Power, Justice and Food Sovereignty in Urban Foodscapes

A case of the food retail sector in Malmö, Sweden

Sitha Björklund Svensson

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Faculty of Landscape Architecture, Horticulture and Crop Production Sciences
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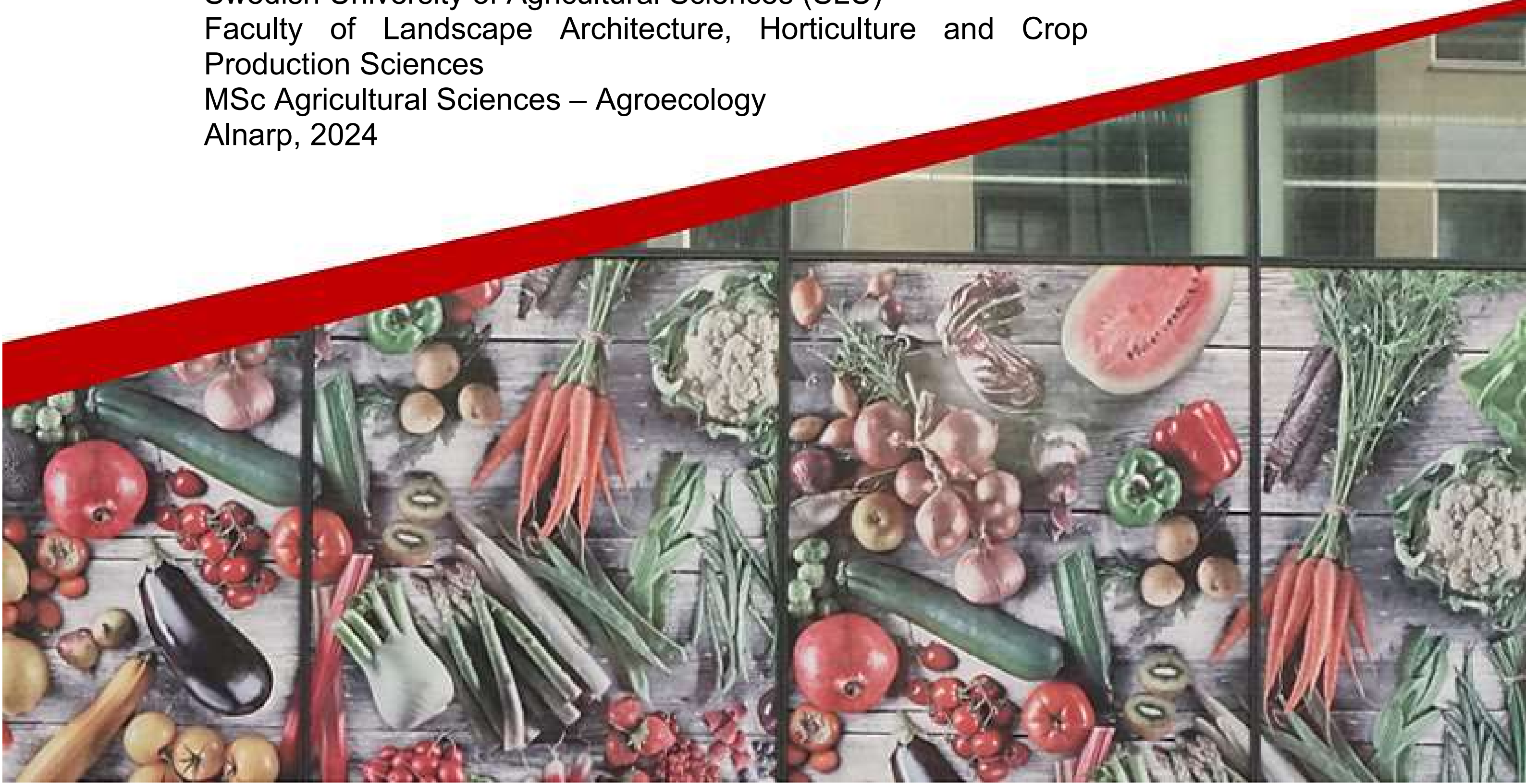

Power and Justice in Urban Foodscapes: a case of the food retail sector in Malmö, Sweden

Sitha Björklund Svensson

Supervisor	Kes McCormick, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Department of People and Society
Assistant supervisor	Love Silow, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Department of Landscape Architecture, Planning and Management
Examiner	Jonas Bååth, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Department of People and Society
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Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

Faculty of Landscape Architecture, Horticulture and Crop Production Sciences

Department of Biosystems and Technology

Abstract

Of the many challenges facing the global industrial food system, the concentration of power is at the centre. A decreasing number of corporations have increasing control over what, where, how and for whom food is produced, distributed and sold. In Sweden, the food retail sector is characterized by an oligopoly of three corporations owning 90% of the market. This research highlights how the uniform food retail sector constrains sustainable food systems transformation. The food retail sector is the main link between farmers and citizens in the industrial food system. In many ways, farmers are trapped in the 'treadmill' of agribusiness, and consumer demand is an insufficient tool to achieve profound change.

