vendors in Hötorget market hall are much more prone to cooperation than the other vendors in the other market halls. He feels this is probably because there are more small-scale entrepreneurs there who need to co-operate to overcome some of the costs.38

Sometimes vendors share the cost of buying something jointly. There are also some cases of internal deliveries within the market hall, where vendors deliver to their fellow vendors. This may lead to conflict over how the costs should be divided, or when internal invoices need to be paid. Quarrels over space are other potential sources of conflict. Vendors sometimes have to share kitchen and storage space. This can lead to conflict when all vendors have need for the same space at the same time. This is particularly salient around Christmas when everyone needs to prepare for the best sales season of the year. Sometimes the vendors go to the market hall administration with their complaints. The staff members at the market halls do not wish to interfere too much, but one of them told me how they have to go in at times and suggest solutions on a very detailed level.

“There are always complaints about the other vendors”, the administrator tells me. Common examples are “that they don’t clean properly, that they use too much of the common space in the aisles for private uses. This clutters the space for the customers and then they all suffer from it”, he continues.39 When everyone has more to prepare and everyone needs to use the kitchens at the same time, the time schedules become more rigid, and there is less room to improvise if there are customers who have special requests.

It is Tuesday of the Easter week, and all the vendors are preparing herring in various ways. The entire kitchen is filled to the brim with herring, and one of the vendors needs to mince fish for fish quenelles for a regular customer. “I wish I hadn’t spoiled them so much, now they all want their minced fish. And they all want it this week. Of course, it's traditional for some people to have fish quenelles for Easter, but it is inconvenient right now.” The vendor removes the herrings to have more space to mince the fish for the quenelles, quickly rinses the mincing machine, and returns up to the waiting customer with the minced fish. This interruption only caused minor irritation and the steady work pace is soon resumed. The cook who was busy with the herrings carries on with his work. There are other parallel activities going on, and the cook prepares salmon dishes: “Salmon is great for Easter” he explains to me. The vendors take turns at

38. Interview, October 16, 2006.
the cooker as well. They all prepare fillets of herring stuffed with parsley and dill. “Everyone wants this for Easter, you know.” The vendors from the neighboring store have just finished with the steamer. When the cook who has been preparing herring wants to use the steamer, there is something wrong with the thermostat. The temperature keeps jumping up and down instead of increasing at a steady pace. The vendors all get worried and look at the steamer. To keep the worries on a manageable level they start joking about having to pay another 100,000 SEK, and how they really look forward to this, as they are all virtually swimming in money and don’t know what to do with it.40

Conflicts over cleaning, utensils, or products going amiss also occur. One of the vendors jokingly accuses another for being a kleptomaniac, and pretends to guard his own goods, while calling out that the other should keep his dirty hands to himself. It is all done in a joking tone, but the vendor who is accused does not respond. Instead he looks annoyed.41 These stories reach the Market hall administration as well. One of the administrators gives an example: “You can’t go running beet roots in the shared potato peeling machine and not clean properly, because then the next guy who comes along to peel potatoes will get red color on his potatoes. Of course that creates tension. Usually they work it out by themselves by yelling a bit, but sometimes we have to help them solve the conflict.”42 Some of the paternalistic heritage of the earlier eras are reflected here. The City as landlord takes responsibility in a more far-reaching manner than a typical private property owner would.

Other vendors’ pricing policies are also a sensitive matter. There are always rumors about profits, and sometimes accusations of shady dealings and black money. The accusations of black money and shady dealings were extremely rare when the vendors talked to me, and if they occurred, they mostly referred to one of the other market halls, not their own. When it comes to tales of non-ideal behavior, most of the vendors I have talked to seem to find it easier to talk of the past. In the past people were drinking too much here in the market halls. In the past, you could always find ways of getting around the ration book for wine and spirits in the market hall.43 In the past, people were not so particular about hygiene. The market hall administrators confirm this picture of the market

40. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Tuesday, April 11, 2006.
41. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Wednesday, February 22, 2006.
42. Interview, October 13, 2006.
43. In Sweden, there was a system of ration books for wine and spirits from 1914 to 1955.
hall. Most problems are referred to in the past, and most vendors are said to be honest nowadays. This is a way of handling the problematic issues of gossip and slander. If you refer to it as being in the past, it becomes less flagrant of a problem. It is also a way of contrasting yourself with the past in order to tell the story of your own success today. In this sense, it tells us more about how people manage their present self image.

To be part of a larger business group has advantages, in gaining greater economic strength and the possibility to profit from coordination. This too can be viewed with a suspicious eye, by the other vendors. Perhaps their profits and their solidity is not as good as it appears? To sell outside of the market hall world, is that not a sign of selling out? This kind of gossip is more implied than outspoken, even if explicit accusations are sometimes made as well. Customers indulge in this behavior when they reflect on the development of the market hall. Vendors are very careful when they gossip, and prefer to say good things about their competitors, such as who is good at their job and why. The criticism comes more indirectly, or in passing. The gossip and the suspicions can be countered by displaying knowledge or by building credibility in other ways. The Melander Group, for example, owns the renowned restaurant “Wedholms fisk”, and has managed to maintain the star attributed to it from the Guide Michelin, which in itself is a cachet of gastronomic capital.

The loss of tradition?

The most recurrent theme when vendors discuss the loss of tradition is a general lamentation of the shallowness and superficiality of our times vs. the golden age of former days. The disrespect of tradition, lack of application and skill, are lamented. First class primary produce and cooking skills are no longer what they once were.44 Vendors frequently speak of new eating habits as a reason for the loss of tradition. This perceived loss of tradition is usually explained by a general squeeze on time in present day Swedish society. How are people ever to have time to do any cooking with all the chores they have to do? People work full-time, they have children, and they redecorate their homes all the time. Of course there is no time left for cooking.45 Besides, there is a remarkable loss of skill when it comes to cooking. Several vendors say that we have lost at least two generations who are hopeless at cooking.

44. These lamentations are not confined to the market hall context of course. See for example Vleissis, A., Kitchen literacy.
45. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Monday, November 7, 2005.
The renewed interest in cooking and cooking shows, as well as in cookbooks and gastronomic press is sometimes interpreted as a hopeful sign. Many say that the thirty-somethings age group is actually showing a lot of interest. They might still become true gastronomes. The cookbooks are interpreted as signs of a growing interest in food. The vendors also retell stories of young people coming in to buy small pieces of quality food with their pocket money, as if to reassure themselves that there will be new customers in the future. This is a form of incantation against bad business luck. The affluent thirty-somethings are considered desirable customers. However, one vendor describes them as fickle: “They don’t prioritize good quality food. They buy things instead. What do they want with their things? What good are their kitchens and tableware if they don’t buy food?”46 The frustrations expressed by the vendors reveal the vulnerable position of any small-scale entrepreneur. If only they could determine what the consumer wanted, if only there were guarantees the consumer would always come back and spend a fair share in the market hall. To predict and orchestrate demand, that would be an art worth mastering.

Vendors compete with goods and services of all kinds. It is not only food which can help the customers realize their identity project: furniture, clothing, and travel all compete for the luxury spending capacity. The travel people make are also seen as a threat to tradition. “People come home and they just want foreign food all the time,” one of the vendors complains. “On the other hand, this is good because they ask for new products”, he continues. Still, the loss of tradition is lamented. Here tradition and traditional Swedish food such as boiled ling or fermented herring are presented as ideals in their own right. Immigration is mentioned as a reason for the disappearance of tradition. This is a sensitive subject, and the vendor corrects himself immediately after saying this, and stresses that immigration also creates traditions, and that immigrants are usually much better cooks than Swedes.47

Tradition and change are constantly reenacted and renegotiated. In one of the stores that prides itself in working in a very traditional way, the owner and the chef discuss changes. The owner wants to turn a storage room into a kitchen, but the chef thinks it will be too small and claustrophobic. The owner also wants to rationalize some of the cooking processes. The chef is decidedly against. It will not do. The owner can do that after the chef has retired. He refuses to do any rationalizations. It is a question of professional integrity. A chef does his work and takes respon-

46. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Tuesday, February 22, 2006.
47. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorg market hall, Monday, November 7, 2005.
sibility for the entire process. The owner laughs and says that this is why he pays his chef so well. He has professional integrity. When the owner leaves, I stay and talk to the chef. He adjusts some of the boxes with ready made dishes. This is better he explains; “Now they look like bouquets.” We talk about cooking. “To me it is more like a routine nowadays. I know what to do and I don’t think about it so much. But I guess routine comes with experience.” He then explains how he was trained in one of the prestigious hotel and restaurant schools in Switzerland, and how they truly put a focus on craftsmanship. Craftsmanship is important.48

The interaction between the chef and the owner of the store reflects a resistance to the attempts at rationalizing a profession, which echoes earlier developments in the retail sector. In the interwar period, the era of counter service stores and an expanding retail sector, a lot of energy was invested in raising the status of the vendors and clerks, and turning this into a true profession. With the subsequent rationalizations, an increasing and loss of skills and status transformed the proud counter service store culture into a streamlined, standardized consumption machine, where the vendors and clerks were reduced to small cogs in the big wheel of retailing. The resistance of the chef to the standardization and rationalization efforts of the owner can thus be interpreted as an attempt to safeguard a sense of craftsmanship and professional integrity.

But there is another side to the tales of the mythical past concerning the less glorious aspects: the hardships, the class differences and hierarchies, the formal address, the number of stores, the harsh competition, the nature of the assortment, the hygienic problems, and the long hours. These are not the stories we wish to be told when nostalgia makes us dream of a more authentic past where quality - true quality - reigned supreme.

**The importance of knowledge and contacts**

One way of looking at the relationships in the market hall is by seeing who is recommending who in the market hall. If a customer asks for something that you do not sell, then who do you recommend? Just like in Clif-ford Geertz’s description of the bazaar economy, knowledge and contacts are valuable assets in the market hall, both for customers and for vendors. One way of obtaining information in the market is through clientelization. Clientelization in Geertz’s description of the bazaar economy is “a resilient pattern of informal personal connections” based on reciprocity. What Geertz points to is how there never was a sharp break, instead the

48. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Tuesday, February 21, 2006.
tradition from the bazaar continued during the firm economy. They co-existed side by side.49

The participants in the bazaar economy, much like the regular customers in the market hall, know the etiquette of interaction, and feel at home in the bazaar. The clientelization makes the uncertainties of the bazaar setting operable. In a way, the regular customers and the vendors in the market hall establish relationships of trust and obligation similar to the personal connections of clientelization. Some of the regular customers assume that they would never be deceived. But other customers are deceived either because they “do not know quality” or because they are not regular customers and they may thus not expect the same kind of preferential treatment the regular customers receive.50

The non-standardized character of the assortment in the market hall may also entail suspicions and anxieties. When the assortment is not uniform or standardized, there must be variations in quality, and the idea of supreme quality implies that there are also sub-quality items. It also entails the idea of preferential treatment, since the best quality may be reserved for certain people. This way of thinking about food and food retail echoes the consumption patterns of the old pre-industrial urban food retail of the counter service store era. In those days, finding your special grocer, butcher, etc, and remaining loyal to them was one way of navigating the uncertainties of a non-standardized, non-regulated food market. Thereby one would hopefully get good quality food, and get neither cheated nor poisoned.51 Of course, the market halls of today are far from the counter service stores of the early 1900s. They are as heavily regulated as the rest of the food trade, but the perception of extraordinary quality and of authenticity in production methods still inspire a different kind of trust.

