Familiar Flavors
Sensorial Experiences of Familiarity and Transnational Food Practices Amongst International Students

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ABSTRACT

The thesis takes a reflexive feminist and sensory approach in examining the transnational practices and feelings of cultural familiarity that embody international student migrants, as well as the spatial and social implications of shared kitchen environments. Empirically, the research is based in participatory cook- and eat-along interviews, and a focus group dinner session with six student participants, situating both the researcher and the participants within the sensorial realm of food practices during the fieldwork. The thesis discusses the compromises and negotiations that food practices undergo through material accessibility, geographical knowledges and expectations in cross-cultural interactions, causing reconstructions and reinterpretations of daily routines and transnational feelings. Further, the thesis engages reflexively with the embodied situatedness of the researcher and its influence on the results produced throughout the research process. The research highlight the importance of a reflexive approach in sensorial research and emphasize how the sensorial perspective on mundane everyday practices contribute to an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of migrants. The research findings in relation to the methodological approach, suggest benefits in further fieldwork with an interactive approach of cooking and eating simultaneously to the reflexive interview interaction.

Keywords: Migration, transnationalism, social practices, food, senses, embodied methods, international students.
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1.0 INTRODUCTION .......................................................................................................................... 4
  1.1 Research Aims and Questions..................................................................................................... 5
2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW .................................................................................................................. 6
  2.1 Transnationalism, Cultural Maintenance Practices and Spatial Relationality ......................... 6
  2.2 Migrant Food Practices and the Home ...................................................................................... 7
  2.3 The Kitchen – A Cultural, Gendered and Shared Space ............................................................ 10
  2.4 International Student Migration in Sweden ............................................................................. 12
  2.5 Summary – The Theoretical Framework.................................................................................. 14
3.0 METHODS ................................................................................................................................... 15
  3.1 Methodology ............................................................................................................................. 15
    3.1.1 Senses and the Body in Research ...................................................................................... 15
    3.1.2 Feminist Research Practice and the Situated Body of the Researcher ................................. 16
  3.2 Ethics ....................................................................................................................................... 18
  3.3 Positionality ............................................................................................................................... 18
  3.4 Methods .................................................................................................................................... 19
    3.4.1 Observations ...................................................................................................................... 19
    3.4.2 Individual Participatory Interviews and Cook-Alongs ...................................................... 20
    3.4.3 Focus Group Dinner Session ............................................................................................. 21
  3.5 The Empirical Case ................................................................................................................... 23
    3.5.1 The Kitchen ....................................................................................................................... 24
    3.5.2 The Population and Sampling Process .............................................................................. 26
    3.5.3 Data Collection and Analysis ............................................................................................ 27
    3.5.4 Participant Introduction ..................................................................................................... 28
  3.6 Limitations ............................................................................................................................... 31
4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION ....................................................................................................... 32
  4.1 Transnational Food Practices and Interactions ......................................................................... 32
    4.1.1 Constructing the Culinary Identity .................................................................................... 32
    4.1.2 A Process of Adaptation Ensues ........................................................................................ 34
    4.1.3 Geographical Knowledges and Cultural Expectations ...................................................... 39
    4.1.4 Embodied and Sensory Methods Reflections .................................................................... 42
  4.2 The Shared Kitchen - Cultural Usages, Practices, Interactions and Interpretations ................. 44
    4.2.1 A (Dis)enabling Space - Changes in Practices .................................................................. 44
    4.2.2 The Kitchen as Home - The Private/Social Dichotomy .................................................... 45
    4.2.3 Embodied and Sensory Methods Reflections – Sharing a Kitchen .................................... 49
5.0 CONCLUSION ............................................................................................................................. 51
6.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY .......................................................................................................................... 53
7.0 APPENDIX ................................................................................................................................ 56
  7.1 Participant Post on Social Media .............................................................................................. 56
  7.2 Participant Information Statement and Consent Form .............................................................. 57
  7.3 Interview guides ......................................................................................................................... 60
    7.3.A Individual Interviews .......................................................................................................... 61
    7.3.B Focus Group ......................................................................................................................... 62
1.0 INTRODUCTION

When moving abroad for tertiary education, as in any type of migration, one’s social practices undergo change. This dissertation addresses the transnational links between international students, their place of emigration and how the links they establish are embodied, (re)produced in their everyday social practices and interactions within the domestic spaces they inhabit. More specifically, the research will focus on the social practices and everyday rituals of cooking and consuming food in the shared kitchen in student corridors in the spatial context of Stockholm, Sweden. As previous migration research suggests, cooking is not only something everybody does, it is integral to how migrants connect to their place of origin (see Collins, 2008a, 2010; Hage, 1997; Longhurst et al., 2007, 2009; Ratnam, 2018).

International student migration is a peculiar type of migration, given its limited temporality. The actual implications and lived experience of the migration event of students is rather under-researched (Wells, 2014). Instead, research on student mobility and migration has generally focused on migration patterns, decision-processes, and pre- and post-migration circumstances, all within a national-economic and competitive scope, and less so on the lives of the student migrants while in the host country (Wells, 2014).

From my own experience as an international student in Stockholm, the social environments wherein we conduct our daily lives are shaped by extensive cross-national and cultural interactions and relations, both through the university institution, but certainly also in the more mundane daily activities. This type of international environment and cross-cultural interaction is especially present for international students living in student accommodations comprising shared kitchens and corridor rooms. Conducting one’s culinary practices bears a different and more social dimension when the facilities are shared between a dozen co-residents. The social interaction in this cross-cultural space can facilitate the creation of a social space where the cultural (re)negotiation of habits and practices occur through the continuous interaction of different usages, users and cultural interpretations of the same space – the kitchen.

The compromises, negotiations and conflicts that inhabit these spaces and the meeting between culinary traditions are themes that have risen from my own personal encounters of romanticized narratives and expectations of communal living and the more or less dramatic cultural clashes of reality, told by friends and co-students living in corridor accommodations. During my time studying in Stockholm, I have wondered what it means to share a kitchen and what type and level of social relations the residents have between each other. Are they neighbors or flat mates? A hybrid? How does sharing such an integral domestic space, with multiple people that conduct their food practices differently, change the perception and usage of the space, and ability to cook something that feels familiar? I have on my own body experienced the sensorial deficiency of food that I am used to from home, how I miss certain tastes and textures, and how I have altered my eating habits to accustom my new surroundings in Stockholm. In addition, as an international student with a predominately international social network, I find that conversations often find its way back to one’s own, or other’s, culinary practices by comparing, sharing, tasting and enjoying each other’s culinary traditions to give your acquaintances a taste of your home. Undoubtedly, food is a dominant platform for social interaction and identity construction in relation to the migrant event, and certainly also in the cross-cultural meetings and interactions between student migrants, as well as their new surroundings.
The research project’s contribution is an examination of how the cross-cultural social interactions between international student migrants are operationalized and experienced in their daily lives, and how they are performed within the frame of student corridor kitchens. Understanding the (dis)enabling factors of the domestic spaces of student migrants can contribute to their ability to perform their routine practices of cooking and eating in a familiar way. Indeed, an understanding of the importance of the social space of the corridor kitchen in the student migrant experience can further contribute to an in-depth comprehension of the student migrant as a social agent and not just as an economic resource between nation states.

Studies of food and social practices in regards to migration in Human Geography (see Dudley, 2011; Hage, 1997; Longhurst et al., 2009, 2007; Pascali, 2006; Visser et al., 2015) have mainly concerned an adult and permanent migrant population. However, not many studies have approached international student migration in regards to the students’ everyday lives (see Collins, 2010; Hendrickson et al., 2011; Prazeres, 2017) and fewer have approached the domestic elements of cooking and eating and its sensory and social role in cultural maintenance (see Collins, 2008a), particularly within the domestic spaces. To explore the significance, meanings and influences of these cross-cultural and social spaces, it is here, in the shared corridor kitchen of the international students, that this research project takes its conceptual and empirical starting point. By connecting studies of food and social practices, and their influence on identity and social interaction within the context of international students, this research explores how international students relate to their own and their co-students’ social practices and how this negotiation process influences their self-perception and interactions within the shared domestic space of the corridor kitchen.

1.1 Research Aims and Questions

The aim of the research was to explore the (re)production of transnational identities and cross-cultural negotiations of international students in their everyday practices of cooking and eating alongside each other in shared kitchen environments. Through a sensory approach, the research sought to create an in-depth understanding of how daily social practices connect to the reenactment of familiar experiences connected to the student migrants places of origin. These practices were spatially contextualized and explored within the shared corridor kitchen, with the aim to examine how its physical and social construction influences the residents’ practices and social interaction. A sensory and feminist methodological approach was applied to examine the embodied experiences connected to food practices for student migrants, and to exploit the researcher’s own embodied experiences and reflexivity as part of the data collection.

These aims can be summarized in the following research questions:

1. In what ways do the everyday practices of preparing and consuming food engender and (re)produce transnational feelings of (dis)familiarity between international student migrants?

2. How does the shared corridor kitchen facilitate and shape the everyday practices and cross-cultural interactions of the student residents?
2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

This research project takes its entry point in the discipline of migration studies, but does so with less emphasis on the action of migration itself, and more on the life and experiences of a particular group of migrants in the host country of Sweden - international students. First, I examine the concepts of transnationalism and migrant cultural maintenance, and discuss and conceptualize them for the purpose and context of this study. Second, the food geographies and the social practices they entail are discussed with reference to how they construct migrants’ everyday lives. Third, the significance of the ‘kitchen’ or ‘cooking area’ as spaces and sites of migrant food practices are considered. Fourth, before summarizing the theoretical framework, I define and briefly discuss student mobility in an international and Swedish context. Lastly, a summary of the theoretical framework is outlined for the reader to receive an overview.

2.1 Transnationalism, Cultural Maintenance Practices and Spatial Relationality

Transnationalism refers to the way that an individual can have multiple physical and psychological ties and interactions with people or institutions across the borders of nation-states (Vertovec, 1999). Huang (2009) defined transnationality as a contested and diffuse concept related to the reconceptualization of the nation state, as notions of citizenry have become more fluid and less bound to a spatial and territorial area. It can be limiting to only consider formal connections and direct interactions between the migrant and the physical nation state, and instead it is advantageous to see transnational connections as flows and transfers that are constantly in flux. Samers and Collyer (2017, p. 361p) take a critical approach to transnationalism, pointing out the importance of considering the influence of social and institutional practices surrounding the individual migrant. Samers and Collyer (2017) further questioned the usage of the nation state as an identity reference point, and rather sees it as a constraint to attaining a suiting perspective unto the complex spatial connections that embodies the individual. They suggested that we should “expect migrants to have diverse transnational and other attachments (trans-local, trans-regional etc.) within and across multiple territories” (Samers and Collyer, 2017, p. 363). As a result, the understanding of transnational identities and practices must be regarded as working through the constant intersection of translocal, gendered, sexualized, classed, ethnic and religious attachments and relations.

Space and spatial scales are integral in understanding of the complexities of trans-spatial relations and identities (Massey, 1994). On localized and individual scales, understanding the processes of transnationality everyday social practices are pivotal. Social practices are the physical and psychological routine actions that we conduct in our everyday lives that, when put together, build our individual way(s) of living (Ho and Dobson, 2011). Working, commuting, reading, speaking, cooking and eating are examples of things that we do every day that when linked together shape how we live. These practices are socially constructed within a particular spatial and temporal context, and are thus shared amongst the other individuals we encounter in these spaces who also conduct their everyday practices. Because of the multiplicity of continuous social inputs constricting these practices, they are also dynamic and constantly evolving from the influence of social agents, groups and individuals (Webster, 2016, p. 17). In this way, social practices become the foundation for the (re)construction and (re)negotiation of the individual’s social identity through their life course.

To understand the contextuality of social practices, one must recognize that their spatial significance is defined by the reciprocal relationship between space and the social. Social practices must also be
considered in relation to the spatial links that stretch beyond the space where they are conducted and thus implicate other spaces too (Massey, 1994, p. 120). In relation to a migration event, the migrant is bound to experience extensive changes to the way that they live their everyday lives. Adjusting one’s scope towards the social practices that make out the everyday life brings forward a perspective where we can see how migrants actively build, sustain, renegotiate and continue practices throughout the migration process (Ho and Dobson, 2011; Webster, 2016).

For migrants, living their lives transnationally involves continuous practices of cultural maintenance through (re)production of social and cultural ties to their place of origin while adapting to the host country (Samers and Collyer, 2017). Of these, there are the obvious communicative ties that individuals maintain with family and loved ones (Waldinger, 2015, p. 60pp), economic, such as remittances (Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007, p. 134p), and ties that are connected to social practices and strategies in the migrants domestic lives (Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007, p. 137p; Ratnam, 2018). For migrants, the domestic practices and homebuilding involved in maintaining cultural links to their place of origin are embedded in memories of their place of origin and in the way that life was conducted ‘before’. The everyday actions that both recall and reproduce the migrant’s identity belong to both ‘here’ and ‘there’ through actions of familiarity (Hage, 1997; Ratnam, 2018). These practices that constitute the everyday routines and how they vary between places are particularly evident in the way the domestic space is structured as well as the sensorial experiences of them. The everyday place of the domestic home then encapsulates both memory and identity of its inhabitants.

Sensorial practices are a key aspect of the ways in which we conduct our everyday lives, and food and eating practices are ubiquitous to this. For migrants especially, food and eating practices become performances of their social and cultural ties to their place of origin, and their sensorial nature (through smell and taste as well as the visual in both the process of cooking and eating) conjures deeply personal memories of the cultural affiliations they construct pre- and post-migration. To understand the meanings ascribed to these practices, and the materiality of the spaces in which they are performed, this next section will discuss food practices in a transnational perspective.

2.2 Migrant Food Practices and the Home

A recognition of the weight of everyday transnational practices and the importance of the micro-geographies that they are performed within reveals the significance of the sensory connections to practices and spaces. A feminist perspective of migration critiques the over representation that global economic structures have been afforded in transnational research. Silvey (2004) pointed out that transnational connections and migrations are constructed through social bonds, cultures and families, not capital flows alone. The overemphasis on the global scale in globalization and transnational research creates an ambivalent relationship to the fundamental purpose of feminist research. Silvey (2004, p. 144p) argued that to understand the continuous production of space, social reproduction on a smaller and more domestic scale in micro-geographies must be taken seriously. Therefore, there must necessarily be an emphasis on the subjectivity and everyday experiences of transnational agents to understand the transnational spaces that they produce and maintain (Ley, 2004).

Food bears significant personal meaning, but is also important to cultural meaning in many different societies. What and how we (do not) eat, and where and with whom we eat varies significantly across space. Culinary traditions around the world distinguish themselves from one another in the ways we ensure the body receives sustenance for life - food. Understandings of culinary traditions are pervasive in our understandings of cultures themselves, for instance differentiating Italian and Indian
culture through an understanding of the different flavors, ingredients and cooking processes that constitute their traditional diets. These practices have been built throughout different geographical, historical and social circumstances and show interscalar variation between the regional, national and local scales and are thus also by nature social constructs (Cook and Crang, 1996). Arguably, the routines and practices of cooking are in fact more shaped by the domestic spaces of the parental home than the general national identity, though it does bear significant value in cultural and culinary identity (Cairns et al., 2010; Cook and Crang, 1996). These practices embodies a deep layer of identification and safety embedded in knowing how your home feels, smells, tastes, and works (Visser et al., 2015). The social constructedness of the ‘geographical knowledge’ of cultural culinary practices and materials leads to the idea that the individual knowledge of other food cultures is situated in the relationship between ‘here/us’ and ‘there/them’. These relations are continuously constructed through the representations that we have and will encounter through travelling, material representations in services and commodities where we are from (i.e. restaurants, imported ingredients and media), or interactions with people that are from ‘there’ (Cook and Crang, 1996). The meeting of other’s culinary practices and materials thus have an ‘othering’ influence on our experience of the encounter, where the taste, cooking process and visual impression is received through the lens of our geographical expectations and what connotations we connect to different geographies (Longhurst et al., 2007).

In this research, the conceptualization of food’s role in home-building for migrants has been inspired by Hage’s (1997) research on Lebanese migrants in Australia, Ratnam’s (2018) conceptualisation of the home as an intersect between memory and identity, Collin’s (2008a) study of South Korean student migrants’ transnational food practices in New Zealand, Meah and Jackson’s (2016) exploration of the kitchen as a site of sensorial memories, and Longhurst et al.’s (2009) research on the sensorial aspects of homebuilding for migrant women’s food practices in their domestic homes. Additionally, the inspiration for the emphasis on the mundane everyday exercise of cooking and eating in relation to the migration experience, was inspired by Ho and Dobson’s (2011) editorial for a special issue of Population, Space and Place on ‘Migration and Everyday Matters’. In the post-migration practice of building a home in the host country, Hage (1997, p. 4) argues that the practices of intimations to the place of origin are used as building blocks to make migrants feel a sense of ‘belonging’ or ‘home’ in a new cultural context. In line with Hage (1997), Ratnam (2018) has argued that the home is constructed through habitual routines and cultural traditions that provoke memories of the place that the migrant left behind. Certain artifacts or practices start to bear meanings that are deeply connected to identity. These meanings, however, are not necessarily triggered through verbal communication but rather through the sensory experiences of them (Ratnam, 2018). Transnational links in the everyday life should therefore be conceptualized as elements that are felt and embodied by the individual migrant while performing them.