Through the lens of political agroecology and urban food planning, this research investigates how national policy and local planning shapes the food retail sector and how this sector in turn shapes the food system. Through a qualitative and comparative case study of the city of Malmö, Sweden, the research examines how the food retail sector influences urban foodscapes and what that signifies for food sovereignty and food justice for the citizens of Malmö, and beyond. The methods include a policy review, interviews with key stakeholders, foodscape mapping, and field observations. Findings suggest that national and municipal governance protect hegemonic structures in the food system through supporting dominating food retail. On a national level, these asymmetric power relations disfavor food producers, especially smaller and sustainable production, and consumer-citizens through the promotion of corporate diets. On a local level, food retail shapes urban populations' availability to food, which varies between socioeconomic weaker and stronger areas. Concepts of food sovereignty and food justice were used to reflect upon citizens' accessibility to nutritious, sustainably produced and culturally appropriate foods through urban food retail.

Keywords: food retail, food justice, food sovereignty, foodscape mapping, political agroecology, urban food planning, Malmö, Sweden

Foreword

This research has been written in collaboration with Malmö Food Council (MFC). MFC is an independent non-profit organization with the aim of collectively co-creating knowledge and acting to support a sustainable and localized food system in the city of Malmö, Sweden. I first approached MFC to offer my scholastic services of the thesis project for a greater purpose, such as supporting local food activists. At my request, and after joint discussions, the core team of MFC came up with the research assignment to make A FOODSCAPE MAP OF MALMÖ WITH A FOCUS ON POWER DYNAMICS. After consideration, I chose to focus on one sector: food retail.

This thesis is an attempt to understand and communicate what many of us take for granted in this corner of the world: food and our non-stop access to it. The cover picture describes it perfectly – "*Follow the seasons with us!*" – an advertisement for seasonal food by Sweden's second biggest food retail chain, without any seasonality visually presented in the picture nor in the store's typical assortment. As a privileged actor in the global food system, Sweden – and its citizens – can enjoy a broad assortment of domestic and, particularly, imported foods; of which we only pay a part of the true cost and whose negative externalities are kept comfortably out of sight. For some people in Sweden, though, food injustice – the structurally inequitable distribution of inaccessibility to healthy, sustainably produced and culturally appropriate food – is an increasingly pressing issue. More than anything, this thesis is an attempt at connecting the dots of societal issues related to food with the conviction that there are no sustainable food systems without food justice and food sovereignty, not in Sweden, not anywhere.

A special and significant "thank you" to my supervisors Kes and Love at SLU, the core team of MFC, the interviewees and the many other people I had insightful conversations with along the way, my caring and helpful friends and family, and finally to my daughter Inti, my sun and greatest source of motivation.

Sitha Björklund Svensson

Malmö, August 14th 2024

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1 INTRODUCTION

Food is a commodity that, regardless of the price, we all have to keep consuming to survive. Those who control how food is produced and distributed therefore also hold major influence over how we relate to one another, and ultimately, how society functions.

– Notes from Below (2023)

Global food systems are increasingly challenged to deliver food under current market conditions. Shocks such as climate change, COVID-19 supply disruptions, and global food price surges following the Russian invasion of Ukraine have contributed to the exposure of the failings of the global food system. A global food system which contributes to a third of global greenhouse gas emissions, widespread rural impoverishment, soil degradation, the dismemberment of traditional food cultures, exploitation of workers, and loss of biodiversity, clean freshwater and natural habitat (Anderson et al., 2021; Tittonell, 2023). A global food system which produces food for 10 billion people, yet 30% of the global population are food insecure and 42% cannot afford a healthy diet, all the while an estimated 30-50% of all food produced globally is wasted (IPES-Food, 2024). A global food system which can be described as dysfunctional.

1.1 Food systems in a capitalist world economy

According to the agroecologist and political economist Holt-Giménez (2019), our global food system may be dysfunctional, yet it works according to the logic of the capitalist world economy in which it functions. The basic principle of capitalism is the accumulation of capital. But if we understand capital as power rather than money, we can see capitalism as *a mode of power* rather than a mode of production (Howard, 2016). A broad definition of power allows us to see beyond a company's capacity of provisioning goods and services and include "the power of its owners and directors to shape and reshape politics, society and culture" (Di Muzio, 2013, cited in Howard, 2016). The "commodification of everything" (Wallerstein, 1983) and "the forced creation of markets" (Patel, 2012) is the very foundation for capital accumulation, as are the twin processes of colonization and patriarchy (C. R. Anderson et al., 2021). Food systems in a capitalist world economy are characterized by industrialization, globalization, ecological and social disconnection, food culture standardization, and a high dependency on finite resources, such as fossil fuels, phosphorus, and clean freshwater (Bowness et al., 2020). Ever-increasing efficiency and productivity in workers, plants and animals is the basis for continuous capitalist economic growth (Vincent & Feola, 2020).

Of the many challenges facing the global industrial food system, the concentration of power is at the centre. Clapp (2022) even points to corporate concentration as "a dominant feature" of the modern, industrial food system. A decreasing number of corporations have increasing control over what, where, how and for whom food is produced. Corporate domination of the global food system is referred to as "the corporate food regime" (McMichael, 2009a) or a "corporate capture" of the food system (Alonso-Fradejas et al., 2020). Corporate concentration is observed both within sectors – through horizontal consolidation – and throughout the global food chain – through vertical integration. According to the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food, 2023b), large corporations from agriculture, finance, technology, and food industry not only have increasing influence over global food systems, but also over global food governance. A lenient global regulatory environment, technological change and financial incentives – such as the benefits of economies of scale and the financialization of food systems – are identified as the main drivers behind the corporate concentration in the global food system (Clapp, 2022).