We find the same kind of reasoning among the vendors vis-à-vis their suppliers. One of the vendors explains to me that it is important to have contacts. That is the key to getting hold of the best quality products. It is important as well that you have experience and the professional know-how. Food is a sensitive product; you need to handle it with care. If there has been some mishandling, the food will go bad, but then you just send it straight back, the vendor explains to me. Here we really know quality,

50. Interview, September 9, 2005.
51. See for example, French, M. & Phillips J., Cheated not poisoned?
so there is never any problem for us. We know how to handle the food and if you do, then you can keep the customer happy. Some people don’t like fish because they are afraid of bones, but we can fix that! If you buy a fillet of fish from us, I can guarantee you that there will be no bones. This is a way to handle the uncertainties of running your own company in an unpredictable world. It is also a way to present yourself as a knowledgeable professional who can discriminate the good from the bad, and who offers high quality to the customers.

By finding the small, special suppliers and the small-scale special products, vendors strive for uniqueness and authenticity. By having the right selection of products and brands, they also display knowledge and taste. One of the fish vendors explains to me that he always looks for small-scale purveyors. He likes and respects good, genuine craftsmanship. “Look at this can of fermented herring!” he says enthusiastically. “I found this in a small fishing village, done by a man who makes his own fermented herring, just the way they used to make it in the old days. He has one of these old tinning machines. Absolutely wonderful!”

As we speak, a fisherman from the north of Sweden comes by and asks if the vendor has any cases for crabs. “Oh, lobster cases? No, I just have the salmon cases (he points to a flimsy Styrofoam box) and the plastic bags, you know, for fish. You can have as many as you like of those.” The vendor and the fisherman discuss a delivery: the vendor wants the delivery on a Monday (when they usually don’t get any other deliveries). The fisherman is uncertain and prefers to give an answer later on. The interaction is characteristic of the kind of small-scale interactions outside the main distribution circuit that the vendor celebrates as a way of maintaining a more authentic set of purveyors. It is also a way to circumvent the drawbacks of the standard distribution networks, by asking for deliveries outside the standard times.

One of the vendors in Östermalm market hall talks to me about the special farmers who produce the most marvelous poultry: Bjärekyckling. The two brothers who run this company have put in an amazing amount of work into producing poultry of prime quality. In fact, the vendor thinks the poultry from Bjäre is much better quality than the French Bresse chickens. The Bresse chicken is delicious of course, but the price is way too high in comparison to the quality you get. This vendor is exhibiting the same celebration of small-scale purveyors as his colleague.

52. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Monday, November 7, 2005.
53. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Monday, November 7, 2005.
54. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, November 7, 2005.
55. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Friday, October 21, 2005.
sense of authenticity is heightened by his personal acquaintance with the producers.

Sometimes the quest for uniqueness and authenticity involves cooperating with competitors, both for getting the right kind of commodities through each other’s contacts and also to find inspiration from what the competitors do. On a Tuesday afternoon I talk to one of the owners of the cheese store in Söderhallarna. A colleague in the cheese trade, who happens to be in Stockholm, pops in to have a chat and look at her store. She happily shows him the store and I am invited to come along. Together they look at the setup and the display of the goods, and discuss the various small suppliers they use: “Oh, you use them, so do we. We are trying this now. Yes, this is a really good way of displaying the goods, it sells itself this way.”

They exchange news about common acquaintances in the cheese world, and talk about what they think about the market. They explain to me that there are informal networks of suppliers and importers, at least in the cheese trade. He says that the competition in his town is ferocious. She thinks the competition is just inspiring. They both talk about how there is room for the small suppliers today. People are looking for the genuine, the authentic, and therefore the small-scale suppliers have appeal. Besides, these days even young people have an interest in food. There are seventeen year olds who buy small pieces of cheese rather than large pieces of cheaper cheese, they explain to me.

I find exactly that same example of seventeen year olds who buy small exclusive pieces of cheese in an article by the foodie and food writer Lisa Förare-Winbladh. She cites a cheese importer that the vendors in the market halls use. It is part of the market hall lore, the stories vendors tell themselves and their customers to create a sense of community and reassurance. It is almost like an incantation for the reproduction of a community of gastronomes who will constitute the basis of the market hall consumers, now and in the future.

The genuine, authentic, and traditional skills are valued as a sign of true knowledge. This also works as a way of maintaining sociability and a sense of community among the vendors themselves. This can be interpreted as a way of managing the unpredictability of small business in the market hall economy. If we borrow the notion of the Bazaar economy from Geertz again, this can be seen as a situation where bonds hold people together and reassure them in their hunt for intangible values such as quality and authenticity. It also suggests the production of community.

56. Author’s fieldnotes, Söderhallarna market hall, Tuesday, November 22, 2005.
By creating and maintaining bonds of friendship and trust, the vendors manage both their knowledge and their contacts. Some vendors go hunting together with their suppliers or the customers. A vendor may also become a supplier later on in life, or a supplier can come and work as a vendor. As in many other professions, the lines between friendship and business relationships are renegotiated and blurred by the long-term character of many relationships. As seen in the chapter on customers, one way of maintaining relationships is for vendors to save products for special customers. The bonds of friendship and trust are sometimes confirmed by praise and gifts from customers: “You know when they appreciate what you do. They come in and tell you so, sometimes they also give you gifts or flowers”. This vendor actually means that working in the market hall may open up for a career in a different field as well: once you have gotten to know customers, they can help you elsewhere as well. Again, if we interpret this from the perspective of the Bazaar economy and clientelization, we see how the roles keep reversing. Who is the patron and who is the client changes over time.

**Building credibility**

The right kind of business is run by the right kind of business person. The right kind of person might be is open to definition. On an individual level, it is certainly an asset to have experience in market hall work. Selling in the open air market is another possible asset, but then you need to conform to the climate inside the market hall, with its more sophisticated business practices (no yelling after the customers is the most crucial rule). To have experience from the restaurant business is yet another suitable background, as is coming from the conventional retail trade, or better still, from one of the small specialty stores outside the market hall.

To recount a long history about the market hall, both individually and as a store, is usually a way to obtain respect. But inheriting and managing tradition is difficult. The bigger companies that are more like business groups (such as Melanders and Elmqvists) have a more formal structure than the smaller businesses, whether they are family run or not. This creates certain envy, and also gives rise to criticism. They are not run the way you ‘should’ run a shop in a market hall. They have lost that sense of personal service so particular to the market hall, that comes with the staff working long hours and taking personal care of the customers. If a customer calls in the morning, the same person should be there to serve

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57. Interview, January 9, 2006.
58. Interview, January 9, 2006.
them when they come and pick things up at six o’clock. It is not possible to work normal hours on a schedule and give “proper”, personal service.\textsuperscript{59} Here small size and personal service are inextricably linked.

One of the vendors explains to me that the neighboring vendors are relics from the past. They never take up anything new. At the same time, he is anxious to present himself as someone who does things the way things should be done: in a traditional way, from scratch. Lots of the other vendors do not. But those people are good. They do things the right way. Of course, they slightly overdo it - you don’t have to do everything yourself. That other vendor, he really didn’t know how you do things here. No respect for other people. Just using and abusing everyone. And the things he sells. It is the worst quality.\textsuperscript{60} The comparisons and the definitions of who is good and who is not are part of an ongoing setting of boundaries.

Vendors in the different market halls are very curious about what is going on in the other market halls. They ask about the number of people, how business seems in the other halls. So how was it around Christmas? Easter? Was it busy?\textsuperscript{61} One of the vendors compares two of the market halls where she works. There are advantages with both. Hötorget market hall is older and more established. It has a warmer climate, and the vendors cooperate much more. Söderhallarna is good because it has daylight and more space. However, it will still take some time before it establishes the same climate as Hötorget market hall.\textsuperscript{62} I discuss trademark and building up your trademark with one of the vendors. He defines the three fish vendors in Hötorget market hall: they all have different qualities. One is a classical, traditional store. One is minimalist and trendy. The other is more for the common man. I ask him to explain what this means, but this turns out to be an impossible task.\textsuperscript{63} This is hardly surprising, it is a tricky business to define who the common man is, especially in a setting that celebrates distinction, but needs to attract a wider clientele.

To compare the market hall and the big food retailers is one way of defining who you are. One of the vendors explains to me that he visited the new manual meat counter in a big retailing chain. “They made all sorts of ads for their new manual meat counter, you know, so I had to check it out. But it was pathetic. Just a few pieces of meat and a messy deli

\textsuperscript{59} Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Tuesday, February 21, 2006.
\textsuperscript{60} Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Tuesday, February 21, 2006.
\textsuperscript{61} Author’s fieldnotes, Söderhallarna market hall, Wednesday, April 19, 2006.
\textsuperscript{62} Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Thursday, April 20, 2006.
\textsuperscript{63} Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Tuesday, April 11, 2006.
counter. No sense of style and craftsmanship.” To compare yourself to the large retailers and the food industry is a recurrent theme among the vendors when they explain who they are. One of the vendors takes me for a grand tour. He shows me the storage rooms, the cold storage rooms, and the kitchens. Here we do everything the right way, he explains to me. Not like in the factories. We do things the way things have always been done, the traditional way. This is all part of the market hall lore and the ongoing definition of quality.

The level of personal services is also pointed to as a difference between the large retailer chains and the market halls. A vendor is discussing service with a customer. “Well, all vendors are different. There are those who care. And those who don’t.” He shrugs his shoulders and gives the customer a look of mutual understanding. “In the market halls you meet those who really, truly care. You might come across them in ordinary stores as well, but it is much more unusual.” The customer nods in happy agreement, “yes, that is true!” That the level of personal service is higher is attributed to the nature of the market hall. In the market hall everything is supposed to revolve around personal relationships. “Personal relationships! That’s what this is all about. It’s not like the big retailing chains. Here you actually build a relationship with the customers. It is so much more rewarding. The customers know much more about food and cooking and they give you something back.” The vendor expresses a sense of authenticity and community that may explain why working in a market hall can be so rewarding despite the hard work.