In his research, Hage (1997) used the example of food as a practice of belonging to explain how the migrants create a home in the host country and simultaneously connect to their place of emigration emotionally when cooking and consuming foods with cultural links to that place. A point that Ratnam (2018, p. 2p) shared from the perspective of the daily sensory and material encounters enacted in the home that reinforce ties between memory and identity through sentimental value embedded in how the practices are remembered. In this way, food and the negotiations of migrants’ post-migration food practices become an essential part of homebuilding in the host-country. The home is where one constructs a place of security and a sense of familiarity. To establish a secure and familiar home, practices from the migrants’ life that have hitherto established a sense of homeliness are (re)enacted. Food, arguably, plays a large part in that (Ratnam, 2018). Familiarity becomes an important factor in the decision process of how to structure the culinary practices in the home, both emotionally and
practically (Hage, 1997). Much tacit and accumulated knowledge goes into the practice of cooking and eating, which is indeed why our mother’s cooking will always be superior to our own. However, the embeddedness of the way that food is produced and consumed follows the individual through the migration event. Consequently, the task of the transnational migrant is to continue their familiar food practices as closely as possible in a new context, or inevitably renegotiate and build a homely practice with the ingredients that are available. For a migrant, memories of how food practices were performed define their efforts to create a space of familiarity in their home now. These memories will, in most migrant cases, be a defining point of how the kitchen will look and how it is used so that it is suitable to their desired practices and experiences. However, for a migrant that is living in a cultural minority in the host county, access to the correct tools and ingredients may be a luxury, and living without them an everyday reality (Hage, 1997, p. 8; Longhurst et al., 2009). The migration event, therefore, requires many adjustments, compromises and negotiations to take place before being able to conduct practices that are similar in experience to those used in the place of origin. Some of the material compromises might be eased by diasporic stores that sell products imported from the home country and thus create a space for nostalgic and functional re-engagement with homeland culture and enable migrants to re-create authentic sensorial experiences (for good examples of this, see Visser et al., 2015; Webster, 2016).

In the case of this research, temporality plays an obvious role in the migrant’s desire and need to settle in the host country. In relation to student migration, temporal purpose of residency is highly variable, as some stay for half a year with home-migration as a certainty, while others might have an indefinite or maybe even permanent purpose of stay (this is further reflected upon in section 2.4 International Student Migration in Sweden). Temporality is also relevant to take into consideration concerning transnational practices of homebuilding and experience of settlement whether the migrant plans to return or not and how long time the individual have committed (i.e. a two year program or a single 4 months semester for example) (Samers and Collyer, 2017, p. 199).

Collins (2008a) in his research of South Korean students in Auckland, New Zealand, also found food practices to have representational elements of the home in facilitating sociality in student diasporas. Moreover, he found that these practices are very much connected to sensuality of the experience of longing and belonging to a geographical home (Collins, 2008a, p. 155). The sensual aspect of transnational practices of belonging is of particular interest for this study. I draw from Longhurst et al. (2009, 2007), who emphasized the potential of a feminist perspective in exploring the domestic sphere and how it can be beneficial to understand the lives of migrants of all genders, as well as the gendered usage of public and private spaces. Exploring the daily practices and experiences of migrants in their homes, can lead to a more in-depth understanding of the (re)production and (re)negotiation dynamics of student migrants’ feelings of belonging.

Indeed, food is an advantageous medium for memory (re)construction from a sensorial point of view. Meah and Jackson (2016) argued for the potential of food to evoke memories connected to one’s past when being exposed to sensual, haptic and kinetic impressions (see also Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy, 2008; Wilbur and Gibbs, 2018). By including the haptic and kinetic dimensions, Meah and Jackson’s (2016) conceptualization of the sensorial experience attends not only to the passive impressions that producing and consuming food create through smell and taste, but also the active sensorial impressions that are connected to touch and movements in practice. It is not only the recreation of a specific product that should be in focus, but rather the whole process of (re)enacting the physical rituals that are connected to its production. These (re)enactments not only make the dish itself, but the whole process of cooking and being in the kitchen space, the focal point of
understanding and contextualizing the sensory, haptic and kinetic dimensions of the experiences and memories are embedded in food practices. In this research, the aspects of haptic and kinetic are paired with the sensorial experiences of smell, taste and visuality that is shown to be methodologically connected to food practices.

Conversely, sensorial familiarity will always stand in contrast to unfamiliarity towards practices and sensorial impressions that appear foreign. Certainly, the ‘othering’ of cultural minority practices and the affiliated smells and other sensorial impression is a large part of life as a migrant. The othering of migrants’ daily practices take form in both curiosity and abjection when experienced by outsiders, being either the cultural majority or between migrant or minority groups. An example within a Swedish context would be the traditional fermented herring with the, to some, repulsive odour: surströmmning. In their research Longhurst et al. (2007) focused on an intercultural shared lunch where traditional dishes were merged into the same meal. In context with that social interaction they discussed the subconscious reactions of othering and abjection towards foreign sensorial impressions and different ways of approaching and consuming a lunch meal. This embodied reaction that is embedded in our interpretation of other’s food practices has indeed been a point of interest in this research project.

Longhurst et al. (2009) focus on the domestic environment that food practices are performed in, referring to it just as the migrant’s ‘home’. Nevertheless, the spatial conceptualization of the domestic space where food is prepared and consumed is much more specific than that. In other words, the kitchen as both a social phenomenon and a norm bearing space is not taken into account. In this research, the aim was to explore the significance, meanings and practices that are tied to this place. The kitchen works as the conceptual and spatial starting point of defining the palpable domestic space where the student migrants of this research conduct most of their domestic culinary lives. However, the type of kitchen that is in question in this research, the shared and communal kitchen in student corridors, is a peculiar construction of the social dimension of this domestic space compared to the traditional ‘private’ Western discourse. Here, around a dozen people share the same space for cooking, and therefore share a level of domestic intimacy, but do not necessarily share other social or cultural background than their current stage of life being a student of a tertiary education in Stockholm. To understand the social construction of the kitchen space, and therefore the cultural and social interpretations that it engenders, in this next section, I conceptualize the kitchen as a social space and examine the influence of a migration event.

### 2.3 The Kitchen – A Cultural, Gendered and Shared Space

“The kitchen is where work mingles with desire, pleasure, creativity, violence, safety and other people; and where domestic technologies, architects and designers create devices and spaces which shape gender. (…) Whether this space is fixed and separated within the modern home, open and communal or one which has to be reassembled daily in the streets of third-world cities, the kitchen reflects and is remade by social and spatial relations.” (Johnson, 2006, p. 123)

These social and spatial relations that Johnson (2006) refers to in the above quote, are the normative and discursive constructs of what makes the different usages and interpretations of the kitchen depending on where you are, who you are, and with whom you are sharing the space. In this research the kitchen in focus has been shaped by a Western, and more specifically, Swedish, tradition of how to design a kitchen to fit the patterns and practices that suit the needs and ways of life there. As Johnson (2006) pointed out, however, such a space is very different from place to place, tradition to
tradition, and social context to social context. In research, various examples of different usages of the kitchen have been examined: Pascali’s (2006) study of the usage of a fancy and an everyday kitchen amongst first generation Italian immigrants in North-East America, Robson’s (2006) study of a site of women’s power in Hausa villages in Northern Nigeria, and Meah and Jackson’s (2016) research on the construction and reproduction of memories and familial identities in the kitchens in Northern England (see also Bennett, 2006; Christie, 2006; Schroeder, 2006; Wardrop, 2006).

Historically, in a Western context, the kitchen and culinary practices within it have been (and still are) heavily skewed in terms of gender. The kitchen is where the modern patriarchal definition of women’s role in the family as the domestic facilitator, manager and caretaker (i.e. ‘housewife’) was born out of technical changes in domestic hardware, and a demise in availability of servants for the upper- and middle-class during the last century (Jackson, 2005; Johnson, 2006). The differentiation between public and domestic work is established through ‘real’ or ‘paid’ work and practices that are not considered labor also create a gendered disparity to access of the public sphere (Massey, 1994). Patriarchal structures that are still prevalent in today’s domestic power structures and division of labor are both affirmed and renegotiated within the home and on the labor market. In some feminist work, the kitchen is portrayed as a ‘domestic jail of sorts that keeps women outside the realm of public space, performing unpaid and undervalued work’ (Christie, 2006, p. 654). Bennett’s (2006) research on the power structures within a farming household in Dorset in England took its vantage point from the kitchen and sought an in-depth ethnographic understanding of the performances that shape these relations. By doing so, Bennett (2006) found that these patriarchal structures are reproduced by the daily activities and interactions of both men and women in this particular space, which shows the embeddedness of cultural meanings of practices in place. Further, feminist literature points towards the embedded gendered utility of cooking: the feminine practice of caring for the bodily needs, and the (masculine) practice of cooking as an intellectual practice of leisure and entertainment, removed from the daily domestic labor (Cairns et al., 2010). Inherent gender relations and social constructions about domestic labor vary across space and have different constructions and explicitness depending on where you are in the world. Nevertheless, these social and cultural constructions of the labor division within the domestic sphere travel alongside food practices embodied by the migrant and negotiated within the social and cultural context of the host country (Samers and Collyer, 2017, p. 104p). However, gender relations are not the only social and cultural reproduction that takes place within the frame of the kitchen space.

The kitchen is not a space where food is prepared in a mechanical a non-personal way. Instead, it is a personal place where people encounter the sensory experience of food and social memories. The tastes, smells, sounds, touches and movements that fill out the kitchen space when cooking and eating functions as sensory, haptic and kinetic dimensions of social and cultural memory (Meah and Jackson, 2016). For a migrant, recreating the sensual, haptic and kinetic impressions and practices that embody home to them, as well as the availability of ingredients and utensils in the host country, sets the tone for what is possible to produce in the kitchen. This sensual element, in many ways, is also the case with the design of the kitchen and the practices that it (dis)enables. Resultantly, if home is constructed through everyday practices that evoke memories of the country of origin, and food and culinary practices are fundamental to recalling these memories, the kitchen space is then integral to the creating of familiarity and security, and thus home (Ratnam, 2018). In a situation where the migrant is not

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1 Except from Meah and Jackson (2015) article, all of the mentioned examples are from two sets of themed papers in the journal Gender, Place & Culture, vol. 13, issue 2 and 6.
able to alter the space to fit these homing desires, they must make compromises in order to proceed in their everyday lives.

Kitchens are not the same space or bear the same meanings just because they have a similar design. A family sharing an apartment have a different way of using and dividing the labor in the space from a handful of roommates residing the same apartment. Within a family household, one person might secure the daily shared dinner meal, while inhabitants in a shared flat might cook separate meals at different times to fit their individual lifestyle. The kitchen as a social space is not static but constructed from meanings according to the social relations between the people sharing it and the space is therefore a (dis)enabling factor in the interactions within it. In the context of migrant minority households, the meaning of this space alters accordingly to the interpretations of them. Some would even argue that the usage of the kitchen, while being broadly defined by cultural heritage, is highly individual and changes from person to person even within the household (evident from the patriarchal division of ownership and practices found in the research of (Bennett, 2006).

2.4 International Student Migration in Sweden

In this last section, I contextualize the research population of international students in Sweden by shortly exploring the significance of international student migration globally and within a Swedish context, and I afterwards take a look into the literature on student migration in relation to the migration experience.

The number of students taking a higher education degree abroad has been rising and are predicted to keep doing so in the future as a result of increasing policy attention. To give an impression, the yearly OECD report on education (OECD, 2018, p. 224) explained that the trend was evident through the explosive rise from 2 million foreign students engaging in tertiary education worldwide in 1999 to 5 million in 2016. Sweden itself experienced a growth from 6,000-7,000 newly enrolled students in the academic year 1997/98, to 23,550 in 2016/17 (Universitetskanslersämbetet, 2018, p. 94).

This expansion has been met with an increasing national political interest in tertiary studies that recognizes the benefits of: ‘tapping into the global pool of talent’ and the likeliness of integration into the domestic labor market; the economic gains of students’ contribution to the general consumption; and the cultural capital contribution to the home country in case of home-migration, to mention a few (OECD, 2018, p. 218p). Collins (2008b, p. 400) argued that this neoliberal discursive fundament shaped the academic literature on student migration early on as it mainly concentrated on issues of marketing strategies, economic measurements, pedagogical evaluations, and psychological assessments (see also Samers and Collyer, 2017, p. 166). The main body of literature on student migration, then, focuses on the decision to migrate, the pre- and post-conditions of the migration, and the patterns they shape between locations, and less on the lives of the student migrants while living in the host country (Collins, 2008b; Wells, 2014). Related to a Swedish context, after introducing study fees for basic- and graduate level students from outside the EU/EEA and Switzerland in 2011, two scholarship programs were established to attract students from especially outside EU/EEA and Switzerland to study in Sweden (Universitetskanslersämbetet, 2018, p. 97).

Recently, more critical research has engaged with the structural and individual factors and consequences that play a part in student migration and mobility. These include, amongst others, friendship research (Hendrickson et al., 2011), transnational social fields (Gargano, 2008), and social
and cultural reproduction of familiarity through food consumption practices (Collins, 2010, 2008a). Hendrickson et al. (2011) points to an important element of understanding international students’ daily lives and the social networks that they live in, the limiting factor of host-country language skills. In the case of Sweden, then, the literature suggests that the social networks of most international students when studying abroad is composed by, if not co-nationals, then co- international students (Hendrickson et al., 2011, p. 289p). Collins (2008a) treated the topic of international students’ food practices and its role in sensory familiarity of South Korean students in Auckland NZ. He thus focuses on a particular migrant group within the student population to enable the examination of the transnational practices between the two defined cultures. This research project, however, will focus on the cultural interaction between Swedish and international students with a multiplicity of origins, rather than one specific group. This focus enables a more diverse examination of the lives of international students in their host country and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of their everyday experiences and practices.

Because the temporal purposes of students’ migration time in the country varies from a short term exchange of a single term to an aim of integrating and working in the host country after study; it is impossible to key student migration as either temporary or permanent (Bilecen, 2009). That this migrant group is special in the way that it contains a multiplicity of purposes in regards to temporality of residence is important as it adds to the understanding of its complexity and diversity. In this research project both students with a purpose of staying after their studies and short-term exchange students were part of the participant group. The aspect of temporality, however not being the main focus of the research, is an interesting aspect of student mobility and is one of the reasons why this particular migration group was chosen to study. Nevertheless, further research should be conducted on the topic to understand the correlation further as this was points of less interest to the aim of this research.

The population of international students is not a sharply defined entity within the research field, often generalized on type and length of stay and level of education amongst other (Wells, 2014). In this study, however, international students were defined as students of a university or ‘högskola’ level education that migrated from their home country for a full degree or on an exchange for one or several semesters. The population and their social interaction in focus in this research project was further framed by the spatial context of their shared housing situation of which I will return to in detail (see 3.5 The Empirical Case).

As an international student in Stockholm, many find their housing accommodations through private companies that administer student housing different places around the city (Swedish Institute, 2019). The biggest one in Stockholm, and the company that all of the participants were connected to, is SSSB (Stiftelsen Stockholms Studentbostäder) (SSSB, 2019). In the corridor accommodations that are available, the corridor kitchen is by default designed for a space and utility-maximizing purpose where 12-14 people can store, prepare and even consume their meals in a shared space. However, this research was interested in examining what type of relationships this shared space entail. And further, what happens to the engrained sensory social practices that migrants bring with them to their new place of living when this place is shared amongst so many other people with different cultural backgrounds.
2.5 Summary – The Theoretical Framework

This research project was based on the theoretical foundation of the relation between migrants’ transnational feelings of belonging and their everyday practices of remembering and recreating sensorial experiences of familiarity. I emphasize the importance on the micro-geographies of the daily lives and domestic spaces in the (re)construction of migrant identities (Ho and Dobson, 2011; Webster, 2016), and an understanding of the daily practices of food constituting the lived migrant experience as integral to their homebuilding practices (Collins, 2008a; Hage, 1997; Longhurst et al., 2009, 2007; Ratnam, 2018). Food practices and perceptions are understood to be shaped through the micro-geographies of our close domestic surroundings and often through the parental home (Cairns et al., 2010), and less so by general regional and national food cultures. However, these larger social constructions of food cultures bear a significant influence on people’s knowledge and expectations of their own and other’s culinary practices, and thus the connotations that are attached to the embedded sensorial experiences. These knowledges are produced and reproduced by representations and encounters and further shape our experiences through the expectations and connotations that we attach to certain food practices (Cook and Crang, 1996; Longhurst et al., 2007).

For migrants, food practices undergo changes in new spatial, cultural and social contexts of the host countries. These changes are caused by the compromises and negotiations in availability of certain ingredients and material and social changes to surroundings that re-shape their food performances (Hage, 1997; Longhurst et al., 2009). Compromises that are sometimes eased by the presence of diasporic distributors of particular culturally specific goods (Visser et al., 2015; Webster, 2016).

The kitchen is acknowledged as a space of much cultural and social negotiation and interaction in the social practices of cooking and creating sensorial experiences of belonging, familiarity and (gendered) power relations within a household (Bennett, 2006; Johnson, 2006) and in the daily labor of cooking (Cairns et al., 2010). The kitchen is a space of sensory experiences of food and social memories. The sensory experiences that are connected to the (re)production of food practices entail not only receptive impressions of smells, tastes and visuality, but also the senses of touch (haptic) and movement (kinetic) connected to the performance of cooking and being in the kitchen (Meah and Jackson, 2016). How the kitchen is structured, then, becomes a defining entity towards the practices that the migrants are able to conduct their daily lives, and therefore transnational practices of belonging.