Corporate concentration matters because it is an issue of power and justice. Dominating actors hold greater power to influence policy, market conditions, consumer and supplier prices, labor conditions and wages, and products available for consumers to their own benefit and often at the cost of other actors (Clapp, 2022). Critical scholars emphasize the risk of corporate concentration undermining transparency, corporate social and environmental responsibility, the human right to food, and food sovereignty, disproportionally impacting marginalized people and areas (Howard, 2016; Shaw & Shaw, 2019). Concentration of power leaves food systems – the very basis of our survival – disturbingly vulnerable to shocks (Holt-Giménez, 2019).

1.2 Food retail in a global food system

The global food system can be compared with an hourglass. In one end are all the food producers, at the other the food consumers. In the middle are the middlemen. Of all the middlemen, food retail is the most concentrated sector (Howard, 2016). This means that food retail functions as a "gatekeeper" between the production and the consumption of food (Ehgartner, 2018).

On a global scale, the largest ten food retailers dominate 30% of the market, with national markets experiencing even higher degrees of concentration (Clapp, 2022). The global extremes can be found in Australia, Norway and Sweden where two, respectively three, companies control 80% of the food retail market (Shaw & Shaw, 2019). In the Global North generally, "Big Food Retail" now completely dominates the food retail sector and sell the majority of food consumed in these countries (ibid). These companies typically own and operate a variety of food store brands, such as grocery stores, supermarkets, hypermarkets, department and discount stores, and neighbourhood markets. For example, US-based Wallmart is the largest food retailing company in the world by sales ($611,289 million in revenues 2023) with 10,500 stores under 46 brands in 24 countries[1] (GlobalData, 2024).

Supermarkets specifically have prevailed food retail since their widespread expansion from the 1950's and onwards, the so called "supermarket revolution" (Vorley, 2007). The supermarket phenomenon has transformed the ways in which food is sold and bought in Global North (Shaw & Shaw, 2019). So much so, that many of us cannot imagine an alternative to the supermarkets, and if we can, we struggle to find it. Through their market dominance and authority status, Big Food Retail have had significant economic, social and cultural influence on our societies (Dixon, 2007).

Big Food Retail has become increasingly concentrated and grown in market shares through buying smaller food retailing companies, vertical integration with food industry, horizontal consolidation with other food and non-food retailing companies and selling more than just food (Howard, 2016; Shaw & Shaw, 2019).

Big Food Retail has standardized the locations for food shopping and as mentioned contributed to the normalization of the dominance of supermarkets in food retail. Shaw & Shaw (2019)

[1] This would make Wallmart the 21st wealthiest country in the world, as compared to world GDPs 2022.

argue that the "supermarketization" of food retail is the third stage of the disconnection between food production and consumption in the capitalist food system, after the industrialization and the globalization. From "the eternal modern feast of supermarkets" (Shaw & Shaw, 2019) food is available to consumers most hours of the day, most days of the week. The assortment is typically independent from seasons and geography, even from social relations. The writer and architect Carloyn Steel (2012) notes that food shopping has gone from a social event to an anonymous – often individualized – activity. The supermarketization of food retail is intrinsically connected to the capitalist development of how everyday lives are organized in a consumer society. After finishing our 8-hour long day at our paid jobs, we don't have the time or energy to go anywhere else than the supermarket to buy our food. Fast and convenient food shopping (and preparation, see below) also leaves more time for consuming other goods and services. Note just how online food shopping has boomed globally the last years (Olumekor et al., 2024).

Finally, Big Food Retail has contributed to the standardization of the assortment of food available to the consumer, where dominating food companies typically determine what is on the shelves (Nestle, 2019). This has led to a homogenization of food consumption and devaluation of diverse traditional foods for the benefit of an anonymous, convenient "corporate diet", which is related to rises in food illiteracy and a loss of traditional knowledge (Nyéléni, 2024). A corporate diet is typically based on industrial foods, such as ready-to-eat "convenience food" and ultra processed, energy-dense and low-nutrition foods, the consumption of which has negative consequences to human health and the climate (IPES-Food, 2023a). The production of industrial, highly processed foods contributes to the homogenization of agricultural production and landscapes, as pointed out by the writer and farmer Gunnar Rundgren (Rundgren, 2024). Rundgren calls ultra-processed foods "the highest stage of a sick food system" (ibid). Shaw & Shaw (2019) refer to this as the fourth stage of the disconnection between food production and consumption in the industrial food system: the dominion of unrecognizable foods.

1.3 Food with an urban focus

The world is quickly turning more urban, with forecasts pointing to ever-increasing urban populations and areas in the coming 100 years (Tittonell, 2023). Urbanization drives profound food systems transformation, mainly through increased food demand from increasing populations as well as dietary changes due to cultural and lifestyle shifts (López Cifuentes et al., 2021). Although a recent report from FAO et al. (2023) state that urbanization generally leads to increased food security, diversification of diets, and improved affordability and accessibility to healthy diets, this is far from straightforward. Urban populations are typically more economically unequal, more income and price dependent, and more disconnected from food production. Urban populations embrace an industrial, unsustainable and unhealthy diet to a higher degree, due to the increased availability of processed foods and animal source foods, long working hours, and unavailability to self-sufficing (FAO et al., 2023). Thus, urban populations experience rises in obesity and non-communicable diseases, especially poorer and marginalized urban communities (IPES-Food, 2023a). Furthermore, just as formal and informal urban food markets have increased in sizes and numbers, so have food deserts – areas distinguished by unavailability to varied and healthy foods (Fanshel & Iles, 2022). The expansion of supermarkets in urban areas often leads to market constraints for smaller food producers (FAO et al., 2023). The relationship between cities and food is complex and full of paradox.