Considering how the big retailing chains are used as counter-examples of what the market hall stands for, it might seem surprising that so many of the vendors have a background in the big retailing chains. If we listen to the stories the vendors themselves tell about who they are, and their background, we will find that when they have a background in the big retailing chains they are careful to point out that they always desired something more. One vendor explains that what he really liked about his store in a big retailing chain was the manual counter.

Another vendor who has a background in a big retailing chain put a lot of effort into explaining to me the vast differences in quality between

64. Author’s fieldnotes, Söderhallarna market hall, Wednesday, April 19, 2006.
the food in the market hall and the food sold in the big retailing chains.\textsuperscript{69} One of the vendors speaks of his boss, who has a background in the retailing chains, and he is eager to point out that this man is very competent, that he has an acute sense of quality, and besides, he started out here in the market hall ten years ago.\textsuperscript{70} This way the credibility of the vendor is re-established and the background in the big retailing chains is reconciled with the identity in the market hall, with the market hall coming out as the winner.

There are several possible ways to achieve the credibility of being a quality store and a knowledgeable vendor. A knowledgeable vendor knows that the origin of foods has a value. For example, one vendor can assure a customer who asks where the eel is from. “The eel comes from Dalarö.Caught and smoked right on Dalarö.” The customer is happy about the information and feels that he is really getting the “real stuff”.\textsuperscript{71} This in itself is not enough. The vendor who is to be able to answer questions and discuss techniques with the customers, gains credibility: How do the vendors prepare the food? What kind of tools do they, the customers, need in the kitchen? Do the vendors use special cutting boards? If so, which ones? And what about the knives? Which ones do the vendors recommend?\textsuperscript{72}

A legitimate vendor is able to advise customers on the aesthetic aspects of gastronomy as well, as when they suggest venison fillet with sugar snaps and rowanberries, and speak about how this creates a beautiful and delicious combination that will please the palate and the eyes of the dinner guests.\textsuperscript{73} These exchanges of questions and answers reassure the customers that they are speaking with an expert. But talk needs to be backed by actual, demonstrable craftsmanship and knowledge in the hand. A good vendor knows how to debone chickens quickly, or how to cut up meat nicely. It is a very practical form of knowledge, coupled with the ability to talk about what you do.\textsuperscript{74} Again we see how knowledge and expertise are at work. There is a different interpretation of rationality from the big conventional self-service stores. It of course speaks of a different interpretation of quality as well.

\textsuperscript{69} Interview, January 9, 2006.
\textsuperscript{70} Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Tuesday, March 21, 2006.
\textsuperscript{71} Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Friday, December 23, 2005.
\textsuperscript{72} Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Wednesday, December 28, 2005.
\textsuperscript{73} Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Thursday, December 29, 2005.
\textsuperscript{74} Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Thursday, December 29, 2005.
One of the hallmarks of a good vendor is the ability to read the customer, to know the codes in the market hall. This prevents the recruitment of immigrants in Östermalm market hall, according to one vendor. One example of this sense of reading the customer is about changing from the familiar you in Swedish to the polite you, if you sense that the customer demands it. The good salesman is able to sense how the customer wants to be treated. One of the vendors in Hötorget market hall and his interactions with two elderly ladies may serve as an example of how to read the customer. He addresses them as “my ladies”, smiles a lot and makes all sorts of jokes. One of the ladies wants to buy a pâté for a gentleman friend. He is very particular you see, she explains to the vendor. The other lady looks at a salami sausage and comments that it is truly divine (this particular salami happens to have a sign next to it where the former owner claims: “So divine it brings tears to your eyes”). The vendor smiles appreciatively and says “yes, that’s true. Do the ladies want some salami?” The price is quite prohibitive, SEK 400 per kilo, so he suggests that they buy half the amount of salami, or just 100 grams. He offers them samples, and after tasting they both sigh with delight. Then they turn to the serious matter of the right pâté. The vendor thinks that a Halmstad pâté will be just perfect. It is the best pâté, if the gentleman is a gourmet. This is what he would want. She ends up buying a slightly bigger piece of pâté than she intended to, and half the salami. You are so charming here! And you know so much! No wonder I always end up buying more than I planned! But it is a treat. Thank you!”

As the market hall celebrates the older ideals of counter service, this can be seen as a reconnection with the older traditions. During the interwar period, trade journals actively sought to establish a good store culture. The trade journals offered advice on how to become a good vendor, there were educational films on how to behave in the store, and the trade associations arranged courses in sales techniques and good manners. We can see this as an attempt to install a sense of profession for the men and women of the retail trade. When the self-service stores first appeared, the advice on how to act in the new setting abounded. The preferred styles of interaction changed, as did the demands on the staff of the new supermarkets. Working in a supermarket was transformed into something anyone could do without much training or commitment.

75. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Wednesday, November 23, 2005
76. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Tuesday, February 21, 2006.
77. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Tuesday, March 21, 2006.
78. Kvist, E., Stormarknadens nya maktordningar.
To bring your best self to work is not only a management fad in the market halls. In any case, the vendors do put up a good show. Even when it is late and after closing time, I see one of the vendors selling things, smilingly, jokingly. He calls women “my ladies” or says “hello girls” to women in their fifties. He addresses men as “monsieur” or asks men in their sixties “what can I do for you, young man”. The customers lighten up and smile a lot to him. His addresses also open up for chit chat in a friendly manner. I talked to the vendor before the last wave of customers came along, and he was extremely tired this day. None of this he shows to the customers, who leave his store with filled bags and smiles on their faces.79

It is important to be ‘strong’ and have an ‘iron constitution.’ Illness is interpreted as a sign of weakness, and it is important to point out that you are never ill. A worn out knee however is considered a sign of hard work and is a legitimate reason for being out of work – at least for the first days after the operation.80 When I worry about the ergonomics of working in the basement storage room, carrying heavy cases full of frozen meat, the vendor just smiles and explain that it is no problem. He is strong.81

When I interview a former vendor who started working in the market halls in the 1950s, and who still continues to come in and “help out” sometimes, he talks about other vendors who worked well into their 80s “and there never was anything wrong with these people. They were never ill. Of course, their bodies were aching and their feet were worn out, but they continued to work. That’s the kind of people you don’t find any more.”82 To small entrepreneurs, serious illness and incapacity to work are incongruent with their chosen life-style. Incapacity to work over a longer period critically threatens the survival of the business itself. Accidents and over-work which causes health problems need to be kept at bay. When things do happen, it creates uneasiness: “is it really worth it all?”83 Then issues of ergonomics and harsh working conditions with long hours and hard stone floors take on a different meaning.

What we see here is rather a particular type of ethic. To be hard-working, honest, and willing to cooperate with the other vendors are esteemed qualities of the right kind of vendors. Depending on personal likings and

79. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Thursday, April 20, 2006.
80. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Hötorget market hall, Söderhallarna market hall, 2006.
81. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Tuesday, February 22, 2006.
82. Interview, October 19, 2006.
83. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Tuesday, February 7, 2006.
temporary business dealings, the feelings of mutual respect vary.\textsuperscript{84} The official version is always that all the vendors are good vendors. That applies unless the desire to reveal how much you know about the workings of the market hall turns the official version into a less rosy one. Defining yourself and others as a good businessperson and a good vendor is essential to building credibility in the eyes of the community of vendors. To gain the approval of your fellow vendors, you also need to gain the approval of the customers (albeit, not at the expense of your fellow vendors by engaging in illicit or disloyal trade practices).

The informal plays an important role in the market hall setting. In small businesses there is a tendency to recruit friends and family first. Some vendors speak about recruiting people when they are young, and then letting them work as apprentices. Most recruitment happens via personal contacts. You know some one who works in the market hall and you start off either by working extra or full time. One of the vendors explains that his older sister recruited him. She already works there and knows the owner.\textsuperscript{85}

The informal approach leaves room for discussions about what the work implies. The young man recruited by his older sister explains how the job has helped him enormously. He has become much more outgoing and cheerful. “You have to learn how to perform, how to talk to all sorts of people. There is no time for being shy, and instead you develop a professional self and then if you like this professional self, you can let it spill over to all your relationships.” There are the additional benefits of learning more about the trade itself. He really enjoys that too. The owner speaks more about the importance of taking responsibility. She is a big sister and has always taken a lot of responsibility. But of course it is important to learn to set up a façade of niceness and happiness, even if you are feeling sad and depressed. To say things just to be agreeable: “Perhaps you say that this is your favorite if the customer says it is theirs.” But most of all it is a question of working hard to succeed.\textsuperscript{86}

\textsuperscript{84} Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Tuesday, February 21, 2006.
\textsuperscript{85} Author’s fieldnotes, Söderhallarna market hall, Wednesday, April 19, 2006; Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Thursday, April 20, 2006.
\textsuperscript{86} Author’s fieldnotes, Söderhallarna market hall, Wednesday, April 19, 2006; Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Thursday, April 20, 2006. See also Hochschild, A. R., \textit{The managed heart}. 
Visual and spatial techniques

According to most vendors, attracting customers is a question of attracting the eye first. A sensual display of the food is essential. The vendors come early in the morning, and much attention and dedication is invested in the display of the foodstuffs. What fish looks good next to what other fish today? How much ice should you put in the counters? Where do you put the ready-cooked items? The glass of the counters is polished, and the order of the display is carefully checked before opening hours. This process continues during the day. On a Monday afternoon in March, the head chef comes up from the kitchen in the basement to discuss the sales as well as the displays with the vendor upstairs. Maybe they should rearrange the fish in horizontal lines rather than the vertical lines they have now? Perhaps put the fillet of fish like this, almost like a wall, and then put the whole fish around the fillets? They also plan how many lunches to prepare for tomorrow. They also discuss how to sell more of this particular dish, which is really delicious, but doesn’t look especially appetizing. What do they need to order? 

How do you get the fruits and vegetables to look appealing? One vendor says that they take care of their vegetables “like they were babies”. This is absolutely necessary, she explains, since the aesthetics are more important than the gustatory sensations to many of the customers. She then reiterates one of the most recurrent themes in the market halls: that you eat with your eyes, the primacy of the visual. I am allowed to come to the backroom to see how the vegetables rest in damp towels to keep moist and fresh. These towels are continually changed. The walnuts and hazelnuts are sold from large sacks of jute cloth with the name of the French grower imprinted on the side. All fruit and vegetable vendors take great care to display their goods in a harmonious and colorful way. One of them tells me that he has a background from the open air markets, “where you really learn how to display your goods or you simply go out of business. But it is much calmer in here and a much better climate for the fruit and vegetables.”

88. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Monday, March 6, 2006.
89. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Wednesday, November 23, 2005.
90. Author’s fieldnotes, Söderhallarna market hall, Wednesday, March 22, 2006.
Cheeses are uncovered and readjusted. Sometimes the entire cheese set up is altered to leave room for new arrivals, or to keep special cheeses for regular customers. It is important to find the right balance between cheeses of various sizes, shapes, and colors, in order to make the counter look tempting, and yet not encumbered or badly arranged. The customer has to be able to find the cheeses as well. Some of the cheeses have little signs. Sometimes there are suggestions written on black slate. Honeys and jams can be placed next to cheeses they accompany particularly well, all to suggest delicious combinations to the customers, and also to remind the vendors of additional sales opportunities.

The delicatessen counter transmits a feeling of abundance, with a mass of sausages and hams in different colors, shapes, and sizes. They are piled up in mountain-like formations, and the ends of the sausages and hams are carefully tended to in the morning to make sure they look appetizing. The meat has its own aesthetic, as do the fowl and game. Meat needs to look juicy and fresh. The right, bright red color can be achieved if you scrape the surface of the meat a little bit. The vendors need to find the right balance between big cuts of meat and portion sizes. An important consideration is which items look good next to one another. At one vendor, the lamb racks are arranged next to the lamb chops and a beautiful row of lamb sausage almost like a ladder next to a mountain of freshly minced lamb meat. The fillet of reindeer is next to the steaks, and the chicken wings are nicely piled up next to a neat row of chicken breasts and chicken breast fillets, all in various shades of light pinkish white or gold. The handling of the meat, fowl, and game, such as the cutting and trimming, are also part of the activities during the day. It works both as a way of performing necessary tasks, and also as a way of staying occupied so as to attract the customers: this store is busy so its foodstuffs must be fresh.

Most stores buy large pieces of meat and do the cutting themselves. This is part of the craftsmanship: doing things from scratch. If you can’t pluck a fowl, you are not truly cut out to work in a fowl and game store. In reality, the plucking of fowls and the flaying of game are mostly done outside the market hall nowadays, as the rules and regulations and the limited space prevent this. Perhaps also the aesthetic sensitivities of the customers are better kept away from the actual flaying, even if the rabbits are sold with tiny bits of fur at the bottom of the feet.

All of this can be interpreted as a way to manage the visual impressions and the spatial arrangements of the market hall stores. Of course, this applies to any commercial setting; they all have their special spatial constraints. The vendors adapt to the immediate surroundings. When the florist in Östermalm market hall was replaced by a Lebanese catering
and deli, the store next to it refurbished and opened up more towards the side where there would be more competition, i.e. towards the new Leba-
nese catering and deli. This way, the vendors could sell on this side as well, facing their competitor. The ready made dishes were also moved into this corner. The new store inspired the older established one into a renovation and a reinvention of its previous concept.91

The new fish vendor in Hötorget market hall had the same effect on the older, more established competitor. The new store had a complete make-over and went for pure expression, with elegant lighting and new ideas about how to display the food, with more space and more ice to make the fish stand out more. One of the owners in the old store comments on this as we chit chat about life in Hötorget market hall. “I think it is time to change the lighting fixtures here. Look at them (he points to the neighboring store), they have some fancy lights and it attracts the eye, doesn’t it?”92

This visual space management of the counter itself and of the entire store, as well as in relation to the neighboring stores, is an attempt to control how others, both customers and other vendors, perceive the work you do and the store you run. This is a kind of an advanced type of impression management, which takes other forms as well. The self-image of the store is often carefully managed. Newspaper clippings about the store are usually kept, and in the case of the smaller stores, displayed so that customers see them.93 One of the vendors has been interviewed by the radio. He explains to me that a customer who heard the show came all the way from Norrålje just to buy meat from him. “That’s good! Even if he does not come back every week, it is still good, right?”94 There is an article about one of the vendors in the largest morning paper, DN. The day after the article the store is full of people. It is hard to tell if it is due to the article or to the fact that it is Thursday of the Easter week.95

Many vendors seem simultaneously flattered by and blasé towards the attention they receive from the media. To receive media coverage might be an asset, but one is careful not to reveal too much. One never knows how it is going to be used. Some vendors are more positive than others to the media and to attention in general. Most often they patiently answer questions from the media, as well as from school children and older students,

91. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Tuesday, February 21, 2006.
92. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Monday, November 7, 2005.
93. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Tuesday, February 7, 2006.
94. Author’s fieldnotes, Söderhallarna market hall, Wednesday, April 12, 2006.
95. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Thursday, April 13, 2006.
in particular from restaurant schools. Just before New Years, I observe some students from Grythyttan restaurant school, two sommeliers and two restaurant and meal students. They are filming and preparing two menus as part of an assignment, a Danish and a Swedish menu. They are discussing what to use, what to buy, and what to document by film, but they do not ask the vendors to participate or ask for their advice. Instead they are focused on their assignment and on being experts themselves.\textsuperscript{96}

Impression management is a delicate business. There are always influences from outside the vendors’ control, such as trends and fashions. The vendors mention that customers are influenced by trends they pick up in the media. Now all of a sudden everyone wants dark chocolate. Or they have read about a certain kind of oil, and they want that particular oil. They like to show you that they know things, one of the vendors explains to me. You can just tell when something has been on TV, because then everyone asks for that. For example, perhaps they have heard about linseed oil, so then that becomes the new craze. It is almost absurd when people dare not go outside the recipes and improvise.\textsuperscript{97}

To build credibility, you need to consume what you sell. Or rather to appear to consume what you sell. One of the owners explains to me that he takes his staff to a truffle tasting at Pontus (Pontus in the Greenhouse, a famous gourmet restaurant in Stockholm which is now closed). Another vendor jokes with me about the prime quality of a good vendor being the capacity to lie in order to sell well. Then he corrects himself and says that what is important is to know the products. That is why it usually works so well when the suppliers come in and work extra for Christmas, for example. Since they know their products, they may talk more about the products. There are vendors who hunt and who also sell wild game. This adds to their legitimacy as vendors. Not only do they sell the products, they actually obtain them the “real” way, i.e. by hunting. To have chefs employed who can discuss food and cooking with the customers contributes to building credibility for a store. It conveys the idea that the store has access to experts, and that this is part of the service they are offering their customers. There is more selling lobster than eating it among staff. There is also quite a bit of selling fish, but not eating it. The vendors explain that you get fed up with fish if you sell it all day. So the most important thing is to claim that you do eat the products you sell, if your role is that of the expert. One of the vendors actually used his own

\textsuperscript{96} Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, December 28, 2005.
\textsuperscript{97} Author’s fieldnotes, Söderhallarna market hall, Wednesday, April 19, 2006.
children and their tastes as arguments for selling more reindeer fillet to a customer.98

But to appear to consume what they sell and thus gain credibility, the vendors need to convey and preserve the image of themselves as particularly competent. As we have seen above, this is done in many different ways. It is not only a question of what you do, but also how you do what you do, and how you speak of what you do. One of the vendors compares gastronomy and musicality. To be able to tell what the cows have been eating when you taste a cheese, you would have to have absolute gastronomic pitch. But there are so many different nuances in the spectrum between that extreme and not caring about food at all. The new owner has a lot of competence. He sends back food that does not taste right. That’s good. He doesn’t want to sell things that are not perfect. Even if most customers wouldn’t notice, he takes responsibility. He has a sensitive palate.99 The successful space and impression management are the foundations for the vendors’ aspirations to credibility. This credibility is in itself part of the foundation upon which the vendors expect the customers to believe in them, to trust them as guarantors of prime quality. In other words, these are the foundations for an economy of trust.

An economy of trust

There is an ideal about how you as a vendor should handle the products and how you should choose your products, as well as your producers and suppliers. The ideal prescribes a return to basics, and doing things from scratch – no semi-manufactured ingredients. Small-scale artisanal producers are sometimes used as assets, as indicators of this return to basics. Using small-scale producers evokes certain values, where the cheap supermarkets broilers are contrasted with small-scale producers like Bjäreést-fågel and their superior quality corn-fed chicken. “Once you have tried them, there is no going back to the cheap broilers. I know the guy who produces these chickens and he is really good at his job.”100 That the vendor knows the producer in person enhances the credibility and the feeling of authenticity and trust.

When vendors compare which small-scale producers they endorse and give each other suggestions on other artisans whose products they like,

98. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Wednesday, December 28, 2005.
99. Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Tuesday, March 21, 2006.
100. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Saturday, October 22, 2005.
this can be interpreted both as a search for authenticity and a search for quality. This focus on the small-scale, the genuine, and the authentic creates a sense of exclusiveness, but also a sense of assurance. The personal contacts between vendors and suppliers, and between vendors and consumers, ideally create bonds of trust, an economy of trust.

This love of the small-scale manifests itself, for example, when a customer asks if the chicken was happy. He wants to hear that the chicken does not come from one of the big factory farms that he has seen on TV. Instead he wants to be reassured that the chicken has had a good life, that it has grown up with its mother and has had the chance to scratch in a chicken yard with fresh grass and worms, like chickens in children’s books. The vendor answers that this chicken was definitely happy, and the customer seems satisfied. Here the food is given an identity in an off-hand way. The vendor vouches for the chicken – it was a happy chicken – and the customer is satisfied by his answer.

A recurring theme in the discussions of quality among vendors and customers is that of the small-scale, artisanal and high quality vs. the large-scale, industrial and low quality. The French economist Gilles Al- laire invites us to look at quality in food systems in terms of competing logics of quality in different systems of distribution and retail. If the large corporate retailers may be described in terms of a logic of decomposition, a sort of Taylorization of the methods of food production and a standardization of the food products, then there is a competitive form of logic present in the market halls. We may view this as a logic of identity: a holistic view that quality encompasses all aspects of food, aesthetics, ethics, sociality, purity, naturalness, and so forth. The practical reality often calls for a careful consideration of the relation quality – price – keeping qualities. This relation determines more than any ambition to source primarily from small-scale producers. In this value system, the primary produce is valued higher than the ready-cooked food, both as a sign of knowledge of food and cooking, and as a more genuine form of life. In the old days, everyone knew how to cook. The housewives really knew how to cook. The younger generations do not. At the same time, many vendors agree that the market hall survives because people buy convenience. For example, they buy garlic butter or creamed

101. Author’s fieldnotes, Söderhallarna market hall, Tuesday, November 22, 2005.
102. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Tuesday, February 22, 2006.
morels, or the immensely practical food duck liver pâté. They buy the ready-cooked meals, even if it is actually both quicker and cheaper to just fry up a fish, as one vendor put it. They buy it because they don’t know better. They don’t know how to cook.

There is a gap between the ideals of starting from scratch and the practice of the ready-cooked. Here the discussions about quality become apparent. The staff discusses quality, and how you know the difference between good and bad quality. They also discuss the need to educate the customers, and help them realize the difference between good and bad quality. Here their expertise becomes an asset: both a service and a gift to the customers. The vendors take responsibility for their customers, and feel the obligation to inform about how to prepare food. They take the time to explain that the Christmas sausage is still uncooked, and should be treated as raw meat even as the lines of people keep filling up in the Christmas rush.