In the next chapter, I lay out the methodological foundation of the research, and discuss and explain the research process and data collection.
The purpose of the research was to explore the experiences of international students living together in corridor accommodations with shared kitchens and their everyday routines of cooking and eating as ways to maintain linkages to cultural identity. The focus was on their social interactions and relations in the shared corridor kitchen spaces. Particularly how they were influenced by the multiplicity of different practices performed there. To do this, six in-depth individual interviews coupled with cook-/ and eat-alongs were conducted with international students in the shared corridor kitchens where they resided. To explore the embodied practices connected to food, the researcher participated in the production and consumption of the meal while conducting the interview. Further, the research also entailed a focus group dinner session. There, all research participants shared their food, as well as reflections on their experiences of their own and others’ food practices, and sharing a kitchen.

This chapter outlines the thesis’ methodological background, situates and describes the research field and population, the approach, and process of the data collection. First, I therefore explore the sensorial, feminist and embodied methodological background that the research is based on. Second, I consider the ethical dimensions related to the choices of methods and in the interaction with the research field. Third, I discuss my positionality as the researcher to the data analysis. Fourth, I discuss the three major data generation methods: my observatory practices during both types of fieldwork, the individual participatory interviews and cook-alongs, and the focus group dinner session. Fifth, I define the empirical case of the shared corridor kitchen space and of the international student participants. Therein, I also describe the data collection and analysis process. Sixth and lastly, I shortly reflect on and explore the limitations of the research process and results.

3.1 Methodology

Ontologically, the thesis research paradigm considers understandings of the social world to be found in people, their embodied, sensory experiential practices of their everyday lives (Butler, 1999; Pink, 2009). This ontological position can be difficult to access through verbal or written representation. Therefore, this research focused on the participants’ and researcher’s interpretations of what was experienced and sensed when conducting the practices of cooking and eating. The epistemological approach, then, was interpretivist and reflexive (Mason, 2002). The knowledge generated was foremost the participants’ own interpretations and reflections on/of their cooking practices. This knowledge was enacted through memories of their cultural homes, based on their sensory experiences and the social interactions in the interview setting. Additionally, this data was co-constructed with the participation of the researcher through a participatory interview approach.

In the two following sections, I first explore the field of sensorial research in relation to the feminist research tradition and the importance of the body in approaching the sensorial realm. Thereafter, I discuss the background of my feminist research practice in connection to the researcher’s embodied experiences as integral to understanding the research field and the generation of data.

3.1.1 Senses and the Body in Research

Since the 1990s the body has been an important part of feminist research, especially through the deconstruction of the dualisms between sex and gender, the mind and body, and that body and space.
co-construct each other (Longhurst, 2005). Our bodies are the mediums through which we experience the world. The body is performative; it does not bear any ontological status other than the meanings that are created through actions with which it engages (Butler, 1999, p. 173). In other words, the sensory input that our bodies experience, define the way that we see the world because our sense of self and everything around us is constructed by what we have experienced beforehand and the past memories of sensorial stimulations and impressions that our bodies encounter in the moment (Drozdzewski et al., 2016). Of course, this is not a one-way interaction between the body and its surroundings where space merely acts as the stage that social interactions play out on. On the contrary, space is integral to the production and reproduction of social relations (Longhurst, 2005). In this way, where and how the body is situated at a particular time with all of its intersecting embodied characteristics (for example ethnicity, gender, sex, disability and age) contributes determining to its interactions with the social world.

In academia, ethnographic research has methodologically drawn on the senses in research methods (see Pink, 2009). However, in practice, sensory research has a strong interdisciplinary application in many schools of thought, social and cultural anthropology, human geography and sociology to name a few. Increasingly, the acknowledgement of sensoriality as the fundament of how we experience each other and our surroundings has spread across the humanities and social sciences and is being applied within research in various ways (see Drozdzewski et al., 2015; Pink, 2011, 2008; Pink et al., 2010; Pink and Mackley, 2013; Ratnam, 2018; Richardson-Ngwenya, 2014). The ontological and epistemological principles of sensorial research come from an interpretivist and reflexive way of thinking, which stem from the fundamental idea that everything we experience is not processed textually or verbally but rather it is sensed, felt, smelled and tasted (Mason, 2002, p. 104). Therefore, we cannot expect to understand how people interact socially without engaging in the sensory context that their interaction is performed in. In that way, as Longhurst et al. (2007, p. 208) proclaims: ontology and epistemology, and being and knowing “cannot easily be separated”. In terms of research approach, this viewpoint means researchers cannot be separated from the research field. They must, then, situate themselves in relation to the social and spatial context of their research and be reflexive about their own experiences while conducting their research. The reflexivity created during fieldwork of own sensorial impressions and experiences must therefore be perceived as an essential aspect of the data and not just a side point (Pink, 2009).

More recently, a sensory perspective and methodology has been applied in spatial research in micro-geographies of domestic spaces and the enactment of daily food practices (see 2.2 Migrant Food Practices and the Home). In the methodological approach to research the sensoriality of these experiences, passive observation seem futile. In their research, Longhurst et al. (2007) sought to understand the culturally embodied differences between the cultural practices within this social context of the lunch meal. Longhurst et al. (2007) argued that to do so the researcher’s most important tool was their own embodied experiences, as it was perceived to be impossible to be able to fully represent any other’s. Thus, Longhurst et al. (2007) emphasized the importance of being reflexive towards one’s own embodied positionality in order to engage with the sensorial field of research.

3.1.2 Feminist Research Practice and the Situated Body of the Researcher

In the feminist tradition there has been much attention directed toward the importance of understanding the influence of the researchers’ positionality in shaping the direction, process and execution of their research and results. All fieldwork is unavoidably personal, researchers interact with their research field and participants, and the research field and participants react to the
researchers presence (England, 1994). If the researcher insists on objectivity, it is to argue that social reproduction of power structures only happens around the researcher and not in relation to them. The objection to this neutral position of observation of the researcher is a fundamental pillar in feminist research practice that deems attention must be given to the way that knowledge(s) are produced (Pink, 2009).

To examine the reproduction of social structures in relation to individuals and groups, particularly those who are marginalized or a minority, a local or even micro-geographical perspective is needed (see 2.2 Migrant Food Practices and the Home). On the smallest scale, Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy (2008) have argued that the visceral dimension of the bodily experience can reveal different kinds of knowledges that would otherwise lie unnoticed. This perspective makes the research from a bodily perspective a highly relevant starting point to examine the way that people’s lives are influenced by and intersect with spatiality and connected events like migration. The inherently mundane practices that we perform every day suddenly become the point of entry to understand the mechanisms that construct and reproduce identity (see also Ho and Dobson, 2011). Food, by nature of its necessity and culturally dependent aspects of its performance, becomes a perfect vessel to examine the depths and meanings of how we conduct our lives (Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy, 2008).

However, attending to the embodied and sensorial experiences of the research field also demand, more than ever, a reflexive consideration of the bodily positionality of the researcher. The researcher cannot neutrally observe and understand how the external research subjects sensually experience their surroundings without simultaneously being influenced by one’s own sensorial impressions. Longhurst et al. (2007, p. 209) sees this intersection as an opportunity to engage the researcher’s own embodied experience in the research process, as a tool to understand the culturally embodied differences between individuals with different cultural backgrounds, and the significance of emotional responses of the researcher when conducting the research (see also Wilbur and Gibbs, 2018). Being reflexive about one’s own research position, then, not only entails engaging with the social characteristics that define our perceptions and the perceptions by others of us, but also our own socially and culturally defined sensorial tastes, habits and familiarities, and how they situate us within the sensorial experiences of the people that we are studying.

Working within the methodological framework in this research, I acknowledge and emphasize the importance of the non-verbalized emotional and sensorial responses to the practices and interactions that were conducted throughout. Analytically, the research places significance on the mundanity of the everyday practices of cooking and eating, embracing the full spectrum of sensorial impressions and experiences connected to performing them by also including the haptic and kinetic dimensions. The feminist methodological position of the research means that I, through the participatory methods of data collection, have sought to embrace the embodiment of my presence and own sensorial experiences in the knowledge production. My approach to the research field has placed me in the middle of the sensorial practices of the participants’ daily lives and has enabled me to experience the social and physical spaces that they are practiced within. By being transparent towards my experiences of reflexivity throughout the research process, mean that I renounced the possibility of obtaining an objective research position. Rather, I acknowledge that I, as a researcher am an active co-constructer of the knowledge produced. As a result, the analysis of the results was made in the reflexive scope of my own experiences and considerations towards the way that my presence influenced the research field.
3.2 Ethics

There were three key ethical concerns relevant in relation to the research process: Informed consent, anonymity when conducting a focus group interview, and my own reflexivity and positionality as a researcher of sensorial and embodied experiences.

Because the data collection consisted of direct involvement of the research field in form of interviews and observation, ensuring that participants gave informed consent was essential (Webster et al., 2014). To do so, I provided participants with information on what their participation meant through an initial description of content of participation, written participant information statement and a consent form I also discussed prior to each of the first interview. The participant information statement and consent form explained in detail the research project, what it meant to be a participant, how the data and final thesis would be handled and shared, and their rights and anonymity (see Appendix 7.2).

The participants, except for one, all met each other in the context of the focus group interview. However, personal details exchanged before, during or after the focus group session was not facilitated by the researcher without the individual participant’s consent. The research topic of food and the population of students at a higher education taken into consideration, the risk of harm in connection to the participants knowing who each other is, is minimal.

In the research, a reflexive treatment of my positionality as the researcher and facilitator of the research process was fundamental to provide a proficient scope on the way that the research study unfolded (England, 1994; Rose, 1997). As Rose (1997, p. 317) has pointed out, it is important to acknowledge that research reflexivity may never be adequate as a consequence of the unpredictable outcome of the research process. There will always be elements in the researcher situatedness and the researcher-researched power relation that might be incomprehensible and out of control, but still influential on the research.

Further, in an attempt to counter a researcher-researched power-(im)balance in the influence on the construction of data, the focus group was loosely designed to let the participants be able to shape the direction of the conversation and thus bring it unto, or in depth with, topics that I as the researcher might not have considered of importance (England, 1994). In relation to the interview situations themselves, there was a conscious effort towards conducting them on neutral or ‘home turf” and to make sure that the composition of the focus group would not provoke an unbalanced position between gender or cultural affiliations.

3.3 Positionality

I am a white, heterosexual (cis)male. Like the participants in the research, I am an international student at a tertiary education in Stockholm. Further, much of my social network is with other international students who live in student corridor accommodations like the ones in this research. I am of Danish origin and therefore have a spatial connection Scandinavia. English is my second language, like all but one of the research participants.

As I have taken an embodied and sensorial approach to the data, the interpretation of the data was completed through the reflexive knowledge. An additional reason behind the importance of unravelling my positionalities as a researcher was that as an international student, I share that trait with the research population. Being an international student defined my accessibility to the space and
knowledgebase of other international students. By largely being amongst peers, it was easy to construct an informal setting and there were many elements of the participants’ statements that I could mirror on my own daily experience of being a student migrant. Therefore, there were multiple occasions where things were said within an internal reference frame that I shared, and even though there would be asked for clarifications in most cases, it had a natural effect on the language that the interviews were conducted in.

My knowledge, expectations and positive/negative connotations regarding particular foods and ingredients are shaped by my biographical and geographical background. I do not perceive myself to be choosy with food and did my best not to let my surprises or potential dislikes shine through. However, I am aware that these embodied expectations and situated and limited knowledges about culinary traditions and practices do in fact influence my experiences and interpretations both in the data collection and interviews, and the research process as a whole, before, during and finishing the research project. My Scandinavian origin did in some ways make me more of a representative of Swedish food traditions as well, which in a few cases became evident when participant referred to “your” practices when addressing Swedish practices.

3.4 Methods
This section is divided into three parts corresponding to the three main data collections methods, and explains the background and procedure of each method. First, I discuss the usage of visual and sensorial observation throughout the fieldwork. Second, I explain the construction and process of the individual participatory interviews and cook-alongs that were conducted with all of the participants in their own shared kitchen environment. Third, I describe the structure and procedure of the focus group dinner session.

3.4.1 Observations
During both the interviews and focus group, I utilized observation methods to record the non-verbal interaction, the social and physical space, and how I myself experienced it socially and sensually.

Since the data collection was oriented towards sensory experiences, my observatory field notes were focused on my reflexive experience, acknowledging that I must situate my own embodiment in relation to the social, spatial and sensorial context of the research field (Pink, 2009). The data that was collected through the observations was therefore constructed through the recording of my own sensorial and social experiences while conducting the fieldwork. Analytically, this helped me with acknowledging and reflecting on the way that my bodily presence influenced the social setting and thereby the interactions and practices that I was able to record (Mason, 2002).

Prior and subsequent to each interview, I sat down and wrote reflexive field notes on my own experiences and expectations. In the field notes after the interview, emphasis was placed on recording my sensorial experiences related to the practices that I participated in, the interactions and non-verbal communication between the participants, myself and their surroundings, and what happened while we conducted the interview to contextualize the data. In case of the focus group, I utilized video recording to be able to revisit the data and observe bodily and emotional reactions and interactions through body language that I missed in the initial situation (Pink et al., 2017) (see 3.4.3 Focus Group Dinner Session for more).
Through recording my experiences, for example, I found that my own knowledge and expectations of the participants’ food culture shaped my approach to the practices that we were performing. Seemingly, so did the participants’ knowledge and expectation of what I could handle. Both in the interview with Fah (Thailand) and with Devaj (India) whose culinary backgrounds I had connected with spiciness, I was rather concerned with the spice level beforehand. In both cases, this turned out to be a non-issue as both of the participants had gone through the same pre-considerations. However, this reflection led on to the understanding that the way that cultural expectations is a mutually constructed process. In other cases, my incomprehensive knowledge of for example North American food practices would influence my emotional reactions when exposed to ways of doing things that I had not yet encountered. Cooking potatoes in the microwave oven is a testimony to this point. Further, through my notes I could record a subjective evaluation of my comfortability in the social situation as well as how I felt at that particular time physically and mentally. For example, I tracked the intensity and recovery-period of an influenza that I had during the first half of the data-collection period, and through that reflect on my bodily position in each encounter.

### 3.4.2 Individual Participatory Interviews and Cook-Alongs

The individual interviews with each of the participants were inspired by an in-depth interview structure. Each interview was done between 6-10 PM on weekdays, had a duration of between 1½-3½ hours, and was audio recorded for transcription purposes.

The interviews followed a semi-structured framework and was led by a topic guide through which I could make sure that the necessary information was given beforehand and that we touched upon the same topics in all of the interviews (see Appendix 7.3). The order in which the topics were discussed, however, varied considerably because of the semi-structured approach. By letting the participants structure and formulate their own interpretations of their practices while being in the social context that was discussed (the shared kitchen), the aim was to ensure that the knowledge producing sequence of the interview was done in situational and contextual surroundings of what I wanted to explore (Mason, 2002). Further, inspired by the methodical practice of walk-alongs (Pink et al., 2010), I chose to conduct the interview while we were cooking a dish of some everyday or cultural significance to the participant. That way, the participant and myself would be exposed to the actual practices and sensorial impressions embedded in cooking and let it inspire the interaction as well as the memories of previous situations of cooking and eating (Meah and Jackson, 2016; Yeo et al., 2014). Additionally, it was my impression that carrying out a routine and social practice like cooking and eating contributed to creating an informal and relaxed atmosphere where the participants could reflect freely (Mason, 2002).

The resulting data was co-constructed between the interviewer and myself, as both took part in the social relations and interactions of the food’s performance (Yeo et al., 2014). In my methodological approach, I embraced the outcome of co-construction as I was situated in the field and present for the practices of cooking, eating and being in the shared kitchen, while still conducting the interview. This meant that my role in the kitchen was mostly shaped by helping the participant with small tasks related to the dish and helping with the dishes afterwards.
The Interviews

Upon arrival at the corridor kitchen for the interview, I would either ask to turn on the audio recorder right away before, or in some cases right after, going through the participant information sheet and consent form (see Appendix 7.2). This choice depended on how I sensed that the participant felt about the situation. When I had ascertained informed consent from the participant, we began cooking and I would ask the participant about their daily food practices and the shared kitchen we were in. During the interviews, there were varying degrees of traffic of other corridor residents in the kitchen. Sometimes it was hectic and in others almost empty throughout the whole session. Due to ethical concerns about unintentional covert observations, I made an effort to make sure that the people coming into the kitchen during the interview were made aware of the audio recorder and made sure to answer questions about the research purpose and usage. In some cases, this actually spurred participation in the discussion and reflections by the participants’ corridor mates. Only the direct participant’s conversation was transcribed, and only the general topics of the conversations that included other residents have been used for the analysis, and not anything that was said outside of the research interaction. Because of the presence of multiple other people while conducting the interviews, there were several instances where the audio recording was inaudible because of cooking-related noise or parallel conversations. After finishing cooking, we consumed the dish in the common eating area in connection to the shared kitchen. Before terminating the interview, I made sure to inform the participant about the remaining process of the research, the usage of their data and their rights to withdraw. In most cases, the participants would not accept the offer to pay for half of the dinner, but in all cases, I at least insisted on helping with the dishes.

3.4.3 Focus Group Dinner Session

The focus group was organized on April 4, 2019 in a venue with a small kitchen and living room in connection to the student accommodation area in Lappis, close to Stockholm University. The focus group session had the character of a shared dinner where everyone, the researcher included, contributed with a dish brought from home and shared during the interview. The session was audio and video recorded.