The development and growth of cities is a precondition for the expansion of capitalism, as cities function as epicentres of consumer society. Tornaghi & Dehaene (2020) highlight the effect which the interdependencies between capitalism and urbanization have on social reproductive practices, including the provisioning and preparation of food. The connections between supermarketization and the organization of our everyday lives in consumer society, as mentioned above, is an example of this. Steel (2008) elaborates on the post-industrial city as being "effectively emancipated" from nature, completely disconnected and "devoid of the smell and mess" from food production. Tornaghi (2017) also criticizes what she refers to as "the food-disabling city". According to the ecological-Marxist scholar Alf Hornborg (2009), urban areas function as superior centres of economy, importing material and energy while displacing the environmental load from this consumption on inferior, peripheral rural areas. Such theories of "ecologically [and energetically] unequal exchange" (Hornborg, 2009) can also be applied to food systems. The development of cities and the superiority of convenient, corporate and anonymous diets which prevail in urban areas have huge impacts not only on the urban areas and populations, but far beyond and across the urban-rural continuum. As the world turns ever more urban, we can only foretell what this means for the possibilities of democratic, just and diverse food systems for all.

In this context, research is presented not only with a multitude of opportunities but also responsibilities. As Bohn & Tomkins (2024) say: "there is an urgent need to for clarity around the subject of how we feed ourselves as an urban species". Studies on agroecology in a Global North context are critical yet understudied in general, specifically from an urban and food systems perspective (López-García & González de Molina, 2021; Tittonell, 2023). Tornaghi & Dehaene (2020) call for "a new research agenda aiming to bridge food justice and sovereignty, urban and agrarian movements", where "the urban dimension and its structuring power" is unpacked. Within this broad field, there is a more specific need to understand how food retail companies, as private food system actors, sets the preconditions for urban citizens' availability to food through shaping entire food systems as well as cities' foodscapes in Global North. Furthermore, there is a need for deepening the understanding of how agroecological concepts such as power, food justice and food sovereignty can inform food systems transformation in the Global North. Finally, there is a need to develop social science methodology, such as locally embedded participatory approaches, to support said transitions.

1.4 Research problem and aim

This thesis seeks to respond to the call by Tornaghi & Dehaene (2020) and contribute to the beforementioned knowledge gaps on agroecology in the Global North. The purpose of the thesis is to investigate the Swedish food retail sector from an agroecological food systems lens. Notably, the Swedish food retail sector is one of the most concentrated in the world. The core research problem to be investigated is whether the current Swedish food retail sector constrains sustainable food systems transformation in accordance with agroecology, specifically in regard to food sovereignty and food justice. The thesis aims to:

1. Review the public governance of the food retail sector and explore food system stakeholders' perceptions of the sector to contribute to a deepened understanding of the preconditions and challenges for food retail in Sweden.
2. Conduct a qualitative case study of the city of Malmö, Sweden, to investigate how food retail influences urban foodscapes and what that signifies for food justice and food sovereignty in Sweden.

The following research questions have been formulated to lead this inquiry:

1. How is food retail in Sweden shaped by public governance and how does it in turn shape the national food system?
2. What does the food retail sector look like in Malmö in terms of spatial distribution and food retail actor diversity, and why?

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The following chapter presents the theoretical framework that lays the foundation of the thesis. More than this, the section represents the "epistemological platform" of the research, in the words of Ljunggren Bergeå (2007), as the concepts introduced here have influenced the entirety of the research design and process. Critical and transdisciplinary research can be considered a requirement for the investigation of a wicked problem such as sustainable food systems transformation due to its complex and interconnected nature (Giovannini & Forno, 2023). The transdisciplinary analytical approach of the research was developed through combining existing knowledge and concepts from political agroecology and urban food planning (Table 2.1). Political agroecology is the central framework of this thesis for understanding power, sovereignty and justice in food systems. The aim is for this research to contribute to a newly developing transdisciplinary academic field and demonstrate the relevance of agroecology within an urban food systems context in the Global North, what Tornaghi & Dehaene (2021) call *an agroecological urbanism*.

Table 2.1: Key concepts of the theoretical framework.

Key concepts	
Agroecological transition	sustainable agricultural and food systems transformation based on the 13 principles of agroecology
Corporate food regime	corporate domination of the global food system
Corporate responsibility	the responsibility of an organization for the impacts of its decisions and activities on society and environment, through transparent and ethical behaviour
Foodscape	food landscapes shaped by material, social and political dimensions; the physical landscape of food systems
Food justice	the right to universal access to nutritious, sustainably produced and culturally appropriate food for all; including safety and welfare for food workers
Food sovereignty	the right of people to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems
Food system	the interrelated and interdependent processes of food production, processing, distribution, retail, consumption and waste; including food policy, marketing, culture and research
Power	influence over politics, society and culture; capital

2.1 Political agroecology

AGROECOLOGY can be defined as the use of ecological and social principles on the design and management of sustainable agricultural and food systems (Tittonell, 2023). It is a transdisciplinary, holistic, and action-oriented approach grounded in systems thinking, which promotes the territorialization of food systems (Anderson et al., 2021). Importantly, agroecology is based on the three pillars of science, practice, and movement, integrating traditional, indigenous, practical, and local knowledge into modern science (Gliessman, 2015). Central to agroecology is the sharing and co-creation of agroecological knowledge, with territorial, bottom-up, and participatory methods supporting the empowerment of citizens and communities for the advancement of an agroecological transition (Anderson et al., 2021), that is, sustainable food systems transformation based on the 13 principles of agroecology (HLPE, 2019). Notably, agroecology is a field with numerous, co-existing definitions and applications varying from scale (field, farm, landscape, food system), dimension (agronomist, technological, economic, cultural, social, political, epistemological), and ideology (radical, reformist, progressive). This thesis framework is based on a political approach to agroecology on a food system scale.