The responsibility taken by the vendors is the foundation for the economy of trust in the market hall world. There is an ideal of mutual confidence and trust in the relationship with the customer. This trust is qualified as separate from the kind of trust that is critical to modernity as a whole. The trust here is of a more personal character, and is contrasted with the impersonal logic of the big supermarket chains. Personal trust is judged to be of a higher order than the impersonal trust that we put in food safety on a national level. You risk having to actually meet the person who has suffered from mistakes or frauds on your part face to face. This view is to a large extent shared by the customers, but the food market is not only made up of customers and vendors. There are also authorities who have a responsibility on a municipal level to make sure that the food safety standards are met in the market hall, and they operate according to a logic which does not recognize the economy of trust in the market halls.

In his dissertation on country shopkeepers, Lars Kaijer refers to a change in the law that took place when he was doing his fieldwork in the 1990s. The shopkeepers were then asked to engage in a system of self-control and pay a fee for this to the municipal authorities. Many saw this as a double insult. First of all, it was provocative to pay for something you did not receive anything for. Secondly, it was an insult to ask them to check the freezers. It was such an obvious thing to do anyway. All shopkeepers

104. Author’s fieldnotes, Söderhallarna market hall, Tuesday, December 20, 2005.
105. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Wednesday, December 21, 2005.
have to do this, otherwise the goods will be degraded and the customers will not come back. Shopkeepers routinely checked the temperature either by hand or by thermometer. To obey all the rules would be impossible, everyone knows that. Rules and regulations and the realities of daily practice were not compatible in the eyes of the shopkeepers.\(^{106}\) This is similar to the arguments from the market hall vendors, who sometimes feel betrayed and questioned in their professional competence and honor when the authorities want to check on them.

On a Tuesday morning in February, I talk to one of the vendors in Östermalm market hall. He is very worried about the Public Health Board inspectors. “Soon we will not be able to do anything any more! You won’t be able to fillet fish, or anything! And it is a market hall after all. I think it is so unfair, it is only the Nordic countries who obey by these silly EU regulations anyway.”\(^{107}\) This idea, that it is only the Nordic countries, and Sweden in particular, who obey the EU rules and regulations, seems to be widely held in the market halls. I have been invited to come along to the basement to see how the vendors prepare food in their kitchens, and the conversation turns to the Public Health Board inspectors. All of the vendors complain about Sweden being so intent on following rules. “This leads to unfair competition in the end,” says one of the vendors. The other vendors agree, and they take turns in telling me about unfair and ridiculous things the Public Health Board inspectors have said and done. But at the same time, they understand the inspectors, and that they are only trying to do their job. It is the rules that are frustrating, and the bureaucrats who do not understand how the vendors work. They are professionals. They are taking good care of their foodstuffs. It is part of their agreement with the customers, the foundation of the economy of trust.\(^{108}\)

In February 2006, the Public Health Board inspectors had not yet started their inspection of Östermalm market hall, and I ask around a bit. Most vendors in Östermalm market hall are fairly relaxed. “Oh, well, they are just doing their job. We will adapt. There are some new rules. A few more signs to put up. Maybe we need to wear plastic gloves. At any rate, we will manage.”\(^{109}\) The vendors know they have to adapt to the rules. But the inspectors from the Public Health Board can still be viewed with skepticism. The rules and restrictions they put on the vendors are sometimes

\(^{106}\) Kaijser, L., Lantradlar, p. 78-79.
\(^{107}\) Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Tuesday, February 21, 2006.
\(^{108}\) Author’s fieldnotes, Hötorget market hall, Tuesday, April 11, 2006.
\(^{109}\) Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Tuesday, February 21, 2006.
perceived as insults. “Do they really think I would want to harm my customers?” This view is partly shared by the Market Hall Board administrators, who think the Public Health Board inspectors can be overzealous. As the market halls are under municipal oversight, the Public Health Board inspectors seem to feel that they will encounter more understanding there. The Market Hall Board administrators mean that the market hall vendors are much more vulnerable to the opinions of their customers than the big retailers. They simply cannot afford to lose their customers, and they must take much greater care of their goods to make sure there are no scandals or food poisonings.110

One of the vendors comes up with a conspiracy theory regarding the Public Health Board inspectors: “There must have been a large number employed to handle the mad cow disease crisis. Then you have to find employment for these people, right? The EU gives the Public Health Board all sorts of directives to make things worse for every one. Take this whole business with the kitchens. How are you supposed to make sure that all the kitchens have an entrance and an exit? In a house that is a listed building? You can’t do anything. Besides the entire European project is a mess. It might have worked as long as it was a club for the wealthy. Now it will go to pieces. The EU project is just a big hassle for ordinary people. The rules are hopeless, and it is only the Swedes who obey them. In all other countries you just pay the inspectors off. It is strange how the inspectors work. As long as they don’t see things, everything is fine. If they do notice something, they will make a fuss and show their muscles and enforce a lot of silly rules.”111

It is important to keep the inspectors off your back, the vendor explains to me. You make a few adjustments to keep them happy, like wear a hat or plastic gloves. This way you can work around the system. It is like the inspectors haven’t understood a thing. Why can’t you just keep doing things the way they have been done for three hundred years? It’s not like the vendor wants to poison people! The vendor continues with his complaint: “This is how you prepare this dish; this is how it has always been prepared. This is how you get that special flavor the customers pay for. Just because the inspectors get some new fancy ideas they want me to change the way I work.”112 The same theme is pursued by another vendor. He believes that the increasing number of allergies in Sweden stems from

110. Interview, October 16, 2006.
111. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Tuesday, February 21, 2006.
112. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Tuesday, February 21, 2006.
the overzealous hygiene measures. “There is no other country in Europe where people have as many allergies! And look at the rules and regulations from the Public Health Board! There must be a correlation!”

The economy of trust permeates the market hall culture. It is a contract between the vendors and the customers, and in this sense it is builds on an economy of expectations. The expectations thrive on and are linked both to an economy of expertise and an economy of information or gossip. But the contract is threatened by the rules and regulations of the Public Health Board inspectors, who are compelled not to recognize the informal social contract that is the foundation for the economy of trust. The Public Health Board inspectors almost functions as agents of mistrust. The Market Hall Administrators are sympathetic to the vendors, but also have loyalties to the Public Health Board inspectors. As we have seen, the vendors manage the perceived affronts of the inspectors in various ways. What is at stake are contending definitions of quality, where the vendors have to adapt to the demands of both public authorities and the consumers, whose expectations and definitions of quality, rationality, and authenticity are operating with different logics and different economies of trust. The social reputation within the community of gastronomy conflicts with the formal frame of regulations of the food trade.

113. Author’s fieldnotes, Östermalm market hall, Monday, March 27, 2006.
Coda

The power of place

Each new form of retail trade introduced its own logic, its own aesthetics, and its own culture of consumption. In several ways it makes sense to speak of symbolic representations that are filled with meaning, and reinterpreted as history moves along. The market hall, which seemed such a marvel of modernity when it was first introduced, was replaced by stores conveniently located in each neighborhood. The stores were full of new wonders such as marble counters, glass, and mirrors.

The self-service format came at a time when the retail trade faced increasing difficulty to recruit staff. The self-service format co-evolved with the packaging industry and commercial trademarks. The self-service stores became larger and larger to pay for the initial investments needed. The increased mobility altered the location of stores. The economic expansion led economists to make such bright economic forecasts as to blind the retail sector into overexpansion.

The optimism of the continual economic progress, and the liberty of the consumer society, turned into a critique and met growing resistance. The gospel of more, bigger, and better was no longer an absolute truth. The successful structural rationalizations of the post-war era turned into a desire for the small-scale, the natural, and the non-consumerist. A nostalgic desire for the past was translated into counter-movements, and upgrading of past trade practices. The open air market, the small specialty stores, and the market halls all experienced a renaissance in what can be termed a desire for experience shopping.
The market hall setting in the early twenty-first century offers a type of interaction between a refined, cultivated vendor who has knowledge, style, and courtesy, and a customer who knows quality, appreciates the fine things in life, and strives for a pleasant experience. It is more a question of recreating the atmosphere and style of the elegant grocery stores that were located around Stockholm from the late nineteenth century and onwards, than to recreate the actual market hall and the way it looked like one hundred years ago. The whole idea is to play out the illusion that what you find in the market hall is what was there before, only in a version that is up to the modern standards of hygiene. That the hygiene is immaculate is only implied, and the references back to history are more a question of imaginings than of historical factualness. The overall focus is on perceptions and enactments of quality.

Both customers and vendors compromise and negotiate in order to affirm one another. The reciprocal displays of respect and mutual needs to confirm the position of the other are necessary, so that both customer and vendor can leave the interaction with a stronger belief in their respective gastronomic competence. This talk about quality and what it means is in part a rhetorical exercise, but it is still something the participants seem to believe. The motives as to why you do what you do are always more complex than what you account for. What they do can be defined as a way of performing quality.

Every object, every place, and every attitude can be recoded and reinterpreted over and over again. The constant negotiation and play with identities are characteristic of late modernity and we can see this as a form of reflexive life project. The consumption landscapes increasingly served as backdrop to the identity games of consumers.

In the urban landscapes, new forms of retail trade continue to emerge: the external hypermarkets, the discount stores, and the traffic and service stores. Mergers and alliances with other companies outside the Swedish market, and expansion into foreign markets, have been a tendency from the 1990s and onwards. In this retail landscape, the market hall has managed to survive and acquire an almost iconic status as the temple of food. The competitive advantage of the market hall remains in its history, and how it has managed to hold its heritage in trust, but also in how it has managed to reinvent itself over and over again.

What is interesting is that the retail space and how to design it increasingly became a science of its own. In the third and final period, the sterile and highly efficient forms of distribution that were developed in the second period inspired a desire for more personal service and contact, as well as for more tactile shopping experiences. This desire for experiences is something that the conventional retail chains have also been tapping
into, and the art of creating an appealing retail space has further developed from scientific management of sales people, consumers, and space into sensory management of impressions, to inspire pleasurable sensations and memorable experiences.
Epilogue

New beginnings?