Conducting the focus group in a shared dinner setting was done with the purpose of creating a contextual environment where participants could interact with the material and sensory topic that the research is concerned with. In this case that meant bringing along and sharing food that they have made themselves and that in some way represents their daily lives in Sweden or place of home. This situational social interaction was designed to stimulate conversations of how issues are conceptualized, interpreted and negotiated between the participants in that social context (Mason, 2002, p. 64). Further, by situating the focus group within the social context of consuming and sharing food I sought to focus on the cross-cultural interactions between the participants and their interpretations of each other’s practices and how it related to the socio-spatial context we were in (Bosco and Herman, 2009).

The purpose of conducting the focus group session was to create a situation where the participants interacted with each other and the answers and reflections discussed were created within a social context of interpreting and reacting to each other’s reflections (Bryman, 2016). The focus group enabled participants to take a degree of control over the discussion and pursue their curiosity towards each other’s practices, which guided the direction of the session (Finch et al., 2014; Mason, 2002). In that way, the participants took a more active role in the knowledge construction about their practice (Bryman, 2016). Within a feminist research perspective, empowering the participants worked against
the explorative power relations that can be characteristic of the interviewer-interviewee relationship (Bosco and Herman, 2009, p. 194). Nevertheless, the knowledge produced within the focus group context was still a co-construct with the participation of the researcher. I did indeed also participate in the discussions and influenced the direction of it multiple times in my role as the moderator. I referred to topics from my topic guide or brought the conversation back on the research topic if it derailed too much from the research themes.

To help me keep the focus group on track I utilized a loosely designed topic and event guide with different themes and things that I had highlighted from the individual interviews. These were inspired by the deconstruction of the different sequences of a focus group interview by Finch et al. (2014, p. 215p) to consider the order of topics and information from me to make the event run smoothly (see Appendix 7.3.B).

The focus group session was video recorded to help with the analysis of participant interaction afterwards. By having a visualization of the interaction, I was able to see the bodily reactions of the participants and their physical interaction with the food and materials on the table, as well as enable my own memory of my sensorial experiences during the session. The choice of video recording was based on the view that many aspects of social interactions and experiences are not verbalized (Mason, 2002, p. 104). The session was characterized by complex and rich social interaction with many bodily actions conducted simultaneously and intersecting with each other and the group conversation. Video recording the session enabled me to remember the interaction and noticing bodily reactions that I missed while managing the interaction, thus contributing to the detail that I could revisit in my data (Pink et al., 2017). In relation to my field notes and transcription of the focus group, I could then cross-refer the conversation with the video material and contextualize the transcription to what the different participants were doing during different sequences of the conversation.

The Focus Group Dinner Session

Below I give a short summary of the focus group session and reflect on how it went. To counter unequal social power balances, participants did not know each other beforehand and the interview was conducted at a neutral place at a rented venue at Lappis, close to Stockholm University with easy access for everyone. I had asked the participants for any food preferences or allergies and was made aware of one vegetarian person and a case of peanut allergies. All participants took considerations towards this so that everyone could share the same food, even though this was not something that I required from them.

Before the participants arrived, I arranged the interview room, set up the video recording equipment and tried to make the place cozy to engender a relaxed and informal atmosphere during the session. To create a sharing and participatory setting, I waited with setting the table before people arrived so that we could do it together (see Figure 1). The participants arrived one at a time and started to prepare the last things for their dish before moving to the table. Already before moving to the table, people were talking, introducing themselves and what they had brought with them, suggesting a friendly atmosphere. The food was placed in the middle of the table, as was the audio recorder (see Figure 2 and 3). The conversation went smoothly and everyone contributed without anyone dominating the discussion more than what could be expected in any group conversation. During the session, there was a small break where we took out the dishes and prepared dessert and tea before continuing. Afterwards, the participants were so kind to stay for a little while and help with most of the cleaning even though I had informed them that this was not necessary.
3.5 The Empirical Case

The research draws its empirical data from six international students that were living in similar but different student corridors in the Stockholm area. The research focused on the social spaces of the shared kitchens that all of the participants utilized on a daily basis side by side with their corridor mates. In this section, I describe the shared kitchen, the spatial settings, and configurations that comprises the research location. Second, I describe the research population, the sampling strategy and process, the analysis and introduce the research participants. Lastly, I shortly describe the process of the research project.
3.5.1 The Kitchen

The pictures below show a standard corridor kitchen in the student accommodation area of Lappis near Stockholm University. Five out of the six research participants lived in this student accommodation area\(^2\), which meant that all of their kitchens had exactly the same design but with varying degrees and types of decoration and accessories (see Figure 4 and 5). The kitchens were shared between 11-14 residents who each had a private room and bathroom connected to the kitchen through a hallway. Each resident was allotted one overhead cabinet as well as three drawers underneath the kitchen desk to store private kitchen utensils and products (see Figure 6). Additionally, each resident had one shelf in the common fridge and freezer to their disposal (see Figure 7).

\(^2\) At the time of the research, Vincent lived in a student accommodation in connection with the KTH campus area. The design of the kitchen there varied to some extend by having a more open design between the cooking- and social area and an attached balcony.
In the shared kitchen there would usually be a variety of shared kitchen utensils, pots and pans that previous residents had left behind. The amount and actual utility of the utensils, however, varied significantly between the kitchens that I visited. The interaction from the focus group dinner session in Box 1 exhibits how the quality of the available common utensils could vary between the participants’ corridor kitchens.

Except for the common kitchen utensils, each kitchen had a common circular cleaning and rubbish sorting system where residents would take turns cleaning the space and taking out the rubbish. The kitchens that I visited had varying levels of cleanliness, but because these cleaning systems were often week-based, the state that I encountered when visiting might not have been representational as the cleaning day might have been pending the next day. The weekly responsibility of cleaning would often be accompanied with a note describing the specific tasks connected to the job (see Figure 8). The note was often colorful, had drawings or a humorous description to give the cleaning duties a positive connotation.