POLITICAL AGROECOLOGY acknowledges that agroecosystems and food systems are socio-ecological constructions formed by power relations, that they are politicized systems. Some scholars argue that politics is inherent to agroecology (Holt-Giménez & Altieri, 2012), even "a necessity" to the field (Gonzales de Molina, 2013). According to Anderson et al. (2024), the political emphasis is what truly characterizes agroecology from other sustainable land-use practices, in what they call an:

> uncompromising commitment to each of the ecological, social, political, and cultural dimensions of sustainability, addressing power imbalances and centering the agency, voices and knowledge of local people, peasant farmers and indigenous communities.

From the 1960's, agroecology largely developed as a countermovement to industrial agriculture and the corporate food regime indorsed through the Green Revolution. Its political dimensions were developed by intersectional social movements and critical academic studies through the articulation and amplification of power struggles over peoples, territories, and resources (Anderson et al., 2024). From this perspective, agroecology is seen as a philosophy of resistance emphasizing autonomy from hegemonic, corporate agri-food monopolies and supporting institutions (Anderson et al., 2024; Holt-Giménez & Altieri, 2012), and promoting food systems that are ecologically sound, culturally diverse, socially just, and economically viable (Altieri, 1995). It's the opposition of the "food from nowhere regime" (McMichael, 2009b) in favor of the "food from somewhere regime" (IPES-Food, 2024). Political agroecological scholars highlight the potential of agroecology as a "process of repair" (Anderson et al., 2024, p 3) of the metabolic rift, specifically the restoration of the ecological and epistemological rift (López-García & González de Molina, 2021; Tornaghi & Dehaene, 2021). Political agroecology is concerned with researching and facilitating change in agricultural and food systems and centers the need for profound structural and political transformation to achieve an agroecological transition. This includes the key change components of socio-economic justice, bottom-up governance, and a multi-actor approach led by stakeholders committed to agroecology (López-García & González de Molina, 2021).

2.1.1 Food sovereignty and food justice

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY is a concept central to agroecology (Holt-Giménez & Altieri, 2012; Tittonell, 2023). Food sovereignty as a concept was created by the transnational peasant movement *La Vía Campesina* in 1996 and has since co-developed to be defined as "the right of people to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems" (Nyéléni, 2007). Food sovereignty promotes a departure from extractivist and speculative capitalist markets (Wach, 2021) in favor of local communities' power to democratically determine and manage food systems (Weiler et al., 2015). So, it aims at centering people rather than corporations in food systems and policies, at constructing a society "free from oppression and inequality between men, women, peoples, racial groups, social and economic classes and generations" (Nyéléni, 2007). Food sovereignty is explicitly anti-capitalist, decolonial and inclusive of indigenous perspectives. Traditionally a rural and Global South concept, food sovereignty has over the years entered the urban realm as well as the convictions of Global North scholars, practitioners and activists. The "emancipatory rural politics" (Calvário et al., 2020) which food sovereignty presents, is equally relevant for urban communities. As Tittonell (2023) points out though, urban food sovereignty is an underexplored challenge in agroecology.

FOOD JUSTICE is a concept which similarly was co-created and -developed by social movements. Food justice is understood as the right to "universal access to nutritious, affordable, and culturally appropriate food for all" (Williams, 2022) as well as safety and welfare for food workers. Originating from the US, food justice was developed by marginalized urban communities to counter consumption-focused mainstream food movements, and to promote sustainable food system change which also addresses social inequalities (Murray et al., 2023). Food justice seeks to change oppressive structures of capitalism, racism and patriarchy within the food system (Williams, 2022). Food justice primarily considers aspects of distribution of and access to food, but also includes procedural justice, that is, the inclusion and participation of diverse social groups in decision-making processes (Lamine et al., 2019). As such, food justice calls for a redistribution of power in managing food systems and can also be considered an emancipatory approach (Heynen et al., 2012). The transformative potential of food justice, however, is determined by the ways in which it is contextualized, in terms of place, social relations and politics, as noted by (Moragues-Faus, 2018).

Both food sovereignty and food justice are value-laden and rights-based concepts which align with the power and justice framework of political agroecology. They are both grounded in social movements, and offer platforms for mobilizing emancipatory, place-based and community-specific food systems transformation. As such, they can both be considered "socio-political ingredients in fueling [sustainable] transitions", in the words of Lamine et al. (2019). For a holistic food systems analysis which acknowledges the rights of food system actors everywhere – from rural food producers to urban food consumers – the concepts of food sovereignty and food justice have been used in a complementary manner in this research.