On December 6, 2007, The Economist announced the end of cheap food - we had now reached not only peak oil, but also peak food. This article was only one in a long line of articles on the food system during a time when the world experienced a series of food crises, where staggering prices lead to riots. The UN Food report by Zafar Adeel from 2007 described the situation as ‘acute’. The following year, several new books on the subject appeared. Meanwhile, the profits made by agribusinesses and financial speculators reached unprecedented heights. What this reveals is how fragile the modern food system is. In the Western world we have come to rely on a cheap and abundant food supply, constantly offering new and exciting varieties of almost any kind of food. The seemingly effortless systems of distribution behind this food supply are in fact tremendously complex. The sheer amount of food needed for a place like Mexico City

1. Roberts, P., The end of food; Steele, C., Hungry city; W. Wright & G. Middendorf, (eds.), The fight over food. This critique is not new; see for example Magdoff, F., Foster, J. & Buttel, F., Hungry for profit: The agribusiness threat to farmers, food and the environment from 2000 and A Bonanno, L Busch, W H Friedland, L Gouveia and E Mingione (eds.) From Columbus to ConAgra: The Globalization of Agriculture and Foods from 1994.
2. Beardsworth, A. & Keil, T., Sociology on the menu; Bell, D. & Valentine, G., Consuming geographies.
or London, or for that matter, a comparatively small city like Stockholm, demands logistic miracles every day. Food is brought in from increasingly greater distances to feed the growing urban populations. Food is absolutely essential to our survival. Yet, this only becomes apparent when there are breakdowns and the systems of distribution (or production) fail to deliver.

What systems of distribution a city adopts is highly dependent on institutional arrangements. Every country and every region has its own historical and geographical legacies which have translated into market structures and legal frameworks, as well as aesthetics and cultures of consumption, supported and challenged by politicians, interest groups and scientists. Increasingly, the cities of the world have to adapt to various global trade agreements as well. The systems of distribution are not finalized and perfected at their current stage. Instead, they are constantly subject to challenges and variations, innovations, and new conditions. In the history of cities (in particular Western) we have seen a movement from local to national, and then to global provisioning systems. Let us now recapitulate what the micro example of the market hall can tell us about urban food retail and its consequences.

The first part of market hall development in Sweden from 1863 to 1933 dealt with the time when market halls were constructed in Stockholm as a response to the problem of sustaining a healthy, sufficient, and affordable food supply. The urbanization process in Sweden was initially slow, and even in the latter half of the nineteenth century Stockholm was by most accounts a backward city on the outskirts of Europe. When urbanization finally took off, Stockholm became a very rapidly changing city, with a large inflow of new inhabitants who depended on buying food rather than producing it. It was a transition from a small city with


a kind of housekeeping that had more in common with the long-term agrarian forms of life, to a city with more distinct urban forms of housekeeping, where food was bought more often and in smaller quantities than previously. This was in part due to the fact that many households were unable to store food. Both a lack of space in the homes and a lack of money to buy in bulk contributed to the new patterns of consumption. Some households and individuals had no cooking possibilities (or virtually none), which meant that they had to rely on ready-made takeouts, or a simple meal such as coffee with lard and molasses on bread. The urban households also bought more fresh produce than previous urban populations, especially the more affluent consumers, but the dietary patterns changed in all classes.

The transition from a subsistence economy to commercial food provisioning demanded an infrastructure on a whole new scale, throughout the food chain. There had, of course, always been an infrastructure for food provisioning in the cities. What was new, apart from the greater scale, was the lack of control in an era of laissez-faire and free enterprise. In the rapidly expanding city of Stockholm, with its rapidly expanding economy, the unequal distribution of wealth created unequal access to the new urban food supply. It was literally an unequal distribution of quality. Safety, freshness, variety were all valued attributes, but for some sufficient quantity was the key issue.

The urban life and the abundance of novelties inspired food anxieties in several ways. The alienated consumer needed more thorough knowl-

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6. This refers both to the practice of keeping pigs or poultry in the backyard, and to growing various crops where possible. It was also a question of how the general household work was planned and carried out. One such example is buying a whole pig and then preparing every part of the animal, the way a household in the countryside would. The books on good housekeeping in the city were full of advice that sought to mediate and adapt the rural practices to an urban setting. The housekeeping books were mainly intended for a middle class consumer. The more modest households had other occupations, such as making ends meet. With the emergence of industrial, or rather, protoindustrial food, in the mass production of salt, sugar, milling of grains, brewing, baking, bouillon cubes etc., the cooking habits and what can be defined as “cooking from scratch” changed. These foods had been processed, but still required cooking. However, several steps that had until then been performed by the end consumers, or members of the end consumers’ households, had been eliminated, thus paving the way for short cuts in the kitchen.

8. For a history of how fresh foods became part of the everyday diet of Western consumers, see Freidberg, S., Fresh. A perishable history.
edge of food. This complaint was voiced at regular intervals. In 1883, Professor Klencke complained about the ignorance of young girls, and how this would affect their abilities as housewives.

Fifty years ago it was easier to make purchases than it is today. Then the majority of the vendors and merchants were more honest, the circumstances of living were simpler, and the industrial art of adulteration was not yet so common. In our times [1883], when industrial greed exploits the natural sciences to give the bad commodity the allure of the good commodity, when all necessities and luxuries have acquired such an increased, imagined value, or prices have risen due to the period of high living costs and high taxes, and railways and waterways have made the trade in commodities from all over the world much simpler, which has inspired speculations and price increases by artificial means – now the purchase of commodities and their true value has become much harder, and a more thorough knowledge of merchandise is essential.9

Klencke goes on to tell the ignorant consumer how to buy, when to buy, and what to buy. Around twenty years later, another handbook reiterates the points made by Klencke - ignorance leads to getting cheated, so the consumer had better make sure to be knowledgeable, as well as to find regular merchants and remain loyal to them.10 In 1923, yet another handbook appears that proposed to guide the consumer through the mass of commodities on display. The sophisticated art of advertising would otherwise easily lure the inexperienced consumer into unwise purchases.11


What these examples demonstrate is how the mass production and mass distribution of goods that underpin the subsequent democratization of food, initially created certain food and consumption anxieties. The novel foods demanded a new competence. As consumers became increasingly alienated from the production process, the need for competence grew. With the consumer removed from the production processes, pastoral ideals and dreams of the rural bliss proliferated, not least in the iconic status accorded to the farmer in the discussions of the food markets in Stockholm.\footnote{12}

The production of food increasingly took place outside the city or in the outskirts of the city. To bring the producers and their food products to the city and the consumers was the main concern for the city officials, who were anxious to make sure that there was enough affordable (and preferably safe) food for the inhabitants. Paradoxically, there was a strong desire to eliminate the persisting food production in the city, as the city officials strived to turn Stockholm into a modern metropolis.\footnote{13} All of this called for new forms of distribution. This is when the market hall emerged as a possible solution. The move towards the market halls can also be mirrored in the parallel history of the city’s arcades, and later in the department stores, or in their rural cousins, the dairies.\footnote{14}

The transition into modernity was also a move towards applying the principles of scientific management to the food chain. As more foods and goods of transatlantic origin entered the food markets in Sweden, the US example increasingly inspired the Swedish business community and the municipal authorities. The municipal cold stores, commercial chilled warehouses, packing plants, railcars, and steamships held the promise of an infrastructure where food could transcend time and space and arrive at the consumer fresh, or at least fresher than hitherto was possible. None of this could have happened without a host of technologies that protected the foods and made transportation possible. This combination

\footnote{12. For an account of the tendency to honor and romanticize the countryside, see for example Erlandson-Hammargren, E., \textit{Från alpromantik till hembygdromantik}.}

\footnote{13. Deland and Hall have both demonstrated the importance of city planning as a tool for reaching the goal of building a more orderly city. See Deland, M., \textit{The Social City} and Hall, T., \textit{Stockholm: the making of a metropolis}.}

of technology and science, sustained by economic profits, was emblematic of the modern condition.\(^\text{15}\)

That the US influence was first noticeable in the business community is perhaps not so surprising. If we accept Arrighi’s interpretation of the twentieth century, the US emerged as contender for hegemonic power from the end of the nineteenth century, even if the outcome was by no means certain. Great Britain still remained the hegemonic superpower with its empire spanning the globe.\(^\text{16}\) Sweden had historically often sided with Great Britain’s archenemy, France. Even if there were exchanges with Great Britain, the main influence was not British. In 1810, Sweden also invited one of Napoléon Bonaparte’s marshals to become the king of Sweden. But the political influence of France on a global scale had diminished, as the French failed to master the economic, technological, and political initiatives.

Sweden had close cultural ties to Germany, and Germany thrived as France’s sphere of influence diminished. The penchant towards Germany was strengthened by the marriage of the Swedish king Oscar II to the German princess Victoria. If the cultural and political influence was clearly German, the business community was as much under a build-up phase in Germany as it was in Sweden. Another vital reason to follow the American rather than the German example was of course the defeat of the German imperial power in the First World War. All the wealth and capital Germany had accumulated dissipated after the clash with the then hegemonic power Great Britain.\(^\text{17}\) Here the US offered a much more promising example for the business community to follow. It was the new world, with its new economic opportunities and new business practices that beckoned entrepreneurial spirits.

Towards the end of the period 1863-1933, responsibility was shifted in favor of private enterprise for both the production and the retail end of the food chain. Municipal authorities were to provide the infrastructure needed for the distribution of goods. Part of the infrastructure was the creation of a wholesale district for food.\(^\text{18}\) The wholesale market halls

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18. In 1916, L. D. H. Weld, professor of business administration, wrote *The marketing of farm products* to explain why middlemen were necessary - , they added value by professionally and rationally handling the distribution and marketing of food products. The debate about the value of middlemen continued for years, and the division into wholesale and retail can be interpreted
were to be operated under the supervision of the City, but the businesses within were to be private. This mixture of municipal infrastructure and private enterprise was to balance control and profits in the most rational manner, in order to provide citizens with an abundant, modern food supply worthy of a modern city. By the 1930s, the food chain had expanded its scope from a regional to an increasingly national market, and later on the frontiers of food supply were to extend even further.

The middleman, who had been depicted as unjustly reaping the profits of farmers, was no longer an actor to be eliminated, but was rather a necessary and desirable intermediary between the increasingly rationalized food producers on the one hand, and the retailers on the other. The economies of scale from the food production and manufacturing were to be transferred to the retail sector. Interpretations of quality had thus shifted from the rural imagery of the authentic farmer, that was most in fashion around the turn of the century, towards rational food handling, which took its cue from industrial scientific management, where the natural sciences would master the constraints of time and space for the lasting benefit of the consuming public. The democratization of food consumption, with its standardized, uniform, food supply accessible for all, was about to unfold.