Figure 8: Cleaning note in shared kitchen (permission from Melina Scheuermann, 05.09.2019)

```
KITCHEN CLEANER
TASKS:

DAILY: Pick up the dishes, pots, pans, cutlery, etc. from the drainer and put them in their places.

WHEN NEEDED/AT THE END OF THE WEEK:
- Take out the different trash
- Clean the microwave
- Clean countertops, tables, ...
- Sweep and mop the kitchen floor
- Water plants

Vincent: “(…) do you use all of them [pots] or like basically you know which ones are the good ones to use?
Alberto: I know the good ones.
Vincent: Yeah that is what I do too. I only use a certain amount of them because the others are gross.
Mathilde: But yeah. There are very old (...) in my kitchen. Like most of the pans are, I don’t know how old, but they are old and posessed, and always a bit dirty even when you clean it. I have my own pot for most of my stuff. But then everyone is fighting for the only pan that is still good. [That is still] Looking good. And it’s huge. Today when I was making the crumble, there were 3 people wanting to use it at the same time as I was [laughing].”
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Box 1 (Focus group, 04.04.2019)
3.5.2 The Population and Sampling Process

The six participants were all international students studying for a semester or a full degree at a tertiary institution in the Stockholm area, and living in student accommodations with shared kitchen facilities (corridor rooms). The participants were purposefully chosen to create a sample consisting of cultural and social differences and were therefore chosen strategically (Bryman, 2016). This sampling strategy mean that gender, nationality and other personal characteristics were part of shaping the selection-process so that the sample represented a variation in demographic character. It is important to emphasize that the research did not aim to create a representative sample of the general international student population in Stockholm. It was the interaction between different cultural background that were of interest, and not the interaction of particular cultural backgrounds.

Participants were recruited through my own social network and the recruitment was especially successful through the usage of social media. By sharing a post on Facebook (see Appendix 7.1) on multiple different platforms connected to student accommodation, I found participants for both of the data collection sessions. Even though I utilized my own personal network of international students in Stockholm, I focused on recruiting participants that I did not have any personal relations to counter imbalance in the group and the risk of personal relations shaping the research encounter. After the initial contact, I provided them with a participant information statement and the consent form, which I would ask them to sign before conducting the first session (see Appendix 7.2). The participants were first asked if they were still interested in being involved and participate in both the individual interviews as well as the focus group, and if they understood they had the right of withdrawal. I coordinated each interview and moderated the focus group dinner session. The focus group was organized early on to make sure as many as possible could participate. That way, I was also able to meet each of the participants beforehand in the in-depth interviews and create personal rapport that could ease the social interaction in the focus group (see Figure 9 below). The hope was that the initial individual interview would generate reflections on the participants’ own food practices and how they were performed in the shared kitchen, so they could contribute more confidently in the focus group discussions. The focus group dinner session included six people (including the researcher and without one participant who was unable to attend the chosen date), six dishes and two and a half hour of interaction about food and sharing a kitchen.

![Figure 9: Process time-line of data-collection](image-url)
3.5.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Each interview was audio recorded and the focus group session also video recorded. The data collected for the research project consisted of approximately thirteen hours of audio material, around 250 pages of interview transcription, and one hour of video material together with my field notes on sensorial impressions and observations during the encounters.

The theoretical framework outlined in the literature review detailed the structure of the initial approach to the data collection. In that way, the theoretical framework functioned as a tool to focus the interview themes and shape the topic guides that were used (see Appendix 7.3.A and B). However, this was not a linear but rather a circular process where the theoretical framework was revisited throughout the data analysis to embrace the directions that the data revealed. After the data was collected, it was approached from two overall perspectives defined by the theoretical framework: the everyday practices of food and their spatial and transnational significance, and cross-cultural interpretations and usages of the shared kitchen space. First, the data was used to contextualize the case of the space of the shared kitchen and situate the different participants in their transnational and migrant lives and backgrounds. Through the overall themes different categories and patterns emerged through the data, such as shopping habits, changes in practices after migration, positive and negative experiences with co-residents’ cooking, sense of home.

The transcriptions were coded and analyzed using those identified themes, as were the field notes of my observations. Because of the sensorial and feminist methodological approach, the data was further approached through a reflexive scope of my own experiences, drawing on my field notes. The field notes were scrutinized and coded using the same or similar themes, to add a reflexive dimension to the results that I found in the data. In that way, the non-verbal and sensorial aspects of the food practices and social interactions that were performed throughout the data collection were accounted for reflexively. As a result of the dual division of the data from the beginning of the research processes, the results and discussion chapter is also divided into two sections, and the patterns found in relation to the theoretical framework are discussed within each sections as well as a reflexive discussion relating to the overall theme.

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3 One audio recordings of an individual interview was lost due to technical issues and I had to rely on my field notes for analysis.
3.5.4 Participant Introduction

In Table 1, an overview of the contextual social and geographical background of the research participants is provided, followed by a short biography of each research participant, their migration to Sweden and the relation to their current living situation in their student accommodation in Stockholm. Each participant has been provided with a synonym for research ethical reasons.

Table 1: Participant information overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Place of origin</th>
<th>Arrival to Sweden</th>
<th>Time in current accommodation (at the time of the research)</th>
<th>Educational stay in Sweden</th>
<th>Dishes cooked (I: Individual interviews, G: Focus group)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alberto</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Northern Italy</td>
<td>October 2016</td>
<td>½ year</td>
<td>1st year of master in at Stockholm University</td>
<td>I: Pasta with tomato sauce and basil G: Pasta with ricotta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devaj</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Kerala, India</td>
<td>August 2016</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Finished master at KTH in December 2018 and was working part time at the university</td>
<td>I: Chicken curry in coconut milk and a rice dish G: Did not participate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fah</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Chanthaburi, Thailand</td>
<td>August 2018</td>
<td>A few weeks</td>
<td>1st year of master at KTH</td>
<td>I: Kang som Kai jeaw (แกงส้มไข่เจียว), Thai omelet and rice. G: chili paste based dish with tofu and rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katerina</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Moscow, Russia</td>
<td>September 2017</td>
<td>2 months</td>
<td>2nd year of master at KTH</td>
<td>I: 2 different Swedish inspired salads G: A Swedish inspired salad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathilde</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Paris, France</td>
<td>August 2018</td>
<td>½ year</td>
<td>1 year ERASMUS exchange at Stockholm University</td>
<td>I: Vegetarian curry dish with coconut milk G: Apple and pear crumble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vincent</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>New York, USA</td>
<td>August 2017</td>
<td>½ year</td>
<td>2nd year of master at KTH</td>
<td>Rosemary chicken, mashed potatoes and peas and onion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Alberto**
Alberto (32 year old male) grew up and has been working as a teacher and living with his family in a city in Northern Italy previous to migrating to Sweden in October 2016. The initial reason for migrating to Sweden was to experience something new and work as a substitute teacher before finding out that he could take up studying. The first period after migration, Alberto lived in a flat in Södermalm but moved into a sub-rented student accommodations after beginning his master’s program and eventually accumulate enough days\(^4\) to get his own corridor room in Lappis, near Stockholm University in the Autumn of 2018. He was at the time planning to stay in Sweden after finishing his studies. Alberto cooked pasta with tomato sauce, basil and ginger for our individual interview session and pasta with ricotta for the focus group dinner session.

**Devaj**
Devaj (28 year old male) come from Kerala, India, where he also completed his bachelor’s degree. Before moving to Sweden to study, he worked in another major Indian city for four years. At the time of the research, Devaj was working part time at KTH (Kungliga Tekniska Högskolan) while looking for jobs in Sweden to extend his visa as he finished his master from the same university in December 2018, just before the research was conducted. After moving to Sweden in August 2016, he was given accommodations through KTH the first year of studying and afterwards collected enough days to apply for his current residence at Lappis where he has been living in for approximately one year. Devaj cooked rice with shredded carrots and onion accompanied with a chicken curry in coconut milk for our individual interview session. Unfortunately he was not able to attend the focus group dinner session.

**Fah**
Fah (25 years old female) come from Chanthaburi, Thailand. She moved to Bangkok at age 18 to study at the university and thereafter worked for three years, where she shared an apartment with her brother and sister. Fah moved to Sweden in August 2018 to start a two-year master program at KTH and was provided with accommodation through KTH for the first year. Before the initial contract ran out, she found another corridor room in Lappis available and chose to move in March 2019, only weeks before our first interview session. After finishing her studies, she was planning to return to Bangkok to work off the student scholarship that she received from the Thai government and take care of her parents. For our individual interview, Fah cooked Kang som Kai jeaw (แกงส้มไข่เจียว), an orange curry dish with fish, shrimps, broccoli, cauliflower, a Thai style omelet and rice. At the focus group dinner session, she brought a chili paste based dish with onion, carrots and tofu as one of the other participants was vegetarian.

**Katerina**
Katerina (23 years old female) come from Moscow, Russia, where she was living with her family, and took her bachelor’s degree. In September 2017, Katerina moved to Stockholm to undertake a two-year master program at KTH and was at the time of the research in the last semester working on her thesis. The choice of Stockholm came, among other reasons, because of a scholarship to KTH that would provide for living expenses. When moving to Stockholm she was provided with accommodation for the first year by KTH and went on exchange to Paris in the third semester. In February 2019 she moved into her current corridor residence in Lappis. Katerina’s plans after the termination of her studies were still unclear except from the decision against return-migration. She might stay in Stockholm as she as grown fond of the city. For our individual interview session,

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\(^4\) ‘days’ are the general term used for the days accumulated on the waiting list for acquiring housing accommodation (SSSB, 2019)
Katerina made different salads inspired by what she would normally eat in Sweden. The salads were based on ingredients like spinach, semidried tomatoes, chickpeas, and beansprouts.

Mathilde
Mathilde (20 year old female) grew up in Paris, France, and identifies as mainly French even though one parent is from Spain. Previous to her exchange to Sweden, Mathilde lived in an apartment in Paris with her boyfriend. She was at the time in her third semester of her bachelor degree at a Parisian university, but has since (August 2018) been on a two semester ERASMUS exchange program to Stockholm University. When she moved to Sweden in August 2018 she was allotted the current corridor room in Lappis by the exchange program, and has been living there for the whole period (approximately ½ year at the time of the research). Because of her exchange status, Mathilde categorized her stay as temporary and was planning on return-migrating when the exchange was over. Mathilde is vegetarian, and for our initial interview session, she cooked an Indian inspired dish with broccoli, cauliflower, pepper, curry, chickpeas while her boyfriend, who was visiting at the time, baked bread. For the focus group dinner session, Mathilde made an apple and pear crumble for dessert. During our initial interview in her corridor kitchen, her boyfriend was present during the whole session.

Vincent
Vincent (28 years old male) come from the state of New York in USA. He is Italian American with all of his grandparents’ origin in Italy. Vincent moved away from home at 18 for college. After finishing his bachelor’s degree, he worked for three years before moving to Sweden to study for a two-year master’s degree at KTH. He moved to Stockholm in August 2017 and was at the time of the research in his last semester of his master program and working on his thesis. Upon arrival to Stockholm, KTH allotted him a student corridor accommodation at Lappis where he lived for approximately the whole of the two first semesters before the contract ran out. Before he was able to accumulate the days to move into his current corridor residence located on the KTH campus in the Fall of 2018, Vincent lived in a couple of subrented student housing accommodations. When he finishes his degree, Vincent was hoping to find work in Sweden and his initial plan was therefore not for return-migration. At our individual cooking session, Vincent cooked oven roasted rosemary chicken in butter, garlic and coriander, microwave cooked mashed potatoes, and peas and onion. At the focus group dinner session, he brought cornbread.
3.6 Limitations

The relatively small sample size of the research and its representational ability has an obvious influence on the potential to generalize the results to a wider population. Since I chose to recruit six participants for the research, there are limitations to the geographical spread of those students. The selective and purpose-oriented sampling process adds to that limitation. However, the focus of the research was on understanding the social relations within the shared kitchen space between international students with different cultural background and not the correlations and interactions between specific cultures. Additionally, creating a representational sample of international students would quickly prove to be an impossibly big task when considering the spatial contextuality of food cultures, even within a single country. Nevertheless, the findings from the study cannot and should not be generalized to all international students and their migration experience.

A key theoretical limitation is the intersecting elements of food practices with other everyday practices that also shape the migration experience of international students. Indeed, food practices are only one everyday routine practice that constitute the everyday life. Cooking and eating intersect with many other daily activities to construct the lived lives of international students. This research must therefore be seen through the scope of only examining one of such, knowingly that there are other intersecting factors that could not be included in the research for the purpose of keeping it focused and in-depth.

During the individual participatory interviews, cooking while discussing the emotional attachments to the practices and sensorial experiences of different elements of the food proved to be a productive approach and could likely have been a valuable framework to include in the focus group session as well. Economic restrictions to the research and unavailability of suitable facilities, however, made this impossible.

In the following chapter, I discuss the results that were gathered from the data produced throughout the research process.
4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The chapter is divided into two sections corresponding to each research question. In each section, I relate and discuss the results that I have found in the data to the theoretical framework that corresponds to these two overall themes. In the first part of the chapter, I concentrate on the transnational food practices by discussing the constructions of the participants’ culinary identities that reference practices of their cultural homes. I then relate the participants’ reflections on their culinary background to their migration experiences, and the adaptations and negotiations they have taken moving to new spatial and cultural contexts. In the second section of the chapter, I discuss the results that relate to the social space of the shared kitchen and the interactions and interpretations that I encountered through my fieldwork. Therein I focus on the different usages, practices and interpretations of the shared corridor kitchen space and the social interaction between the student residents and the way that the space (dis)enables the participants’ transnational food practices. In each of the two sections, I have included a second reflexive sub-section discussing and reflecting on the contribution of the sensory methodology and the embeddedness of my own experiences, and how it defines and enables the research project towards the knowledge that was produced.

4.1 Transnational Food Practices and Interactions

In this section, I focus on the sensorial transnational experience of migration and the changes that ensued on food practices of the international student participants. To explore these changes, the section is divided into subsections that each focus on an aspect of their transnational practices related to food. First, I discuss the construct of their culinary identity and the way it is shaped within the micro-geographies of the domestic home. Second, I explore the experiences of transitioning into a new spatial and cultural context, and how the migration experience brings with it compromises and negotiations in daily practices of food. Third, I discuss the way that knowledge and cultural expectations of other’s food practices are related to interpretations and connotations. Fourth and last in this section I reflect on the sensorial and embodied aspect of the fieldwork in relation to experiencing and understanding food practices from a personal and reflexive perspective.

4.1.1 Constructing the Culinary Identity

In section 2.3 Migrant food practices and the home, the identityrelation between a person’s culinary heritage and perception of food practices, and the homebuilding process was established and connected to the micro-geographies of the domestic homes they have previously inhabited. For most people, the parental home is a defining arena from which many domestic and social practices are learned in early life (Cairns et al., 2010). Resultantly, as the student participants in this study were both young and had not lived away from the parental home extensively, the influence of their domestic culinary traditions adhere closely to home. This close adhesion is evident in the subsequent quote from Devaj, a south Indian male student who described being taught to cook by his mother.

“That depends on how you were brought up. Not many people are encouraged... At least guys in India, are not encouraged to cook. While my mom thought that it was a good idea for everyone to learn how to cook. (…) So she decided to teach... I have a sister, so both of us we used to just help around in the kitchen when she was cooking. And that's how we learned.” (Devaj, India, 03.11.2019)
The memories Devaj connected to the domestic home, then, diverge from gendered Indian culinary norms and indicate the importance of the micro-geographical domestic spaces of the home in defining cultural practices (Ratnam, 2018). The construction and distribution of social practices within the home are not only shaped by general norms in society, but rather are shaped in a complex intersection of norms and practices of the much smaller geographical scales of ones surroundings and everyday life. Everyday practices of cooking and eating are so diverse from family to family and person to person; it becomes difficult to categorize food practices under regional umbrellas, though historical and societal conditions define an overall pattern (Cook and Crang, 1996). An example of this nuance came from the interview with Alberto, a Northern Italian student participant who explained that he adds ginger to tomato sauce, even though his mother does not. This example is demonstrative of how individual practices and tastes alter elements in cooking practices, even to a very small degree.

Spending time and growing accustomed to the daily practices of cooking before the migration event could have a potential influence on a student migrant’s need to reconnect through the sensory, haptic and kinetic dimensions of remembering cooking practices (Meah and Jackson, 2016). This means, if culinary practices were not routinely performed in the previous home, there might not be the same weight given to their connected memories, especially the haptic and kinetic dimensions of the physical performance in remembering cooking practices. Katerina, a female Russian student, explained that her way of cooking changed a lot after moving directly from her parents’ apartment in Moscow, where she barely cooked, to Stockholm, where she was living alone in a student corridor. She explained that in her new Swedish surroundings, a general focus on a healthy diet and increased availability of vegetarian options, have inspired and influenced what she eats and how she cooks. From when she initially moved to Sweden to now, she perceives her culinary practices as suiting her better.

“And then I was eating a lot of bread. I was doing toast and cheese and stuff like.. Which now I don’t eat. Then I was cooking fried… How do you say. Fried vegetables, where you put a lot of vegetables all together. Like onion, you fry it. And cabbage, carrot and everything you find. And then you cook it all together. This was kind of what my granny was cooking for me. But now I don't eat [this type of food anymore]... (...) Yeah I think because I think I was seeing what people around me are eating. It's interesting. And also… Personally. Because I was trying to make this experiment with what I was eating back in Russia as well. Like trying to no to... To eat only vegetables or this or this. But it didn't get into habit. And it didn't change much. And here when you see everybody around… (...) So it changed” (Katerina, Russia, 04.02.2019)

Here, Katerina describes how her daily routines changed gradually from those of her parental home, which for some may constitute culinary identity. In this case, her culinary practice was informed by the practices of others with whom she lived. The limited routine in the kinetic and haptic practices of cooking in the domestic home before migrating could have had an influence on the embodied memory of practices and the contextualization of them to a previous cultural context. Katerina, in another part of her interview, expressed how a certain sensory-based practice of drinking tea with jam after dinner, even if you did not participate in the meal, is deeply rooted in her family’s culinary identity. In the quote below, Katerina described how it is connected to her home and how this practice evolved after moving to Stockholm.
“Ah when I just came I was doing this. I was drinking tea with jam. And I still think... Oh I can give it to you actually. I have a jam. I was thinking. It was amazing. It's really really our home thing. You make it like this. You take a bit of jam. Put it in your mouth. You don't swallow it but you drink tea. And the tea should be with no sugar. And then it's super nice. And so I was drinking it all of the time. And I thought that I could not live without it. But then I just forgot about it somehow. And now not anymore.” (Katerina, Russia, 04.02.2019)

This example showed that the haptic, kinetic and sensorial dimensions of memories of practices distinguish themselves from each other and can have different amounts of influence on what is remembered and what is actually continuously part of a person’s practices and culinary identity over time and space. I now turn to examining how the spatial transition to a new context influences student migrants’ food practices.

4.1.2 A Process of Adaption Ensues

Cooking and Eating

Before moving to an in-depth exploration of the differences that this change in scenery constitutes in the students’ everyday practices, it is important to distinguish the highly individual life style that most international students lead, certainly all of those who participated in this study. While cooking and eating together was indeed an important element of social life for the participants, the cooking and eating practices of their daily lives were much more centered around the flexible and sometimes messy schedules that their meals had to fit around. This was particularly evident with evening meals; varying in timing and construction, performed and consumed individually and often made to cater for several meals to save time and resources.

When moving to a new place, the migrant must adapt the practices that they are familiar with to the facilities, materials and contexts that are available. In the quote below, Devaj explained how he, because of the cooking skills imparted to him by his mother, was able to easily transfer his routines to his daily life after leaving the parental home to work in another Indian city.

“But since I have all the… Had a lot of time and experience with cooking at home with my mom it was not that big of a problem for me to just transfer that in to that particular [context]. Yeah then I just had to cook for myself.” (Devaj, India, 03.11.2019)