2.2 Urban food planning

URBAN FOOD PLANNING is understood as the planning, design and development of urban spaces with a specific consideration for food systems (Morgan, 2009). Typically, urban food planning has an explicit sustainability agenda (Morgan, 2014; Wiskerke & Viljoen, 2012), with scholars arguing for the advancement of physical planning and design to safeguard sustainable urban development, such as urban food security, healthy and sustainable urban diets, social justice and urban agriculture (López Cifuentes et al., 2021; Tornaghi, 2017). Some scholars even call for a transformative agenda in urban food planning (Moragues-Faus & Battersby, 2021). Foodscapes, understood as the physical landscapes of food systems shaped by material, social and political dimensions, is a concept central to food planning. Urban foodscapes, the food landscape of cities, are being targeted by the planning community due to the inextricable links between growing global urbanization and increased pressure on global food systems, environments and human health (López Cifuentes et al., 2021). In the words of Morgan (2014), urban foodscapes are characterized by being:

> a profoundly obesogenic environment that is increasingly in thrall to corporate interests, especially the supermarkets, many of whom are flocking back into city centres as their 'big box' out-of-town superstores have peaked as business models.

Urban food planning is also closely linked to urban policy, as many cities govern the physical planning locally. Urban food policy is emerging as a field of "new food governance systems" (Moragues-Faus & Morgan, 2015), and holds a potential key role in sustainable food systems transformation globally. Morgan (2014) identifies urban planning as one of three main policy tools which cities can employ to shape local food systems (apart from public procurement and private-public partnerships). It is noted, though, that culturally diverse cities are particularly challenged in the formulation of sustainable food policies, due to higher demands of imported foods to support a multitude of food cultures (Morgan & Sonnino, 2010). While sustainable food policies aim for the localization of food systems, the "local trap" (Born & Purcell, 2006) must be avoided, and balanced with accessibility to globalized, fairly traded foods.

3 METHODS

This chapter presents a detailed overview of the methodology which was used to carry out the research of the thesis. A case study approach with multiple qualitative methods inspired by participatory action research (PAR) was used to investigate the research questions. The approach of methodological pluralism was chosen to improve the validity and reliability of the qualitative research (Ljunggren Bergeå, 2007) which also included semi-quantitative elements. The application of the methodological pluralism was conducted as a scholastic exploration, or a "methodologically breaching experiment" in the words of Brinkmann (2016). This approach allowed for the adaptation of methods to the questions raised in the thesis. The methodological pluralist approach was considered especially appropriate to align the methods with the transdisciplinary theory and the purpose of contributing to the unpacking of power structures in the urban dimension.

3.1 Participatory action research

This investigation was inspired by the participatory action research (PAR) approach. According to Cornish et al. (2023), PAR is an academic-activist research approach which engages stakeholders as research participants to co-create knowledge as well as social change (Cornish et al., 2023). As such, social analysis and social action are integrated (Lawson, 2015). PAR is typically used to counter injustices and oppressive power relations, inform civic collective action, and promote transformation. Indeed, it is a research approach praised for its empowering and emancipatory potential (Cornish et al., 2023; Lawson, 2015). Importantly, to achieve such ambitious goals while assuring research validity, it requires the "scholar change agent" (Lawson, 2015) to adopt reflexivity, self-awareness and scientific integrity.

As noted by Chevalier & Buckles (2019), there is a need to guide collective, social action towards "the common good" for PAR to be successful. In this investigation, political agroecology does exactly that. The PAR approach aligns with the agroecological principles of social justice and co-creation and sharing of knowledge (FAO, 2018), as well as the fundamental call for action in agroecology. Participatory research methods are widely promoted by agroecological scholars, such as Gliessman (2015) and Altieri (1995), to ensure the contextualization and territorialization of the research. As agroecology acknowledges the situatedness of knowledge and recognizes a plurality of epistemologies, stakeholder participation is encouraged to “tap into [stakeholder] knowledge” (Altieri, 1995).

In this investigation, the PAR approach first and foremost inspired to the collaborative nature of the study. The participatory element of the research was initiated through the author’s request for a research assignment from the core team of MFC, which was then developed through continuous dialogue on the research project idea and results. This was done with the aim of situating and embedding the thesis research in the national context and local realities. The investigation was designed with the purpose of being a relevant and useful contribution to the work of MFC, as well as for an agroecological transition of food systems in Sweden in large. The aim is for the results of the thesis to inform future food political communications materials, campaigns and events by MFC. PAR methods were also applied through field observations, stakeholder interviews and informal conversations. It was my aim during the research to immerse myself into the field of study and explore food retail from different roles as a student, researcher, activist, citizens, and consumer. Unfortunately, for the case study it was not possible to conduct a participatory mapping of the urban foodscape of Malmö due to time constraints, as is otherwise a frequently used PAR method (Lawson, 2015).

3.2 Field observations

Non-systematic field observations were conducted in the strive for an immersion in the research field, as promoted in the participatory action approach (Lawson, 2015). Field observations can provide information regarding social constructions in a given context, and thus contribute to insights into the interactions and interdependencies between stakeholders (Madden, 2017). Through the participation in professional events on the theme of sustainable food systems transformation (Table 3.1), my understanding of food systems issues in Sweden in general, and Skåne in particular, was deepened. A specific focus was directed to the preconditions and challenges in food retail. Field observations uncovered present, active and socially dominating actors, socially accepted conversation topics and patterns, and stakeholders’ interrelations, concerns and expectations. Locations for field observations were accessed during my internship at MFC in the time period of September-November 2023. This means that field observations took place before the writing of the thesis, allowing time for the experiential learning to integrate.