In the second part, from 1933 to 1973, the market halls had become a non-issue. Other forms of distribution had triumphed, and made the market hall seem redundant in the eyes of municipal governments eager to avoid costs and not hinder private enterprise. Primarily it was a question of a system of stores spread out across the city. Every neighborhood, and almost every street, had its own set of stores: the milk store that also sometimes sold bread, the grocery store, the butcher, and the fishmonger. These stores were small and mostly operated by independent storekeepers. There were also the cooperative stores that were leading the development of store culture by striving for standardized store fixtures and layouts to rationalize the retail trade. The cooperative movement was closely and jealously watched by the independent grocers, who eventually formed a retailer cooperative movement to meet the challenge from the

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as the tangible manifestation of these debates. For an overview of the history of thought of the distribution channels, see Nyberg, A., *Innovation in the distribution channel*, p. 12-18. When the Stockholm City Council decided to focus their energy on providing a wholesale infrastructure by the late 1920s, this can be seen as the acceptance of the division of wholesale and retail. It can also be seen how the initiatives from the consumer cooperative movement and various private wholesale cooperatives paved the way for the actions by the City Council. For more on this, see chapter 2 in this book.
consumer cooperative movement. The developments in the retail trade were also being monitored by the food manufacturers, who were anxious to find an outlet for their products which matched their production capacities.

In this new consumption landscape, there was no place for the market halls. They appeared outdated, and were in many cases rundown. The municipalities did not wish to spend any tax money on keeping up the maintenance of the market halls, when private actors and the cooperative movement were taking care of the food distribution in such a satisfactory way. The food shortages of the previous period were no longer a big issue. Instead, the focus had shifted to matters concerned with making the actual distribution and the retail trade itself more modern and rational.

However, these invisible retail market halls in the second part are interesting as well, since they say something about the new ideals. The market hall had been celebrated for offering everything under the same roof in a clean and safe environment, where, at least in theory, the vendors were civil and competent, and offered first-class service and first-class produce to their likewise civil and competent first-class customers. The small stores located around town were in a sense continuing this tradition, except that hygienic regulations prevented them from selling everything under the same roof, which meant the various food items were spread out geographically. Still, with the numerous quantity of stores, the spatial inconvenience of not finding everything under the same roof was minimized.

The ambition of rationalizing the food retail was led by the consumer cooperative movement, and supported by the food manufacturers and the packaging industries. The industries had managed to mechanize and rationalize on an impressive scale, but the retail sector was lagging behind. This problem was recognized by the representatives of the retail trade, as well as by scholars interested in distribution and retail. Investigations were undertaken at the national level, which is yet another reason why municipalities were not seriously engaging in the retail market hall question. Rather, the municipal authorities focused their attention on providing centralized wholesale market halls, roads, and other infrastructure worthy of the expanding, modern city.

The real breakthrough, of course, is the introduction of the self-service format which took place during this period. The self-service format is truly a revolution of how food retail is undertaken. It virtually altered

the face of the retail landscapes with new forms of consumption cultures emerging from the new forms of consumption spaces. Again, the role model was the US, and this tendency only grew with the increasing hegemonic power of the US, which was translated into a rapid Americanization of the entire Swedish nation. Americanization should be understood more as a useful metaphor for the fruits of economic and scientific progress. In the Swedish setting, it acquired specific forms in line with the aesthetic and moral values that were practicable in Sweden. The US was a role model, and it was used to lend an allure of success to new economic and cultural practices.20

For a while during the 1960s, the big department stores looked like serious champions of food retail. This was the golden era of the big department stores, when almost every Swedish city had two or even three each, and the department stores had full-scale food departments.21 At the high period of the great department stores, they represented the peak of modernity and offered relatively cheap prices. The decline of the great department stores corresponds to a mounting critique of the consumer society and the blatant consumerism.22 But it was also a question of over-reaching, which made the department stores vulnerable for the changes that took place in the 1970s, and eventually brought on the downfall of the vast majority of the department stores.

Another form of food retail which appeared in the 1960s was the hypermarket. The first hypermarket, with the now classic location in the outskirts of the city, was Wessels in Malmö, which opened in 1962. The idea for the hypermarket was again modeled on the US example, where the first hypermarkets opened in the 1930s. The significant expansion of hypermarkets in the US took place in the 1950s.23 In Sweden, the expansion was fairly fast from the late 1960s to the mid-1970s, when the city planners prevented or were extremely restrictive concerning new establishments.24

The rapidity may in part be explained by the spectacular economic and political stability of the post-war era. Despite political controversies, Sweden only had two prime ministers during a thirty year period, both of them social democrats.25 The stability and the political success of the

social democrats may in part be explained by the fact that the ideology of a classless society, or at least of a society where economic and cultural differences were to be leveled out, created a climate of class reconciliation that seemed only rational in the aftermath of the Second World War, especially with the cold war looming in the background. But it was the spectacular economic boom of the postwar era that made the reforms of the welfare state possible. The urbanization of the 1950s and 1960s allowed for city planning with unparalleled economic means and political stability, where the good, strong society was to be given its modern, rational form. Modern technology such as refrigeration and packaging transformed and opened up the landscape for the era of mass retailing, or in other words, the era of democratization of food, where all citizens were given access to the same uniform, standardized food.

But the retail markets and the cultures of consumption were rendered so effective and rational that in the end that they lost their appeal. The democratization of food, which built on rationalizations and standardizations, also led to an upsurge in longing for gastronomy. In the bountiful, standardized consumption landscape, TV food shows were displaying another side of food. In Sweden, the celebrity chef Tore Wretman had radio shows and TV shows championing his version of traditional Swedish cookery. Another famous TV personality, Ria Wågner, also presented declining culinary traditions. In the US, Julia Childs taught Americans the delights of French haute cuisine. The media propogated images of food can be seen as the counterparts of the handbooks on consumption from earlier eras. They reveal something of the anxieties raised by the radical transformations of food. This novel interest in gastronomy and the vague uneasiness over the paradoxes in food is what paved the way for the third and final period.

The third part sees a partial return of the market hall’s prominence. The year of 1973 was chosen as the end of the second period primarily because it corresponds to the crisis of the boom period in the postwar era. The market hall renaissance of course was a much more gradual and subtle transformation with no radical breaks. The general cultural and

28. For a discussion of culinary fashions through history and their bearing on social change, see Mennell, S., All manners of food: eating and taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the present.
political climate of the 1960s and 1970s were influenced by a critique of centralism and large-scale production. The positive visions of the future, of science and progress, seemed uncertain. In 1961, Jane Jacobs published *The death and life of great American cities*, criticizing the urban renewal strategies that had demolished the inner city centers of most Western cities. In 1962, Rachel Carson published *Silent spring*, which can be said to mark the start of the environmental movement. The ideas of these books also resonated within the Swedish context, and contributed to the critique of modernity and large-scale rationality from environmental and social standpoints. The desire to eat organic, and to return to small-scale, more authentic, and more genuine ways of life, made older forms like the market hall seem more attractive again.

The radical 1960s and 1970s were followed by the conservative 1980s, when traditions, etiquette, and luxury consumption transformed the cultural and political landscape. No longer was the welfare state expected to provide a social leveling-out of economic and cultural differences. The economic crisis of the 1970s and the subsequent deregulations of the financial markets inspired instead an attitude change where tax cuts and individual success were the cornerstones. In this new social landscape, the consumption landscape metamorphosed. The prior democratization of food, with its focus on large-scale solutions, standardizations, and conformity, was replaced by an adoration for luxury for luxury’s own sake, and for conspicuous consumption to celebrate individual success. The market hall could cater to this perfectly. The personal service was the incarnation of old-school obligingness, of service-mindedness.

The neoliberal tendencies of the 1980s were reinforced during the 1990s, and privatizations, deregulations, and tax cuts became the standard remedies to cure societal ills. The social democrats in Sweden followed the same path as the rest of the Western world. In 1994, Sweden said yes to join the European Union, and the neoliberal development accelerated. But the dismantling of the welfare state was perceived as a betrayal by some, and a crisis of confidence ensued. The distance be-

31. For a detailed discussion of how this influence materialized in the Stockholm city planning context, see Eriksson, E., *Stockholm med modernismen i centrum*.
34. See Holmberg, S. & Weibull, J., “Förfroendet faller”, In S. Holmberg & J. Weibull (eds.), *Det nya samhället*, p. 31, 33; Ahrne, G., Roman, C. & Franzén,
tween the elite and the majority was widening, as were the income gaps in society as a whole. There has been a gigantic transfer of wealth and power following the 1973 crisis, and the world has never before had such an unequal distribution of wealth.35

To be part of the select few and have a public persona became more important during the 1990s. It is part of the individualization trend that started during the 1980s. To be successful, you should pursue an international career and live in Brussels, London, or New York. To be a world citizen increasingly became part of the success indicators. The individual had to find his or her niche and make the optimal lifestyle choices. Lifestyle, identity, and choice were the predominant themes in the popular press. At the same time, economic and ethnic segregation was intensified.36 The situation was paradoxical: on the one hand, widening income gaps, and on the other hand, an assortment for consumption that seemed to multiply by the minute. In this social and cultural landscape, consumption was perceived as the key to personal self-realization. Consumption was also seen as the motor behind the whole economy. In the early twenty-first century, consumption thus took on a political as well as economic dimension that was intertwined with its social and cultural significance.37

It is from this perspective that the results of the ethnographic field study in this book should be viewed. The renaissance has recasted the market hall not as a general solution to an all-encompassing question, but rather as an alternative to everyday food consumption, that is, a lifestyle choice and a way to express individuality in an ocean of consumption possibilities. Even if there are people who do most of their shopping in the market halls, for most people the market halls represent the exclusive, the extravagant, and the festive. This is where you go when you want something out of the ordinary, or when you prepare for a special occasion. This is also where you go to just enjoy the atmosphere. The market halls of the beginning of the twenty-first century are places to see and be seen, rather than places to do your everyday food shopping in a modern and rational way. The renaissance of the market halls is also part of a reac-

35. For a compelling analysis of the effects of this development in the US, see Lasch, C., *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy*. Nevertheless, the same tendencies in varying degrees are present all over the world.
tion to the structural rationalizations of the retail trade.\textsuperscript{38} When the retail trade became too big, too efficient, and too rational, the time was ripe for a return to nostalgia and a search for different values.

The renaissance of the market hall can also be interpreted as a counter reaction to the democratization of food; it evokes a desire for the small-scale, for something better. Sometimes this translates into a desire for organic foods due to environmental issues, but mostly it is a counter reaction to the pre-packaged, standardized food of the supermarkets - a desire for uniqueness, freshness, and savoriness. It is also a desire for palatable, rich, and intense flavors, colors and textures.\textsuperscript{39} The modern, industrial food system’s shortcomings in taste and texture are exemplified in the practice of harvesting unripe fruit and vegetables for more convenient long distance transportation. Flavorless, out of season fruits and vegetables that spend long periods in cold storage are part of the stereotyped image of the modern industrial food system. Naming fruits and vegetables and other foods can then be seen as a way of suggesting tradition, authenticity, and connoisseurship. This practice is perhaps best illustrated by the heirloom or heritage foods, but also in the presentation of producers, and in the storytelling about exclusive foods that are now common not only in market halls and specialty stores, but also in the big supermarket chains.\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{38} Morgan, K., Marsden, T. & Murdoch, J., Worlds of food: place, power and provenance in the food chain; Warde, A., Consumption, food, and taste: culinary antinomies and commodity culture; Bell, D. & Valentine, G., Consuming geographies: we are where we eat; Fine, B., Heasman, M. & Wright, J., Consumption in the age of affluence: the world of food

\textsuperscript{39} This desire for something better is laden with moral judgements of taste. It is also highly dependent on economic and cultural capital: the market hall is not necessarily a welcoming setting for everyone. It is not only a question of prohibitive prices, because the price level is not always higher, it is also a question of feeling at ease, and having the time and energy to go to the market hall just to do the food shopping. For a poignant description of the power play of taste and its moral undercurrents, see Guthman, J., “Fast food/organic food: reflexive tastes and the making of ‘yuppie chow’”, Social \\& Cultural Geography, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2003.