However, when moving over a larger distance and in between major changes in culinary traditions and practices, the circumstances and subsequently the ease with which the migrant is able to transition into the new context, becomes more complex. Here, Fah, a female Thai student, reflected on her cooking practices in the very first period after moving into her new accommodation near Stockholm University.

“Like during the first few weeks. Even simple dishes I took a really long time to cook. (…) Like the fried rice. In Thailand it maybe takes half an hour to finish. But when I was here I may take like an hour (…) Because when I first came here, what do you say, [I was] still clumsy with doing some things.” (Fah, Thailand, 03.25.2019)

5 All of the research participants pointed towards this construct of the daily meals, which also corresponds with the researcher’s own experiences and knowledge of other international students’ daily routines in his person network.
The inefficiency in her cooking practices were connected to a lack of tools or equipment and “stuff that I can use” (Fah, Thailand, 03.25.2019). The shared kitchen itself presented a new challenge that she needed to grow accustomed to. The first period of moving into a new spatial context, then, is composed of a series of negotiations where the haptic, kinetic and sensorial routines that have shaped the cooking practices previously need to be readjusted to the new space to make it homely (Ratnam, 2018). Hybrid transnational practices emerge in the interrelation between transnational culinary practices, routines and material expectations, as well as the social, cultural and material circumstances and opportunities that new social and spatial contexts present.

When describing the difference of tastes and ingredients between Sweden and their country of origin, the respondents noted several divergences. Vincent (USA), for example explained that Swedish cuisine is “less fatty” and that he feels the food in the US is “greasier”. Devaj (India) additionally described what he perceived as a totally different way of thinking about the construction of a dish while explaining the food that he was preparing.

“Usually in Indian cooking, again, nothing is like one whole dish. It's all a lot of accompaniments. So you would have one main dish, which is usually had with some sort of a chutney or some sort of a curry. I'm trying to make the curry with the chicken, while this is going to be the main rice dish.” (The dishes that are referred to are visible in Figure 10 and 11) (Devaj, India, 03.11.2019)

Additionally, Devaj relates culinary heritage to his approach to the performance of cooking, experimenting with different flavor profiles depending on both what he craves and coincidence, but adhering to an ideology that defines the essence of a certain dish. It is clear that both Vincent and Devaj perceived their culinary heritage to be different from the practices and impressions that they were experiencing in Sweden. By comparing their own practices and sensorial memories to the foreign surroundings, they reconstruct their own geographical knowledge of the food culture that they have grown up in (Cook and Crang, 1996).
For a couple of the research participants, their culinary heritage held significant emotional value when remembering their place of origin. Home, then, becomes more immaterial than the actual domestic space where the food practices of homebuilding are performed. Fah further reflected on the emotional connectedness that she feels to Thailand when she and her friends cook together, saying that “I think I miss the food more than home. Yeah, but maybe for me, food is home” (Fah, Thailand, 03.25.2019) and elaborates at another point in our interview:

“There are some times where me and my Thai friends cook and eat Thai food together. We feeling like we are back home because, like, he taste of food is what we have in our country. So, it feels like you are coming back home when we have the real food.” (Fah, Thailand, 03.25.2019)

However, relating current practices to those of home can create abrupt changes to the way that the student migrant is able to reconstruct familiar practices, tastes and textures. The participatory interview with Fah highlighted such a situation, when she interrupted the researcher out of frustration to explain how an instance of material theft had disrupted her normal routine of cooking rice and how the repercussions of this would forcibly alter the meal.

“Like my rice cooker was stolen. (…) So I asked my friend to teach me how to cook rice with pot and stove. (…) I never do that because I always use the rice cooker. It’s easier just cook rice, water. Push the button, start. And you wait for like 40 minutes and then you get the rice. But this one [the pot] I have to look at it all the time. Because it will be burned.” (Fah, Thailand, 03.25.2019)

This situation captures the essence of what happens when she, as a migrant, is prevented from performing an essential culinary practice. For her, the process as well as the end result became dramatically altered, and I, as the researcher, was unable to experience the authentic process and sensorial impressions of that Thai cooked rice combined with the orange fish curry that Fah had made. The theft, however, had another and deeper consequence for Fah’s daily practices. The haptic, kinetic and sensorial memories that are connected to the usage of the rice cooker and cooking rice in general were almost entirely deconstructed, forcing Fah to renegotiate and compromise this specific food practice and thus lose a part of the sensorial authenticity connected to her food (Meah and Jackson, 2016; Ratnam, 2018).

Shopping, Accessibility and Compromise

Another element of recreating the familiar food practices and sensorial experiences from home is shopping for groceries and negotiating the (in)availability of certain ingredients. Alberto highlighted one of the differences that he found in the experience of shopping for food in Sweden compared to Italy.

“Because it's expensive. Because it's a bit fake I think. If you go to - not this one [referring to the local ICA in Lappis] which is small - but a big ICA in the city, usually you see very beautiful food. But then when you eat them it's not really so... So that you say “ah! Very good!”, it's just that they are beautiful to look at but then [they are] not so good.” (Alberto, Italy, 03.18.2019)

To him, then, there is a loss in availability of quality ingredients for an acceptable price. He ascribed one of the reasons for the difference between Swedish and Italian availability in quality ingredients to the open markets and how the products there are locally produced and not from Spain, which is where a lot of vegetables come from in the supermarkets. As he said: “but the one [the vegetables] you buy at the open market. They tend to be close to the… The market” (Alberto, Italy, 03.18.2019),
and thus fresher (Devaj and Fah underline the same point in their interviews). Alberto continued to describe the connection between taste and the origin of the product through a story about the way his father usually purchased the ingredients for the food in the home.

“Ah! And then there's another opportunity in Italy that I don't find here. To go directly to the people who have fields with tomatoes for example. My father usually does that. He goes to the farmer directly and buy tomatoes in summer. Or salad. Or for example eggs. You can buy eggs directly from the chicken that are free to move around. Not the ones that are in the supermarket that are... (...) The industrial ones. There you can really taste how tasty it can be, an egg.” (Alberto, Italy, 03.18.2019)

To reconnect with food practices across transnational space, the ‘right’ flavors and sensorial experiences are essential (Longhurst et al., 2009). Nevertheless, this quickly becomes tricky in a variety of ways. For example, there can be a direct inaccessibility of certain products that match the sensorial experience expected. Devaj, for example, explained how he brought spices with him when he was in India and his sister sends packages with spices through mail so he can cook the correct way, and not with the curry powder found in Swedish supermarkets that is just “basically turmeric” (Devaj, India).

“Even the common spices that are in the bottles... unless if they are these common ones [points to some of the containers bought in Swedish stores]. You can see the ones that I have labeled. Those are from India. And even of the pepper and stuff I bring them from India. Like I bring the whole ones and I grind them when I need them. So, it preserves a little amount of the freshness. And it still have the potency that I expect it to have.” (Devaj, India, 03.11.2019)

Devaj’s selection of spices are visible on figure 12 below, where especially the two middle shelves showcase a variety of different spices brought from home.

![Figure 12: The inside of Devaj’s overhead cabinet (researcher picture, 03.11.2019)](image-url)
For some migrant groups certain shops import products from their home country and thus offer a variety of choices other than the selection found in an ordinary supermarket (during the research there were mentions of English, American, and Asian stores). In Stockholm, several Asian supermarkets distribute products connected to a multitude of different Asian cuisines, as well as other types of products that are not related to food. These stores then becomes spaces of nostalgic and practical reconnection with specific products that are directly related to the migrants native cultures (Visser et al., 2015; Webster, 2016). Fah described how she utilizes these shops to purchase specific spices and sauces, and added that she thought that she was able to find authentic Thai chili paste in these markets (though this has not been necessary yet as the stock that she brought from Thailand had not run out). However, there are still limitations to the variety of products available when a single store seeks to cover the popular products from all Asian food-scapes. In her interview, Fah explain how the unavailability of one specific type of pepper prevented her from making a specific Thai dish that her mother would cook.

“But I cannot do it. (…) There were just some spice that I could not find here. Like pepper. Like when it becomes a pepper... Like green pepper. And when it [gets] older, it will become black pepper. (…) And European always use the black pepper in the food. But [name of Thai dish] use the green pepper” (Fah, Thailand, 03.25.2019).

In this example Fah did not have access to the same food resources that more permanently situated Thai migrants have in relation to knowledge of places to access culturally specific ingredients. Within co-ethnic and diaspora networks there are often a deeper layer of accessibility to particular products connected to a more informal trade and black markets (Webster, 2016). Fah, however, were in Sweden only temporarily as she planned for home-migration after finishing her degree, and the co-ethnic network that she had in Stockholm was with other Thai students at the university. Accessing these informal networks would require a heavier commitment to the local Thai community in Stockholm, which would probably accompany a permanent purpose of residency. Temporary compromises towards food practices might be more bearable. Further, for migrants that originate from popular and influential European food cultures (i.e. Alberto is from Italy and Mathilde is from France), there are other issues with sourcing products. For example, in the focus group dinner session the conversation at one point turned to people’s ability to appreciate specific types of products and whether they had a high or low quality. Mathilde explained that:

“I don't mind if it's not a good beer, whereas if it's a bad cheese it's. It's that! (…) Because also we have cheese stores and I have my favorite cheese store where I live in Paris. It's like the best place ever.” (Focus group, Mathilde, 04.04.2019)

In the conversation, Katerina suggests that French cheese is available everywhere in Stockholm, just at an inflated price. Mathilde, quietly expressed distrust in the quality of the supply in Sweden, suggesting that authentic good French cheese cannot be easily accessible in Stockholm. To Mathilde, the authenticity and assurance of quality lies in the geographical location of the retailer (in France) because it is the practice of purchasing and consuming cheese that, for her, is deeply rooted in her national identity (Cook and Crang, 1996). Our geographical knowledges and stereotypes, then, are lenses through which we perceive and interpret the possibilities and applicability of ‘other’ food cultures.
4.1.3 Geographical Knowledges and Cultural Expectations

International student migrants usually conduct their everyday lives in rather multicultural social settings, especially when they have residency in a student accommodation as in this research. With the exception of Vincent, who was also the only research participant that was not living in the student accommodation area Lappis near Stockholm University, all of the participants reported that there was a large majority of international students compared to Swedes living in their corridors. Thus a migrant, already predisposed to have mostly co-national and international social networks (see Hendrickson et al., 2011), is also in a social situation where they can experience cross-cultural variation in cooking (and wider housework) practices between multiple and different cultural actors in their daily lives. The following section examines how these practices are experienced and interpreted in the scope of the geographical knowledges and cultural expectations, which situate us as individuals and influence how we experience other’s practices.

At one point in the focus group dinner session, the group reflected on the dishes presented in the middle of the table and which were familiar and recognizable, or unfamiliar.

“Pasta is normal and Thai is… familiar. But the American thing [corn bread] is totally new for me, and potato salad [made by the Danish researcher] I thought it was more German. But I never tried it. I think in Sweden they also eat it. But I never tried it” (Focus group, Katerina, 04.04.2019)

In the quote, Katerina relates her geographical knowledge about Thai and Italian food to what she was able to identify. She recognized the contributions from Fah (chili paste based dish with onion, carrots and tofu) and Alberto (pasta with ricotta) (some of the dishes are visible on Figure 13 below). Her above quote also highlights the way that food not only reinforces our culinary stereotypes, but can also confuse and challenge what we thought we knew about certain practices and dishes, or reveal what we lack knowledge of. Our geographical knowledges of different food traditions are based on experience and associations to different food types (Cook and Crang, 1996).

Figure 13: Collection of dishes served at the focus group dinner (reproduced with permission of the participant, 04.04.2019)
How these knowledges and expectations of others’ cooking are shaped, relates not only to taste but also to a wide variety, if not most, of practices that are connected to food. The performance of cooking and how certain practices and ingredient are also used to indicate cultural expectations, which became clear in the participatory interview situation with Devaj, when two of his corridor mates were present in the kitchen and taking part in our conversation about food. Through my own knowledge of Indian cuisine, I had chosen to inquire about Devaj’s practices of cooking rice, which were part of the dish that we were making. Coincidentally, one of the conversing corridor mates, a Swede, was also cooking rice for dinner. Out of inexperience or maybe general social interaction practice, the Swedish corridor mate asked Devaj for advice about how to cook the rice correctly, giving Devaj a certain cultural authority about the way that rice is supposed to be handled. My experiential and geographical knowledge of Indian cooking, and actually all of the participants’ culinary backgrounds, undeniably, guided my approach to each of the interview. The interviews themselves were interactions and negotiations of cultural assumptions about the practices associated with food in its preparation and the experience of the process. The way that this geographical knowledge was negotiated between cultural expectations and first-hand experience was evident in the discussion between Fah, Alberto and Vincent, where she explained the regional differences and purposes of eating utensils in throughout Asia (box 2).

_Fah_: “And in Thailand we always eat food with rice and we eat rice with spoon. So it's quite different. Like we have rice with spoon but most of you, most of European countries eat rice with fork.

_Esben (researcher)_: You already told me but I already forgot about it because it's so ingrained in the way that I...

_Fah_: Yeah it's new to you so I know that if you eat rice with fork [and] it's fine.

_Alberto_: You don't use the chop sticks?

_Fah_: Chinese and Japanese use chop sticks.

_Alberto_: And you never…?

_Fah_: I don't use chop sticks. But I use chop sticks with noodles. But I can still use chop sticks to eat rice [M makes surprised noise]. I can use it, but we don't use it to eat it normally.

_Vincent_: (...) So do you not use knives? [Fah confirms]

_Alberto_: Because you don't need it or because you can use the spoon [indicating cutting motion]

_Fah_: Yeah because I think… We didn't need knife to cut something. And actually, if you have to cut we can use spoon to cut it.”

Box 2 (Focus group, 04.04.2019)

Not knowing whether Thai food was traditionally consumed with a spoon or with chopsticks obviously related to the individuals’ previous experiences and encounters with Thai culture through representations in restaurants, media, or by direct encounter. I, for example was unaware of the heavy utility of the spoon before my first encounter with Fah in our cooking and interviewing session, a little more than a week prior. While this was a major part of everyday culinary practices, one that might seem glaringly obvious when positioned in the light of its contextual complexity, we can then associate the culinary practice with the performance of the practice too. Indeed, as Cook and Crang (1996, p. 140) have also suggested, food cultures must be recognized as being “locally produced as part of situationally specific identity projects, and, like all such knowledges, constructed from within the spaces of material culture and not from some Olympian viewpoint above them”. What we know about each other’s, and our own, food culture is also a construction of material, historical and social circumstances and stereotypes and not a fixed entity. Nevertheless, this does not make identification with one’s own culinary background and ‘othering’ foreign culinary practices and sensorial
impressions any less felt and emotionally relevant; we must also appreciate the reality that there are 
quite big differences defined by our geographies (Cook and Crang, 1996). The sensorial reaction to 
experiencing surprising or foreign tastes and the culinary identity and knowledge construction that 
lies behind the reaction is, then, very tangible indeed. For example, while the food was distributed 
between the participants during the focus group dinner, Katerina asked Vincent whether cornbread 
was sweet or savory, to which both Mathilde replied but with opposite statements. Mathilde thought 
it was savory while Vincent would in fact categorize it as sweet. This revelation resulted in surprised 
body language from Mathilde and Fah, which was visible to me in situation (see Figure 14 for a 
snapshot of my perspective at the time of the interaction) and through further cross-examination of 
the sensory experience that they could expect from the cornbread, for example with Katerina asking 
“But… Is it dessert or not?” (Katerina, focus group, 04.04.2019).

Later in the focus group, when Vincent had explained the usage of cornbread in American dinner 
structure, and he was explaining the process of cooking it, Alberto interrupted to express his 
enjoyment of the dish, accompanied by myself and the other participants. Even with a small smile 
from Fah, which could be interpreted as the expression of positive surprise over the applicability of 
sweet dishes to a main course. In my own sensorial acknowledgement of Vincent’s contribution also 
worked as an assurance to him that even though a sweet main dish was foreign to me it was very 
enjoyable nonetheless. While the interaction above was lighthearted, the sensorial and emotional 
response that people can experience when exposed to a foreign practice can also create agonistic 
interactions. There you need to negotiate your understanding of what you are experiencing in relation 
with the geographical knowledge and expectations you have beforehand (Cook and Crang, 1996; 
Longhurst et al., 2007). It is a complex negotiation process where there is always someone who has 
something at stake. Such an interaction from the focus group dinner session (Box 3) provides an 
example of a negotiation process, where the usage of cheese in different ways created strong 
emotional responses between multiple participants. Though this was a humorous exchange, the 
dialogue still shows how practices that vary dramatically from one’s own can create direct physical 
feelings of disgust and abjection (Longhurst et al., 2007). In this way, Mathilde’s expression of
disgust (see “eurgh”) becomes symbolic for her reaction towards the reinterpretation of cheese practices that differ from her own. The French identity that Mathilde sees materialized in cheese, also explored earlier in the chapter, becomes reinforced by her defense of the ‘correct’ usage of cheese and the ‘othering’ of the foreign interpretations cited by her fellow participants.

**Box 3 (Focus group, 04.04.2019)**

*Vincent:* “Don't tell me we don't know real cheese. We have like cheese [sounds like 'bizz'], that comes in a tube.

*Mathilde:* Yeah I know.

*Katerina:* You have what? [small laughter in group] Cheese what?

*Vincent:* Actually you guys have... the blue cheese too.

*Mathilde:* And you have like the spray cheese whatever.

*Vincent:* Yeah!

*Alberto:* Spray cheese? (…)

*Vincent to Esben (researcher):* (…) But you guys have cheese it tubes here in Scandinavia. I see like a whole wall of different flavors

*Esben (researcher):* Have you seen that in the supermarkets? There are always these small walls where everything is just tubed cheese. [Alberto: no]

*Mathilde:* I didn't know it was cheese but now I feel really sad [Alberto laughs]

*Esben (researcher):* In the supermarkets there are these kind of stalls somewhere, always, where they have like bacon cheese and shrimp cheese and [Mathilde inhales and says: eeurgh], what are they called, the big shrimps. The... [does pinching motion with fingers to indicate claws]

*Vincent:* Lobster.

*Esben (researcher):* Yeah, lobster cheese

*Mathilde:* [Laughing] lobster!”

**4.1.4 Embodied and Sensory Methods Reflections**

In this part of the chapter, I address the sensorial component of the methodological approach and how it contributed to and shaped the results, both through my own and also the research participants’ embodied experiences throughout the data collection sessions. There are two parts to this discussion: food practices, identity, and interactions and negotiations between them. First, I discuss the way that the sensoriality of our practices during the interview evoked memories of food practices. Second, in line with the epistemological foundations of the research, I discuss the physical, social and geographical situatedness of the researcher and how my own sensorial interpretations affected the research process.

By conducting the social practice of cooking and eating, whilst discussing the analogous cultural connotations and meanings, was fundamental to the participants’ ability to recall and remember how these practices were conducted at home. Ratnam (2018) argued that the sensual impressions of smell, taste, movements and feelings are an essential part of helping these memories come to the fore. For instance, all of the participants were able to reflect and describe the tastes of home compared to the ones they were experiencing in Sweden when they were actually able to taste the difference, while discussing it. In fact, the participants themselves were able to reflect upon how the method allowed them to describe more clearly their culinary relations and practices compared to a situation where they could only formulate a representation through memory. The participatory and interactive method
combined performance and verbal interpretation to create a productive interview setting for reenacting memories and reflecting on their relation to the place they were performed in. It was relieving some of the pressures and power relations associated with formal interview interactions that may cause discomfort for the participant. During a reflexive moment of our interview, Devaj considered the way that the practice of cooking influenced the setting.

“You could also say that it's kind of a diversion, right. Let's assume that we were not going to cook today. I don't think I would have been able to answer the same way that I am answering right now. Because at that time my entire mindset would be ‘ok, you are interviewing me and asking me questions, and I'm supposed to build an answer based on the questions that you ask’. So it's more constructive towards the interview itself. While when you do it while cooking, it kind of takes away the pressure that you have to answer something based on the interview. It just becomes more of a conversation. So that would be the case of any meeting. Say you meet somebody outside and you won't have a conversation with that person. But if you invite that person over for something to eat or drink, obviously that kind of [becomes] a deviation. You don't think about that being an interview. You talk as if it was more of a conversation rather than an obligation to talk just because you're meeting (…) Food being kind of a stress reliever in that case, to have a conversation that is more comfortable.”

(Devaj, India, 03.11.2019)

The familiar memories of cooking practices, the act of cooking, cutting vegetables and the eating as recognizing nuances between spices and flavors, created a sense of purpose and control for the interviewees. It meant that rather than a formal interview, which is often criticized for creating a power imbalance that limits access to the participants perspective, this scenario involved doing, while talking about the act of doing at the same time. The experience of cooking created an atmosphere in the kitchen that provided reminders of home; a sense of familiarity, comfort and security that further aided the interview process (see Hage, 1997).