Table 3.1: Events attended during field observations.

Event name	Organizer	Location	Date
“Business opportunities for the green transition” (Knowledge gathering no. 3 in the series “Driving forces for a circular and sustainable food system”.)	Region of Skåne	City Hall, Lund, Sweden	21.09.2023
“Local producers + public gastronomy = true!” (Workshop)	MFC, Vegostan urban farm, Malmö municipality	Vegostan urban farm, Malmö, Sweden	26.09.2023
“Skåne’s food day – for our food, health, soil, and future!” (Conference on the upcoming updated version of the regional food strategy of Skåne.)	The steering group of the regional food strategy of Skåne (Region of Skåne, Livsmedelsakademin, LRF Skåne, The County Board of Skåne, Krinova, SLU, Lund University, Kristianstad University, Visit Skåne)	Folk Mat & Möten, Malmö, Sweden	21.11.2023

3.3 Policy review

A policy review was made for the analysis of the public governance of the Swedish food retail sector. The analysis was delimited to exclude private (internal) governance due to the scope of the thesis, although this would have also been relevant for the investigation. Since a systematic overview of the public authorities governing the Swedish food retail sector was not possible to find, the public authorities included in the review were chosen due to being mentioned by stakeholders during interviews and field observations. The policy review presented in the thesis is thus assumed to not represent a comprehensive depiction of the public governance of food retail in Sweden, but rather presents a partial insight into the policies of some of the central public governance authorities and their work related to food retail. The policy review was only based on data from the official websites of the public authorities included (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2: Public authorities, their websites and search words used for the policy review.

Public authority	Website searched	Search words
The Swedish Competition Authority	https://www.konkurrensverket.se/	food retail (Swe: *dagligvaruhandel*) food (Swe: *livsmedel*) food consumption (Swe: *livsmedelskonsumption*)
The Swedish Consumer Agency	https://www.konsumentverket.se/	
The Swedish Food Agency	https://www.livsmedelsverket.se/	
The Swedish Public Health Agency	https://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/	
The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth	https://tillvaxtverket.se/	
The Swedish Board of Agriculture	https://jordbruksverket.se/	

Municipalities (The Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning)	https://www.boverket.se/sv/samhallsplanering/sa-planeras-sverige/kommunal-planering/	None
Municipalities (The Swedish Food Agency)	https://www.livsmedelsverket.se/foretagande-regler-kontroll/sa-kontrolleras-ditt-foretag/nkp-webben/myndigheter-kontrollorgan-och-laboratorier3/myndigheterna-i-livsmedelskedjan/kommunerna	None

3.4 Stakeholder interviews

The stakeholder interviews of this research were conducted as semi-structured interviews and as participatory elements of the investigation. Semi-structured interviews are the most commonly used data collection method for qualitative research (Kallio et al., 2016). As a form of "knowledge-producing conversation" (Brinkmann, 2013), semi-structured interviews are a versatile tool to obtain knowledge about other peoples' experiences, opinions and feelings. Semi-structured interviews are based on a pre-determined interview guide covering the main topics of the investigation which offers a focus for the interviewer. They are adaptable and allow for contextualization, exploration and improvisation, following the participants individual expressions and interests spontaneously throughout the interview (Kallio et al., 2016). Importantly, qualitative interviews must be interpreted in their specific social context and in a reflexive manner (Brinkmann, 2013). In alignment with agroecology and participatory action research, the research participants were acknowledged as experts in the field of study.

The purpose of the interviews was to increase my own – and the reader's – understanding of the complexity of food system issues through the presentation of a variety of perceptions on the Swedish food retail sector. As such, the interviews were conducted to complement the background and the policy review. The participants were chosen with the aim of representing a selection of professional roles in the Swedish food system and relations to food retail (Table 3.3). Contacts were given through MFC and academic staff at SLU, as well as contacts were made during field observations and through social media.

Table 3.3: Research participants' food system roles and relevant personal details.

Food system role	Personal details
ICA-trader / Consumer-citizen	Life-long experience from food retail, second generation owner of an ICA-store, one of the largest ICA-stores in Malmö which has won several sustainability awards for its work with local farmers and companies, organic assortment and low energy use.

Agricultural producer / Consumer-citizen	Fourth generation on the farm in Scania, Sweden, of 600 ha where he produces field crops, sheep, and renewable energy. The farm is managed conventionally and has a climate certification from *Svenskt Sigill*.
Representative from the food innovation support system / Consumer-citizen	With long professional experience from the food industry.
Gardener and horticultural producer / Consumer-citizen	Background working in retail, marketing and PR with food retail companies, currently working as a gardener and horticultural producer trained in biodynamic management.
Researcher within food and agricultural economics / Consumer-citizen	Researcher at a Swedish top university with a broad research experience in agricultural and food systems issues. Has co-authored publications for the Swedish Board of Agriculture and the Swedish Competition Agency.