In the market halls of today, the spatial arrangements of traditional forms of distribution hold their own charm. You shop over the counter, receive personal service, and grant yourself the luxury of allowing things to take time. The desire for personal service can thus be seen as a desire for expert knowledge, and for genuine, authentic interactions with someone who has more profound expertise in food than the supermarket staff. It is also a question of reassurance: here you have a human counterpart, someone to talk to who can explain things to you and to whom you can return and complain if what you bought was not to your liking. Personal contact can seem more appealing than the small letters on the ordinary food packages stating the ingredients and the nutritive value.

Every time period has its own dominant sales formats, even if parallel formats coexist. Which format turns out as the most successful depends on the current social, cultural, political, and economical trends. The surrounding context defines what problems and what issues need to be addressed, and in what manner it makes sense to address them. The focus in the period from the late nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century was the city: how could the city best ensure a safe and sufficient food supply? One of the crucial problems was to actually get the food into the city in acceptable condition and at a fair price. Here the market hall seemed an attractive alternative as they were often centrally located, and therefore the transportation costs could be reduced. From the 1930s, the city had a system of neighborhood stores adapted to the inhabitants who walked or bicycled to do their shopping. This system came into place since the local transportation problems had been solved by truck traffic. The rising private car ownership made hypermarkets outside the city centers more attractive. New habits and constraints on people’s lives made long opening hours more important to some than considerations of price.

A fatigue of large-scale and hyper-rationality made small size and personal touch valuable assets. This is what cleared the way for the return of the market hall, which in many ways is the antithesis of large-scale cool rationality, at least on a superficial level. The large retail chains did their best to adapt to the new demands of the consumer. In order to respond to the criticism of impersonal hyper-rationality, they introduced new small stores, and rebuilt the big hypermarkets with manual counters resembling those in market halls. The return of the manual service counter inside an otherwise self-service landscape has not been a straightforward development. Since manual counters are more expensive to staff, their popularity has varied, depending on the general state of the market,
the target group, and the location of the supermarket in the overall consumption landscape.\textsuperscript{41}

From the 1990s, many big supermarket chains also offered more organic foods and more specialties. This tendency has been accentuated during the first decade of the twenty-first century. When the big actors pick up ideas and trends from the small niche markets, and include small-scale actors in their own systems, the purpose is to profit from the appeal of the small-scale alternatives. At the same time, the big actors are making the criticism inherent in the small-scale alternatives more innocuous by co-opting them, which could be seen as a form of repressive tolerance. The appeal of the alternative food distribution networks is thus transformed and integrated into existing formats within the dominant system. The hypermarkets negotiate the threat of the small alternatives into a hybrid form that suits the hypermarket structure.

On a global scale, we have retail giants like Wal-Mart entering the organic produce sector, or Whole Foods, who are trying to play the local card and claim that their products are sourced locally. This has spurned criticism of “greenwashing”, or “localwashing”. Whole Foods, which started out as a counterculture response to large-scale retailing in the late 1970s, has by the early twenty-first century turned into a large-scale retail business. Michael Pollan calls the greenwashing tactics a “supermarket pastoral”.\textsuperscript{42}

Ilbery and Kneafsey identify a “placeless foodscape” of manufactured, industrial food, which is the legacy of the modern conventional food system.\textsuperscript{3} Marsden speaks of a “quality battleground” in the modern food chain, where food labeling of place and provenance is becoming one of the key issues in the contemporary food landscape.\textsuperscript{44} This also affects the conventional food systems, where supermarkets are tapping into the market of organic, and sometimes also locally-produced products, in what can be termed attempts at greenwashing and/or localwashing.\textsuperscript{15}

The market hall embraces many of these tendencies, and helps us understand how a food system could take on many different forms and

\begin{itemize}
\item[42.] Pollan, M., \textit{The Omnivore’s Dilemma}, p. 137.
\item[43.] Ilbery, B. & Kneafsey, M., “Registering Regional Specialty Food and Drink Products in the UK: The Case of PDOs and PGI\textquoteright s”, \textit{Area} 32(3): 317-25, 2000.
\item[44.] Marsden, T., “Theorising food quality: some key issues in understanding its competitive production and regulation”, In M. Harvey, A. McMeekin & A. Warde (eds.), \textit{Qualities of food}, p. 152.
\item[45.] Morgan, K., Marsden, T. & Murdoch, J., \textit{Worlds of food: place, power and provenance in the food chain}.
\end{itemize}
reinvent itself as the surrounding consumption landscape evolves. The renaissance of the market hall can be seen in the context of late modern cultures of consumption where experience is the key. Some of the benefits of the market hall are successfully transferred to the supermarket context, others are impossible to copy. The crucial question is what the customer thinks, and of even more vital importance is where the customer shops.

The desire for other forms of distribution has led to a renaissance for farmer’s markets as well. It has also heralded a return to local food and small-scale producers, which is similar, but not identical, to the renaissance of the market halls. Now we partly see a return of the local. There are locavore movements and an emphasis on the locally produced. Still, this is mostly a matter of ideals, and the actual economic impact is low. Even so, the upgrade of the local is not unchallenged, and there are several attempts at discrediting the alternative food networks.

Several scholars have pointed out a paradox in this preoccupation with food quality, abundance, and food safety, whereby the secure and abundant food supply in the Western world is ironically the system most likely to induce food scares and anxieties. In this context, the image of the small producer, the farm(er), and the region contributes to the legitimacy of the product, just like when the store SöderCheeses sells products from Birgittas Matbod (Birgitta’s Food Store) and Rosas chark (Rosa’s Delicatessen) on Öland. Another example is when the butcher store Sandströms kött och catering (Sandström’s meat and catering) uses pictures of the beef cattle grazing peacefully on Gotland, with accompanying text about the “natural” and first-rate conditions the meat is produced under. The rural nature, the cultural landscapes, and the local knowledge are linked to the essence of food production.

48. Marsden, T., Flynn, A. & Harrison, M., Consuming interests: the social provisioning of foods.
49. Actually, this is a word game that alludes to an expression about an inhabitant from the Southern part of Stockholm and cheese from the same place.
50. Marsden, T., “Theorising food quality: some key issues in understanding its competitive production and regulation”, In M. Harvey, A. McMeekin & A.
We can see the same forces at work when Jamie Oliver publishes a book entitled “Jamie’s Seasons”, which focuses on eating according to the seasons, or when young chefs formulate the Manifesto for the New Nordic Kitchen, with its declaration to use only local ingredients. The avid interest in and the success of the farmer’s markets are also indicators of an increasing inclination towards local food and food labeled from specific regions. This trend is noticed by the conventional food systems, who then seek to enter this profitable market. Local and seasonal food is given a higher value, both in terms of healthiness and the impact on the environment. The organic food sector is increasingly integrated into the conventional circuits, and the big retail chains are trying to accommodate the new demand for local food by procuring foods from local producers. What does this mean for the market hall context? In part, these are trends that were present and affected the vendors and the customers when the fieldwork for this book was undertaken in 2005-2006. A couple of years later, this trend has become more noticeable, with ads for seasonal food in the morning newspapers and climate change issues even more present in daily life and on the political agenda.

The unequal distribution of wealth has translated into a tremendously diversified market, and this has had effects on the foodscape as well. Never before has the world had such a wide assortment of food. The rise of the diversified foodscape, where the market hall is but one expression, coincides with a tremendous redistribution of wealth to the top segments of society. The foundation for the current food system builds on poverty and class differences. There is an unequal distribution of risks and of quality foods.\textsuperscript{51} The quality foods are subsidized in a sense by the fact that the vast majority of the global population eats standardized, large-scale, foods that are not always safe. These foods are produced under disgraceful conditions which are detrimental to the environment, to plants and animals. In addition, the conditions are woeful for the illegal immigrant workers involved at all the invisible junctions of the food chain.

The luxury, the organic, the authentic, and the fair-trade foods are so cheap only because of an army of underpaid workers, the subsidized transports, and because the vast majority continues to consume subsidized, sub-quality foods. If every one ate locally-produced organic foods where the workers were adequately compensated, where the animals did not suffer, and the crops and vegetables were grown in a sustainable fashion, the cost of food would skyrocket. At the same time, it is impos-

\textsuperscript{51} Warde, (eds.), \textit{Qualities of food}, p. 131.

For a classic example of this view, see Beck, U., \textit{Risk society: towards a new modernity}. 
sible to continue on the path of conventional food production, that is, business as usual. The food system is neither economically, socially or environmentally sustainable in its current form. The global imbalances in food production and consumption threaten to undermine our future existence. The true costs of food remain hidden in the current food system.52

The rise in status for food only concerns the glossy side of quality foods for the select few. A community of gastronomes floats on top of a mass of invisible food workers. The food connoisseurs generally prefer to limit their interaction only with the charming, witty, and knowledgeable food experts, who converse on all aspects of the food chain that have an appetizing, appealing story to be told. The stories about food where the focus is provenance only reveal the glamorous parts of the foodscape. The elegant restaurants, as well as the manifestos of local food and sustainable practices are compelling, but what about the busboys, the cleaners, and the other workers lower down the chain? Neglected are the invisible workers who create the inviting food landscapes where the gastronomic upper-middle classes can display their good taste and their superior knowledge.

With the erosion of the nation state in the post-Fordist world, the city and the region have reemerged as supreme entities. In the new global world order, cities are increasingly competing for the same space, the same economic, social, and cultural capital. In order to attract footloose capital, city officials resort to the same kind of strategies. Catch-phrases like “putting the city on the map” and buzzwords like “place promotion” are used to evoke lifestyles and creative environments associated with economic success. A vibrant city full of attractive, authentic consumption spaces is increasingly part of the urban regeneration schemes, and here food and drink are accorded a great significance as formative of a desirable urban landscape.53 In these urban landscapes, the urban-rural


interdependence and co-production are often made both invisible and impossible. But the consequences of which distribution infrastructure we chose have long-lasting effects - so how do we want the future?
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