Accounting for the embodiment of the researcher is an important part of conducting sensorial research. How my body experienced our cooking and eating shaped how it has been interpreted in this thesis (Pink, 2009). During the first half of the participatory interviews, I was sick and my most essential senses connected to experiencing food were unable to connect to tastes and smells. The physical shape of my body, then, became a determining and limiting factor in my ability to experience, observe and participate in the research field, and came to question objectivity in the field of sensory research as indeed an impossibility. Bodies – mine and the participants’ – assembled in time and space in the research, as did my cultural situatedness in the way I interpreted and encountered social and sensorial practices and research (Cook and Crang, 1996). However, it was not only my geographical situatedness that shaped the experiences created during social interaction between the participants and me, but also the participants’ geographical knowledges and assumptions about my taste, abjection, and threshold for certain types of spiciness that defined the sensorial output. During our cooking session both Fah and myself were aware of the difference in the typical spiciness tolerance level between Thai and Scandinavian tastes, which resulted in a negotiation of the spiciness of the dish that we were preparing (see Box 4). In this way, the creation of food and constructing its sensorial experience is not only a result of an individual interpretation of the other culture’s food practice but rather in a mutual negotiation between the geographical knowledges and cultural expectations that all involved parties contribute to and apply on each other.
The haptic, kinetic and sensorial aspects of performing the action of cooking contributed to the interview situation in terms of memories and curiosities between the researcher and the participants. If all research participants had been able to cook alongside each other, it would have had the potential to facilitate more interesting cross-cultural interaction over transnational practices, sensorial experiences and curiosity. Yet, due to economic limitations in the research project, facilitating such an interaction was not possible. Nevertheless, for further research in the topic of transnational interactions between food practices, there is potential pursuing the perceptions and sensorial reactions to intercultural culinary practices with participants cooking alongside each other. This potential became clear initial to the focus group dinner session where people where finishing their dishes and preparing them as there was much interaction and curiosity between participants about cultural practices, origins, tastes, smells and purposes of each other’s dishes.

4.2 The Shared Kitchen - Cultural Usages, Practices, Interactions and Interpretations

As established in the first section of this analysis, migration entails adaptation and negotiation of practices and experiences performed in the homeland, to new context of the shared corridor kitchen in student accommodations. First, I examine the direct (dis)enabling influences that the facilities and the spatial construction of the kitchen have upon the international student migrant’s practices. Second, I examine the construction of the social space of the shared corridor kitchen and how it shapes, and was shaped by, the interactions and usages of its multicultural residents. Third, I reflect on the methodological contributions of the sensorial approach in relation to experiencing and understanding the shared kitchen space and the way that narratives and experiences there were socially negotiated in the focus group dinner session.

4.2.1 A (Dis)enabling Space - Changes in Practices

For some of the participants in the research, there were very tangible differences between the kitchen that they were used to and the one that they encountered when moving into their student corridor accommodation. Their food practices, then, required renegotiation and compromise based on the physical space, tools and systems they had to their disposal in their efforts to recreate practices that were familiar to those of home (Hage, 1997; Longhurst et al., 2009). Vincent, for example, used the oven to a lesser degree after moving to Sweden due to the difference in temperature-measuring system (i.e. Celsius/Fahrenheit), while Fah described the entire irrelevance of the oven all together in the typical Thai kitchen design: “Just stoves yeah. But our food is... The oven is not needed. (…) Yeah, only the top [of the stove] here and under here is the place where you can store a lot of food ingredients.” (Fah, Thailand, 03.25.2019). Consequently, for Fah, the accessibility of an oven has enabled her to experiment with recipes that use one. Below, she explains how she utilized the online food platform; Tasty (“Tasty – Food videos and recipes,” 2019) to explore foreign food traditions that she was not capable of before.

Box 4 (Fah, Thailand, 03.25.2019)

| Fah: So I will let you taste. If it's too spicy I will put more water in. |
| Esben (researcher): Ok, to kind of take the [laughing] spiciness away. That's really nice of you, to consider my tolerance. |
| Fah: Yeah, because my friend, one time, he cooked some Thai food like this. And he made one German cry because it was too spicy. |

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“And I also have an application on my phone. And when I look at it and I find some recipe, I will try it. (...) But some recipes I cannot do because we don't have an oven. (...) From tasty it's like... (...) Because I never tried it. It's Western food.” (Fah, Thailand, 03.25.2019)

The physical design of the kitchens that the student residents have at their disposal, then, has both enabling and disabling influences on the direct practice of cooking and, by extension, the familiarity that these practices create through haptic and kinetic recognition (Meah and Jackson, 2016). However, the shared element of the corridor kitchen also had implications on the way the research participants were able to structure their daily routines and conduct their food practices. The social construction of the space, between the 11-14 co-residents, and the structural and design features, also shaped the participants’ ability to recreate the same utility of the kitchen that they might have been used to (Meah and Jackson, 2016). Vincent, for example, emphasized the way that the limitations of space in the fridge had on his general approach to daily cooking.

“I only have 1 shelf in the fridge for like everything. (...) Like I can barely buy any fresh produce. Everything is compact and... Even when I came here I sort of moved my shelf down a little so that I would have more room [E laughs]. But I asked the other guys and it was fine. (...) I make a meal, and I have leftovers. Like I can always store one leftovers in the fridge. I can't make another meal and store more leftovers. Because at home I can make three meals and a different meal every night, and I would have leftovers staggered the rest of the time. But here it's like you sort of have to finish it before you make the next one.” (Vincent, USA, 03.21.2019)

The kitchen, and especially the fridge, become objects of coordination and negotiation between actors that do not share the same routines but live parallel lives. The material aspects of the shared environment are not the only factors that influence the haptic, kinetic and sensorial routines and practices of cooking and eating. Indeed, in this social space, Alberto drew attention to a common conflict for students who share common areas in the group interview (see Box 5).

> Alberto: “The first thing I want to say is that the common kitchen has this problem that someone cleans and someone doesn't.  
> Esben (researcher): OK. Is that a big problem, or?  
> Alberto: let's say that for example you see this pot [show pot which has not been properly cleaned after cooking rice]. Today I already used and cleaned [it], now I find it like that. It's not like (...) people are doing that, but every day we have the same situation. Sometimes it can be annoying”

Box 5 (Alberto, Italy, 03.18.2019)

It is therefore apparent that the physical facilities and divisions do not work on altering the students’ culinary practices in isolation, but in tandem with the multiple encounters that occur in shared spaces and play a determining role on the experience of space and the performance of cooking. In turn, this alters the capacity of residents to replicate the fulfilling and familiar practices of food practices.

4.2.2 The Kitchen as Home - The Private/Social Dichotomy

In the research, many of the participants drew attention to the way that they imagined communal living in a shared corridor space would work as a homely space on their arrival. In the focus group dinner session, there was discussion about how the student participants had high expectations of the potential social connectedness between co-residents when they first moved in and how they had pictured that the cross-cultural composition of the corridor would seep into their daily activities. In
our individual interview, Vincent reflected on the way that his romanticized conception of the intercultural interaction in the shared kitchen would happen versus what actually happened (Box 6). He stated how there was a social distance between the residents in the corridor that he did not necessarily know, even though he was sharing the same kitchen facilities. However, the social distance could also be attributed to the physical separation between the residents’ private rooms as well as the common kitchen (an aspect that I will take up later in this section).

Box 6 (Vincent, USA, 03.21.2019)

Vincent: “I wish I got to learn more about other people's cooking in the corridor.
Esben (researcher): How... What makes you kind of not see it? Because, you share the kitchen.
Vincent: I know. I guess it's just kind of like. I feel like it's a personal thing.
Esben (researcher): So you don't want to intrude.
Vincent: Yeah I don't feel like I know them well enough to be like ‘teach me how to cook your food'(…) There's a new Chinese guy. And I would like to learn how to cook the Asian food like I was saying. I have a lot of classmates from India, so I ask them how to cook. So I saw a little bit of that”

The influence of the social relationship to the other individuals that inhabit the space is crucial to define how the space is interpreted and experienced. Nevertheless, this raises multiple questions about the intersections of the social space and relations of the kitchen; what should the relationship be between corridor mates, and what conflicts may arise when these preconceptions are not met? If the motivation for sharing student accommodation is cross-cultural interaction (i.e. the romanticized preconception of common living), but this is prohibited when social conventions where trust, cleaning and familiarity are prerequisites for sharing, then there is an impasse. Further, how does the kitchen, a key domestic space, function when the users do not interact positively within it? Particularly given the intimacy between people and their culinary practices. And does this make the kitchen private or public?

Where there, in a conventional domestic kitchen, would be a division of labor between the family-members, flat mates or other type of co-residency, there is, in the student corridors, a more individualistic lifestyle and thus more separated routines. Further, whilst these routines of domestic labor would usually have a gendered division (see Bennett, 2006), individual lifestyles and separate responsibilities have resulted in a flatter structure in the space of the corridor kitchen, where all inhabitants provide for themselves daily. However, with 11 to 14 different parallel lives utilizing the same space for cooking and potentially eating, coordination issues occur. Whilst I was conducting the participatory interviews in the shared kitchens of the participants, there was usually regular traffic of people moving through space; checking on a pot that was cooking or to prepare a quick meal. This kitchen traffic created waves of activity, and during their peaks, people would evaluate if there was enough space for them and retreat if the kitchen was too full. The social environment that I experienced in those periods, while often pleasant, was sometimes quite hectic with conversations and practices running simultaneously, requiring the users to take considerations to each other whilst performing their own individual practice. This meant clearing surface space, cleaning kitchen utensils right after usage and minimizing the space they filled. To some of the participants, this would result in a renegotiation of the temporality that they would use the kitchen. Mathilde expressed frustration with the lack of utility of the shared kitchen and said that she spends less time in the kitchen than what she would normally as a result. Additionally, Fah described how the timing of her cooking

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6 This was a point made by all of the research participants when it was indicated that the utility and responsibility of the kitchen might be gendered.
practices, especially if she knew she would occupy space, would be coordinated in relation to the
time where the kitchen had the heaviest activity.

“So I always choose the time where a lot of people are not in the kitchen if I have to cook something
- a lot. Maybe I'll cook a lot in the weekend and then I can eat that until Wednesday or Thursday.”
(Fah, Thailand, 03.25.2019)

The shift from initial romanticizing to the reality of shared a kitchen structure in a corridor
accommodation also became clear in regards to the utilization of the connected eating and socializing
area and whether the participants would use this space to consume their food or not. In the below
quote, Mathilde expressed how her perspective on and usage of this space changed from the early
period after moving to her contemporary perspective.

“At first I was eating in the kitchen hoping to meet new people. But then everyone… I saw everyone
leaving with their food. So it was always like 'ok' and... Now I do the same. I go to my room almost
every single time. (...) It's just if I have friends over I will eat in the kitchen.” (Focus group, Mathilde,
04.04.2019)

This behavior held true through my own observations from the individual interviews, where few
people remained in the kitchen for consumption after preparation. It could therefore seem like the
individual life style combined with the collective usage of the kitchen creates a social setting where
it is not necessarily very cozy to consume one’s meals. However, as I was conducting an interview
and being actively present in the kitchen the social situation becomes altered, which might have had
a deterring effect on other residents. Nevertheless, taking the participants’ explanations of their
general usage of the common eating area, it did seem like the tendency was confirmed by the patterns
I observed during my fieldwork.

In the previous section (4.2.1 A (Dis)Enabling Space - Changes In Practices) I pointed toward the
influence that the co-residents in the corridor have as actors in the creation of the social space of the
shared kitchen. The constellation of actors and their social relations, therefore, become determining
of the level of intimacy that the space facilitates. As these spaces, and the social practices performed
within them, are highly temporal and spatially contextual (Webster, 2016), changes in the social
composition of residents in the corridor would affect the social practices that are conducted there.
During the focus group session, Mathilde and Alberto each explained how the social constellation of
the corridor residents affected the spaces in two different ways and, further, how their behavior and
usage of the shared kitchen changed accordingly.

“Yeah in my corridor it has actually changed because we had all of these new people coming and lots
of people leaving. And there was this group of guys that were really not. Like really gross. And every
time they cooked it was disgusting and they were leaving their stuff and it was really really gross. But
now, I don't know, they left. And we have all of these girls that are much cleaner and much more
respectful and we have this cleaning schedule and more or less everyone respects. Or at least empty
the trashes and it's like. It's much better than what it used to be.” (Focus group, Mathilde, 04.04.2019)

“I changed my behavior about this. Last year, when I was cooking I was also staying at the kitchen to
eat. Because there were other friends there. Now almost all of them they left. I don't find the same
friendship with the new ones. We are all friends but not in the same way. So I don't… I prefer to go
to my room and be quiet” (Focus group, Alberto, 04.04.2019)
While Mathilde experienced an increase in the quality of the structural circumstances of the shared kitchen in the form of an increased sense of responsibility for cleaning among her co-residents and herself, Alberto experienced a decrease in social cohesion after his friends moved out of the corridor. In the comment, Mathilde explained that the newcomers were generally female and that they were clean, which might indeed bear some gendered meaning of who was perceived to undertake cleaning practices. When asked directly, however, Mathilde, like all of the other research participants, would not categorize gender as a determining factor on the utility of the kitchen or cleanliness. While gendered expectations and connotations are most likely present even in the shared kitchen, they did not draw a clear pattern in the fieldwork. This might be attributed to the individual lifestyle that the students lead, as discussed previous in this section.

In this research, all of the participants that took part in the fieldwork had moved from one housing accommodation to another at least once during their time in Stockholm. Given that, with the exception of one candidate the general length of stay in Sweden at the time of the fieldwork did not exceed one and a half years, this seem typical for students and indicative of the highly mobile housing situation in Stockholm, compounded by temporary stays and frequent relocations. High internal mobility post-migration has also been considered through the perspective of the varying lengths of stays that student migrants plan for in relation to their move to the host country (Bilecen, 2009). The frequency with which residents are moving in and out of student accommodations is therefore a relevant aspect to consider in regard to the continuously changing social contextuality of each corridor kitchen. These kitchens must therefore be regarded as highly flexible spaces that evolve and transform in relation to the social actors that inhabit it, and thus shaped by the actors’ usages, interpretations and interactions.

Often, a distinction was made between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ kitchens; where good was defined by fluent social interactions and a general proactive attitude towards the cleanliness of the kitchen. Alberto, classified his kitchen as a ‘good’ one, describing how he would “force a common dinner” (Focus group, Alberto) when a new resident moved into the corridor to maintain the ‘good’ atmosphere:

“Well we have a good relation... Yeah. Even though I prefer to go to my room we have a... We organize, almost once half a month, every moth or month and a half, a dinner together. (…) And so there is a good atmosphere. So I think we are more than neighbors. But at the same time we are not as close as friends.” (Focus group, Alberto, 04.04.2019)

Supporting his feelings towards his corridor mates being “more than neighbors”, Alberto also expressed ownership and responsibility connected to the shared kitchen to give it a homely connotation to him.

“Oh I think it's something that is mine. I mean it's not really mine but when I clean the kitchen I will like it to be clean. Not because I've done it but because... Yeah I feel in the kitchen there is like home.” (Focus group, Alberto, 04.04.2019)

The link between the feelings of what constitutes the home, ownership and responsibility might also relate to the sense of what is actually the private space and what is (semi)public. In case a space is perceived to be non-private it also loses connotations of ownership, and subsequently of being a home where a migrant can conduct practices of familiarity by recreating senses of security undisturbed (Hage, 1997; Ratnam, 2018). In the case of the corridor kitchens, the resident’s private accommodation was separated from the shared kitchen by the corridor connecting the rooms to each

---

7 At the time of the fieldwork, Devaj had been living in Stockholm for two and a half year.
other, the kitchen and the main entrance. In our individual participatory interview, Katerina pointed out that the practice of having to put on your shoes to go to the kitchen felt like going to a new place entirely: “(...) here everybody feels like going to the kitchen is like going to another flat, you know? You put on your shoes and you go far away somewhere.” (Katerina, Russia, 04.02.2019). In this way, the distance and the need to move through a space of transit before arriving to the kitchen, for Katerina, detracts from the homeliness of the space. Something that I experienced first-hand when we, during our individual interview session, moved between her corridor room where we ate and the shared kitchen where we did the cooking. My own experience of having to move between the kitchen and the private room gave me an impression of how the separation between the spaces created a material and perceptual distance to the shared kitchen as a truly domestic space. This separation became especially evident as I, because of my inexperience with living in a student corridor, had to be reminded to do put on my shoes when going to the kitchen to do the dishes.

4.2.3 Embodied and Sensory Methods Reflections – Sharing a Kitchen

As in the first part of the chapter, this last section takes up a reflexive discussion of the contributions and implications of utilizing a sensory methodology. Here, however, I focus on the way that this approach has helped me understand and experience the social space of the shared kitchen. I focus on two points: first, how my emplacement in the kitchen space and participation in the usage of it contributed to an understanding of non-verbal social interactions, relations and systems. Second, I explore how my physical presence in the shared corridor kitchen had implications for the interactions and practices that were conducted by the residents, and how it might also have enabled all implicated actors to consciously reflect on the experiences of utilizing the space.

Experiencing the student resident’s daily practices first hand in the shared corridor kitchen afforded me the possibility to understand how these daily practices interacted and interfered with those of their corridor mates. By being present in the space, I was able to observe the structures and social negotiations that occurred in the space and shaped the way it was used. For example, each kitchen had similar variations of a common cleaning, storage and sharing system where they would distribute the cleaning duties between the residents in the corridor and have rules for the usage of common kitchen utensils. My own observation of the physical space gave me an idea how well these rules were enacted, and, when it was clear they were being ignored, frustration was palpable both in the embodied experience of the space as well as the non-verbal reactions of the participant, such as body language, facial expressions or interactions with their surroundings indicating the dis-enabling factors of a shared kitchen (Ratnam, 2018). At one instance during an interview session for example, two corridor mates were cooking in the shared kitchen while we were consuming our food in the adjacent eating area. The corridor mates’ cooking was loud and had a strong smell to it, which made both the researcher and the participant lose focus for a moment, where after the participant leaned slightly forward and acknowledged that sensorial discomfort like this was indeed part of sharing a kitchen. Another key observation was seeing the way that Vincent had organized and packed his two refrigerator shelves to the brim of capacity, enabling me to see and measure the limits in storage space in relation to what he described as his daily food routines, indicating that shopping and kitchen routines would have to be adapted accordingly.

By conducting my fieldwork within the space of the shared kitchen, the interview interaction was shaped by the sensorial and social surroundings of the space that we were discussing. As for the sensory aspect of understanding the circumstances under which the participants conducted their everyday lives, it could be argued this approach exposed and provoked many memories of previous
interactions within the shared kitchen (Ratnam, 2018). For example, Mathilde seemed to get her perception confirmed, that the shared kitchen was an insufficient place for comfortable cooking practices, as the atmosphere was rather hectic during our interview, which spurred reflections on what she missed from having her own kitchen space. However, reflections might have been shaped in relation to the social interrelationship between the other people in the corridor. It is, for example, unlikely that a participant would openly express dissatisfaction with the practices or sensory outcomes of a co-resident practices due to regular social norms and to avoid potential conflict. An example can be related to the above mentioned situation where one participant leaned over the table and lowered their voice before expressing sensory discomfort with the strong smell coming from the cooking of co-residents in the kitchen.

As an unfamiliar face, my physical presence in the kitchen did not go unnoticed by the corridor mates utilizing the shared kitchen simultaneous to the interview. The explanations of my research purposes, as well as the usage of an audio recorder became a topic of conversation in most of the interviews, which obviously gave my researcher position a very overt character. The social space and interactions that I recorded during my fieldwork must, therefore, be understood in the contextuality of my embodied presence (England, 1994; Pink, 2009). Explaining my research purpose functioned as a physical reminder of the focus on transnational food practices, however, and did enable interesting conversations on the topic between the people present at the time, even without my participation. One situation where this experience stood out was during the interview session with Devaj, where two of his corridor mates were present throughout most of the interview. Both of them participated in our discussion on transnational food practices with reflections from their own backgrounds and sensorial impressions of what they saw, tasted and smelled. In this way, the altered social space caused by my physical presence seemed to contribute to a deeper layer of conscious reflection on the research topic, and might actually have had a magnifying influence on the cross-cultural interactions over food practices in comparison to the everyday life interactions. Nevertheless, since this research does not focus on unravelling the tangible structures of the student residents’ daily lives, but rather how these are perceived and experienced, this outcome only serves as a contributing effect to the purpose of the research.

In the next chapter, I revisit the main arguments and conclusions of the results that I have discussed throughout this chapter, and relate the conclusions to the initial research aim and purpose.
5.0 CONCLUSION

Before summarizing the main arguments of the paper, I revisit the aims and purposes of the research project. The aim has been to use a sensory perspective to examine how the daily practices of cooking and eating relate to international students’ sense of, and relation to, their place of origin. Further, the research set out to examine the contextuality within the shared kitchen that facilitates many international students’ daily food practices, and how the physical and social space of the shared kitchen shapes the student residents’ interactions and practices.

To contextualize the transnationality of the students’ food practices, first the research explored their perception of their culinary identities and found that it related to the micro-geographies of the domestic spaces of their parental homes and not only to their national heritage. Reconstructing these practices and sensorial experiences within the new spatial and social context showed a significant loss of authenticity in both taste and performance through compromises and negotiations of what is available, which in some way reinforced the relations to their ‘home’ by othering the host culture. Within the space of the shared corridor kitchen, the fieldwork showed both enabling and limiting influences to the participants’ practices depending on the physical and social construction and composition. However, the data showed that the students often went to lengths to ensure resemblance to familiar sensorial experiences by importing ingredients and utilizing niche-stores but that performing and consuming transnational foods did indeed prove to be significant in their daily lives. Some participants even emphasized the sense of ‘home’ that the immaterial social practices of cooking particular food could constitute. When experiencing cross-cultural practices, foods and sensorial impressions, it was clear that the geographical knowledge of these played into the interpretation and expectations that were attached. These cultural expectations created a certain cultural authority towards practices shaped by cultural and geographical association. However, the different ways of utilizing certain food practices were also able to cause agonistic emotional reactions when deviations between essential elements of people’s interpretations did not correlate.

With multiple different students sharing the same space in the corridor kitchen, the students’ culinary and social heritage and identity become influential factors in the way the space is shaped. Social and cultural constructions of the way domestic and food practices should be performed are embedded in the sensorial memories that the migrants’ practices recreate (Ratnam, 2018; Samers and Collyer, 2017, p. 104pp) and the power relations that they represent (Bennett, 2006). The social constellation and relations between the residents are therefore defining elements in the level of homeliness and thus responsibility towards the shared space. The corridor accommodations, however, have a very high turnover rate, which means that the social composition and, through that the kitchen space, is constantly changing. The results indicated that the influence of the highly individual lifestyle that the student residents lead towards the domestic labor division within the shared kitchen, especially considering food practices as everyone needs to attend to their own. A sense of individuality seemed further provoked by the physical separation of the private rooms and the shared kitchen, which gave them both an indeterminable character between private and public.

The sensorial and embodied approach of the research project influenced the process and results in multiple ways. The exposure to food practices during the interviews provoked sensorial memories and reflections from both the student residents and myself and served as a tool to create an informal and comfortable interview situation. Being in the kitchen during the performance of the students’
food practices, non-verbal reactions and communication enabled me to reflect on and ask for meanings of elements that would have been missed in a verbal representation of the practice outside of the spatial and social context of the shared kitchen. The methodological approach contributed with an in-depth insight of the sensorial experiences and interpretations of the participants in their everyday life as the data was collected in situ of the social practice in focus. This was indeed both evident in case of the participatory interviews where I could experience the practices within the spatial context of the shared kitchen, as well as in the focus group dinner, where the interactions and reactions between the participants’ perceptions of food and sharing a kitchen could be shared while sensually experiencing each other’s foods. It was also evident that my bodily shape, own cultural background and geographical knowledge, and certainly also physical presence and participation shaped and situated my experiences, as well as the social setting the fieldwork was conducted within. While my presence within the social space might indeed have influenced the interaction, it also seemed like it enabled and focused the conversations and magnified the cross-cultural interactions that I was overtly there to study.

During the research it was hinted several times of the gendered interpretations of domestic responsibilities within the kitchen and to some extend also the culinary identity. In the relation to the individualistic household structure of the students and Cairns et al.’s (2010) study of gendered food identities, it could be interesting to explore the discursive interpretations and understandings of food, but maybe even more so the sense of ownership and responsibility for the shared kitchen space within student corridor accommodations. Further, the advantageous methodological approach of qualitative data collection while performing the practice in focus, could with great benefits, be applied to a focus group setting as well, giving the participants the possibility to interact over their practices and not just the product of their performance. In the individual interviews, this showed to be a productive way of recreating memories and senses of familiarities, not to mention the way that the multidimensional sensorial exposure to each other’s practices would facilitate a platform for cross-cultural interactions, curiosity and emotions. Further, because of the limited sample size, it is important to recognize the limited ability to generalize to a wider population of student migrants, though this study might certainly indicate behavior and experiences that could be taken up in further research.

The thesis offers an in-depth understanding of the importance that the lived domestic life of student migrants towards their migration experience and how it is shaped by the housing circumstances where many international students live. The contribution of this research is an exploration of the experienced reality of common living and how it relates to the often romanticized picture held beforehand. Further, the research also contributes with a detailed examination of the actual utility of the kitchen space as a cross-cultural space of social interaction and transnational practices of familiarity that facilitates attention towards the importance of these spaces in daily life. The research makes a further contribution to an increasing scholarship on the in-depth understanding of international students by emphasizing the sensorial experiences connected to living a transnational life through an in-situ methodical approach, combining the data collection with the social practice of cooking and eating.

To understand the resources that international student migrants’ embody, as well as how to best facilitate their movements and cross-national lives, we need to see them as more than numbers and sources of capital. We need to see them as – living, sensorial and emotional beings.
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54


7.0 APPENDIX

7.1 Participant Post on Social Media

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**Esben Enghave Larsen**

25. februar

It’s thesis time and I am looking for participants for my research. I’m anticipating that participating is both going to be fun and interesting to most people, so do both the ‘people’ and me a favor and spread the word. Please 😁

Note that I’m only looking for international students living in corridor accommodations with shared kitchens. More info is available in the text below. Please contact me for more information.

❤️️️ Esben

---

Wanted! International students who want to participate in an interesting and different research project about food, cooking and the daily life of being an international student.

I am looking for participants for my master thesis research in Human Geography at Stockholm University.

The study focuses on the lives of international students and how cooking and eating can be part of one’s cultural identity and relations to where you come from. To explore this it is my intention to conduct participatory interviews and cook-alongs, where we talk about food and cooking while we are actually cooking and eating.

Participating in the study will include participation in two separate sessions. First, we will have an individual interview where I will join you for the preparation and eating of a meal while we talk about food and life in the shared kitchen. Second, there will be organized a group session with a handful of participants and a researcher, where we eat together while discussing and reflecting on different food cultures and how it is to share a kitchen with multiple different cultural backgrounds. The group session might include video recording for recollection purposes.

OBS! It is important to point out that extraordinary cooking skills are of no relevance and that everyone can participate, and that, naturally, the researcher will financially cover parts of grocery expenses.

As a participant, you are…

- A non-Swedish citizen.
- Proficient in the English language.
- Studying at a university level institution in the Stockholm area for a semester or more (undergrad, postgrad or PhD).
- Living in student corridor accommodation with shared kitchen facilities in the Stockholm area.
- Able to meet between the 11th-29th of March and again between the 1st-7th of April at either noon or in the evening.

Please help another student out! So if you yourself would like to participate or know someone that potentially would, please do not hesitate to contact me or pass on my post.

If you want more information please contact me!

Hope to hear from you!

Esben Enghave Larsen

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14 kommentarer 8 delinger
7.2 Participant Information Statement and Consent Form

- International students’ food practices in shared kitchens

1. What is the research study about?

You are invited to take part in research. The aims to examine the everyday experiences and practices of international students living in student corridor housing in Stockholm. The everyday living experiences of international students is an under researched aspect of international student mobility. The research will focus on the shared kitchen space in the corridor accommodations where food practices and interactions between residents result from sharing the space. I seek to examine the meanings and sensory experiences of routine practices of cooking and eating as a way to understand how the experience of cooking and sharing the space can be expressed in more than verbal ways. The research will include 6 participants.

You have been invited because you in correspondence with the researcher, via social media have expressed interest, in participating in both of the research sessions described later in this paper.

The research project is being conducted as part of the master thesis dissertation in Human Geography at the University of Stockholm.

2. Who is conducting this research?

The research will be conducted by master student:

Esben Enghave Larsen,
Department of Human Geography, Stockholm University
Tel: +45 20 42 97 12
Email: esbenelarsen@gmail.com

Research Funder:

Applications for funding are currently pending:
- SSAG (Svenska Sällskapet för Antropologi och Geografi)
- Albert & Maria Bergströms stiftelse

3. Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

Before you decide to participate in this research project, we need to ensure that it is ok for you to take part. The research study is looking recruit people who meet the following criteria:

- A non-Swedish citizen.
- Proficient in the English language.
- Studying at a university level institution in the Stockholm area for a semester or more (undergrad, postgrad or PhD).
- Living in student corridor accommodation with shared kitchen facilities in the Stockholm area.
- Commit to meet twice. Once for an interview between the 11th-29th of March, and again for a group interviews between the 1st-7th of April (either noon or in the evening).

4. Do I have to take part in this research study?

Participation in any research project is voluntary. If you do not want to take part, you do not have to. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage.

If you decide you want to take part in the research study, you will be asked to:

- Read the information carefully (ask questions if necessary);
- If you would like to participate, sign the consent form and;
- Take a copy of this form home with you to keep.

5. What does participation in this research require, and are there any risks involved?

If you decide to take part in the research study, we will ask you to participate in the following two separate research sessions, described below. Depending on research funding, the latter session (involving the group interviews) may change slightly in character (see description A and B in the section on the group session):

An individual interview and cook-along

This individual interview will involve you meeting me (the researcher) in a one-on-one interview. During this interview, we will prepare and eat a dish that you have chosen as representative of ‘home’ to you. It is entirely up to you what you choose to cook, it is not a cooking contest and the process and explanation of what and why it has been chosen are the key points of interest.

During the research interview, I will ask questions from a prepared interview schedule. These questions will relate to your experiences of being an international student in Sweden, corridor environment and sharing a kitchen, how food is similar or different to where you come from etc.

The interview will last around 1½-2 hours, and will take place where you normally prepare your meals. The interview will further be audio recorded, then transcribed and coded.

Half of the expenses connected to the meal is, naturally, covered by me the researcher. I will be present and (very) happy to help with the preparation of the food and cleaning the dishes afterwards.

I do not expect the questions or topics brought up during the session to cause any harm. However, there is a small possibility that the questions or topics that I ask you may bring about some feelings of distress. If this does occur, you can let the researcher know right away so that I can change topic.

You are not obliged to answer anything that you are not comfortable with!

You are free to withdraw from the research at any time. If you withdraw from the research, we will destroy any information that has already been collected.

Group session and cook- and eat-along

Plan A (funding goes through):

Between the 1st and the 10th of April, all individual participants will partake in a group interview. Together, with the 5 other participants, you will bring all that you need to prepare a dish that reminds you of ‘home’ (see description above). Only requirement that differs is that it should be able to be
I do not expect the questions or topics brought up during the session to cause any harm. However, there is a small possibility that the questions or topics that I or another participant ask you may bring about some feelings of distress. If this does occur, you can let the researcher know right away so that I can change topic. You are not obliged to answer anything that you are not comfortable with!

OBS! You as a participant is also responsible to conduct yourself and interact in an ethically responsible manner and be considerate of your fellow participants. This research setting is created with the purpose of making a pleasant atmosphere where everybody has a nice experience.

You are free to withdraw from the research at any time. If you withdraw from the research, we will destroy any information that has already been collected.

6. What are the possible benefits to participation?
I hope to use information generated from this research study to strengthen understandings of what it means to migrate for education while maintaining links to home. I hope to show that international student migration can be thought about in more nuanced ways than that represented in estimates of population size. Further, I hope that as a participant the research experience provides an insightful reflection on how cooking and eating as a cultural practice become platforms for understanding difference.

7. What will happen to information about me?
By signing the consent form you consent to the researcher collecting and using information about you for the research. I will keep your data for the full period of the study (until mid June 2019 if the research is not delayed). I will store information about you in a non-identifiable format (name and identifiers will be changed in the transcripts) on my personal computer and online storage units, both with password security. Your information will only be used for analysis in relation to this specific study that will be publicly accessible via DiVA (Digitala Vetenskapliga Arkivet). No scientific or popular publications are planned. In case the researcher decides to pursue publishing the data, a second consent from all participants will be collected before the realization of a publication.

8. How and when will I find out what the results of the research study are?
I intend to publish the results as part of my master thesis dissertation. All information published will be done in a way that will not identify you.

If you would like to receive a copy of the dissertation, please tick that box on the consent form. I will only use these details to send you the results of the research. The dissertation will also be made available via the school’s website su.diva-portal.org/.

9. What if I want to withdraw from the research study?
You can withdraw your consent at any time. You can do so by calling, messaging or emailing the researcher or the research supervisor (contact info is found in section 11 of this document). If you decide to leave the research no additional information from you will be collected and all data collected from your participation will be deleted – also the group interview.
10. What should I do if I have further questions about my involvement in the research study?

The person you may need to contact will depend on the nature of your query. If you want any further information concerning this project or if you have any problems which may be related to your involvement in the project, you can contact the following people connected to the research:

11. Research Team Contact Details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Esben Enghave Larsen</td>
<td>Student researcher and lead on research project</td>
<td>+ 45 20 42 97 12</td>
<td><a href="mailto:esbenelarsen@gmail.com">esbenelarsen@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natasha Webster</td>
<td>Master thesis supervisor. Postdoctoral researcher, Department of Human Geography, Stockholm University.</td>
<td>08-16 48 55</td>
<td><a href="mailto:natasha.webster@humangeo.su.se">natasha.webster@humangeo.su.se</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danielle Drozdzewski</td>
<td>Master thesis supervisor. Senior lecturer, Department of Human Geography, Stockholm University.</td>
<td>08-16 48 55</td>
<td><a href="mailto:danielle.drozdzewski@humangeo.su.se">danielle.drozdzewski@humangeo.su.se</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. What if I have a complaint or any concerns about the research study?

If you have any complaints about any aspect of the project or the way it is being conducted, then you may contact:

Complaints Contact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natasha Webster</td>
<td>Master thesis supervisor. Postdoctoral researcher, Department of Human Geography, Stockholm University.</td>
<td>08-16 48 55</td>
<td><a href="mailto:natasha.webster@humangeo.su.se">natasha.webster@humangeo.su.se</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danielle Drozdzewski</td>
<td>Master thesis supervisor. Senior lecturer, Department of Human Geography, Stockholm University.</td>
<td>08-16 48 55</td>
<td><a href="mailto:danielle.drozdzewski@humangeo.su.se">danielle.drozdzewski@humangeo.su.se</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. Consent Form – Participant providing own consent

Declaration by the participant

- I understand I am being asked to provide consent to participate in this research project;
- I have read the Participant Information Sheet I understand the purposes, study tasks and risks of the research described in the project;
- I understand that the research will be audio/video record the interviews as described by the descriptions provided in this document; I agree to be recorded for this purpose.
- I provide my consent for the information collected about me to be used for the purpose of this research study only.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and I am satisfied with the answers I have received;
- I freely agree to participate in this research study as described and understand that I am free to withdraw at any time during the project and withdrawal will not affect my relationship with any of the named organisations and/or research team members;
- I would like to receive a copy of the study results via email or post, I have provided my details below and ask that they be used for this purpose only;

Name: _____________________________________
Address: ___________________________________
Email Address: ______________________________

- I understand that I will be given a signed copy of this document to keep;

Participant Signature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Participant (please print)</th>
<th>Signature of Research Participant</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Declaration by Researcher*

- I have given a verbal explanation of the research study, its study activities and risks and I believe that the participant has understood that explanation.

Researcher Signature*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Researcher (please print)</th>
<th>Signature of Researcher</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Note: All parties signing the consent section must date their own signature.
7.3 Interview guides

7.3.A Individual Interviews

Before beginning
- Turn on recorder - accept
- Introduction to research aims and objective
  - Everyday experiences and practices of int students -> focus on cooking and eating.
  - Shared kitchen facilities as a social space where practices meet.
- Interview info + consent
  - Participation is voluntary – withdrawal at any point + no obligation to answer any question.
  - All data from participation will be deleted and excluded from analysis.
  - Description of individual interview
    - Cook and eat during interview
    - Topics: experiences of being an int. student in Sweden, corridor environment and sharing a kitchen, how food and cooking is similar or different to where you come from ...
  - 1½-2 hours
- What happens to interview data
  - Unidentifiable (minus name and identifiers)
  - This study only
  - Published on DiVa (no further publications planned <– extra consent form)
  - Stored on personal computer + online storage units (password)
- Accessibility: DiVa or personal email (consent form)
- Contact info – in participant info sheet
- Consent form – read and sign
- When answering – take good time to think about it if you need it and please DO use examples of experiences and memories

Background
- Degree and institution
- Age
- Nationality and region
- Synonym
- Time in Sweden
- Time lived in accommodation with shared kitchen
- Swedish migration history

The shared kitchen
- How is it working? – cleaning system, time distribution, social events/meetings, disagreements?
- Compared to what you are used to?
- Use the kitchen differently? - time, usage, smell, taking up space, social interaction
- Do you like it? Why?
  - Talk about what you are doing? (with others)
  - Taste each others food?
- Men and women – different usage?

The food
- Describe the food – elements, ingredients, memories
- Explain how it is representative for ‘home’
- Where did you buy elements for food?
- Is it the same experience here as it would be at ‘home’?

Food in daily life (Food in daily practices)
- Describe food where you come from? A typical day
  - How do you buy it?
  - How do you make it?
  - The kitchen
  - How do you eat it (social?)
- Describe food in Sweden? – A typical day.
  - How do you buy it?
  - How do you make it?
  - How do you eat it (social?)
  - How do you like it?

- Swedish food culture

Being an international student in Stockholm area
(daily practices in everyday life)
- Daily routines / schedule
- Social network
  - How did you build it?
  - The kitchen?
  - Participate in other activities connected to ‘home’
    - Is food ever part of this?
- How is it to be from XX in Stockholm?

Migration
- Why did you choose Sweden/Stockholm?
  - Exchange, stipendium …?
- Pre migration
  - How did you live before you moved to Sweden?
  - Expectations of moving to Sweden
    - Different from reality?
    - Food?
  - Contact with family and friends
    - Homesick?
  - Permanent / temporal migration plan?
    - Integration?
    - Adopting “Swedish practices”?

Ending interview
- Change shared kitchen to the better – how?
- Elaborate on something?
- Feelings about interview + what we talked about?
- Final thoughts?

THANK YOU for participating
- If you remember or want to add anything you can always contact me through over email, or if you prefer contact any of my teachers you are very welcome to do so.

What happens next with data and reporting
- Participation is voluntary – withdrawal at any point in process.
  - All data from participation will be deleted and excluded from analysis.
- Process
  - Group interview between the 1st-10th of April. More info will come.
  - Thesis is done in start June. Will be available if interested.
- Questions – Contact information on participant information sheet.
  - Happy to answer any questions
Focus group - Topic guide

FOOD

The food that we have here in front of us
- Impressions + experiences
- Can you use food/drinks as comfort when longing for home
- Feelings about bringing food that 'represent' 'home' and daily life to this context (focus group)

Habits and changes of then
- Student life / budget in SE
  - Compromises?
- Finding correct ingredients in SE (to make things taste right)
- Food habits
  - Keeping some from 'home'?
  - Changes? -> adopting?

THE CORRIDOR KITCHEN

Experience of using the shared kitchen
- Change in the way/amount kitchen is used? <-> cooking with neighbours around (see practices / help / talk?)
- Got sense that people don’t utilize area much for other things (eating fx). Why not?

The shared space of the corridor kitchen
- Feels like 'public and outside home' or 'private and homy' space?
- 'Good' and 'bad' kitchens <-> difference? (temporality?)
- Responsibility (and ownership)
  - Is it there? Why (not)?
  - How to ensure responsibility and ownership in a corridor setting?
- How would the best shared corridor kitchen work?