The interviews were conducted in the period of February-April 2024 over video and phone calls. They ranged from 20-45 min. The interviews were recorded with consent and transcribed with the use of ScriptMe.io speech to text transcription software. Researching the background and policy review prepared the development of the interview guide. The main topics covered in the interview guide were:

1. Your role in the Swedish food system and your relationship to the Swedish food retail sector?
2. Your general thoughts on the Swedish food retail sector?
3. Advantages and disadvantages of the organization and governance of the Swedish food retail sector? Specifically considering the current market oligopoly.
4. In case problems were identified – whose responsibility are they?
5. Are there differences between the five Swedish supermarket chains in their driving force, and how they relate to consumers and producers?
6. How do the food retail companies access store premises and how are new stores established?
7. How does the food retail sector influence the possibilities for sustainable food systems transformation? And would such a transition be possible under current circumstances in the food retail sector?

Apart from the formal interviews, informal conversations were held with a multitude of food system actors during the whole research period. These conversations also contributed to insights on the Swedish food system and food retail.

3.5 Urban foodscape mapping

According to scholars Bohn & Tomkins (2024), urban foodscape mapping is a tool to investigate and make visible what is typically invisibilized in the city: the relationship between urban spaces, urban populations and food. As such, urban foodscape mapping is used as a visual approach to understanding and uncovering the complex spatial presence of food in the urban, as well as understanding the experiences of those who live there (ibid). It can be used as a tool for communication, planning and design. Importantly, urban foodscape mapping can highlight potential roads to more sustainable, just and enjoyable "edible cities" (ibid).

Urban foodscape mapping lays the foundation for the case study of this investigation and has here been used to map the landscape of food retail in Malmö. By mapping food stores in different areas of Malmö, the purpose of this urban foodscape map is to make visual and compare the spatial distribution and food retail actor diversity of the provisioning of food in the city. The maps also provide an index for discussing citizens' accessibility to food. Due to the purpose of the case study, the area of the foodscape mapping was limited to the city of Malmö, and not the whole municipality. The borders of the city were set by the natural border of the sea and the artificial border of the "outer ring road" (the E6 and E20 highways). The foodscape mapping did not include online food stores since the aim of the research is to analyse the effects of food retail on the local foodscape, that is, the physical landscape. The increasing presence of online food shopping could influence the foodscape considering changed food shopping patterns, but this is out of the scope for this thesis. In alignment with the PAR approach (Chevalier & Buckles, 2019) and inspired by Bohn & Tomkins (2024) and Fanshel & Iles (2020), there was an initial idea to conduct a participatory urban foodscape map of Malmö. Due to time constraints, this was unfortunately not possible.

3.5.1 Foodscape map of Malmö

As a first step of mapping food retail in Malmö (Fig 5.1), every store location of the six dominating food retailing companies in Sweden within the city were mapped. This was done to acquire an initial insight into the spatial distribution and actor diversity of the foodscape of Malmö. The companies were determined from the Food Retail Map (DLF & Delfi, 2023) as ICA, Axfood, Coop, Lidl, City Gross and Matrebellerna. The store locations were first sought and mapped in Google Maps (Table 3.4), from which the data was exported to QGIS for visualization. Food stores from Matrebellerna did not appear through this search but were instead found through the company's website.

Table 3.4: Search words for the foodscape map of Malmö, including food retail companies and their store profiles.

Food retailing company	Store profile search words
ICA	ICA, ICA Nära, ICA Kvantum, ICA Malmborgs, ICA Maxi, ICA Supermarket
Axfood	Willys, Hemköp, Tempo, Handlar'n, Matöppet
Coop	Coop, Stora Coop, X:-tra
Lidl	Lidl
City Gross	City Gross

3.5.2 Foodscape maps of three city areas

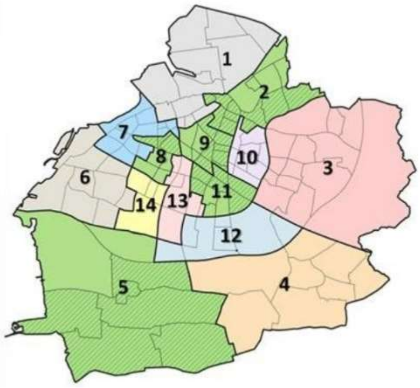


Figure 3.1: The 14 geographical statistical areas of Malmö municipality (Malmö Stad, 2024b).

As a second step of mapping food retail in Malmö, a detailed foodscape map of every food store in three city areas was conducted. The city areas were based on the geographical statistical areas (GeSo) of Malmö municipality (Fig 3.1). Three areas were chosen due to the scope of the investigation. The first foodscape map of Malmö with the nationally dominating food retailing companies revealed a "gap" in GeSo10, which is why this area was selected for further mapping (Table 3.5). The two other city areas were selected with the aim of representing a comparative diversity of socioeconomic and geographical areas in Malmö, as well as a variety in the spatial distribution of the nationally dominating food retailers, as indicated in Fig 5.1. After consideration, GeSo07 and GeSo09 were chosen to demonstrate the coastal-central-peripheral socioeconomic gradient in Malmö (Table 3.5). For a simplified referencing to these areas, GeSo07 was named Ribersborg, GeSo09 Möllevången, and GeSo10 Rosengård. These neighbourhood names were chosen due to being the most well-known in each city area, respectively.

Table 3.5: The geographical statistical areas chosen for the case study and their neighborhoods, respectively.

Geographical statistical area	Included neighborhoods
GeSo07 – Ribersborg	Fridhem, Bellevue, Nya Bellevue, Ribersborgsstranden, Ribersborg, Mellanheden, Solbacken, Rönneholm, Kronprinsen, Fågelbacken, Teatern, Västervång, Hästhagen
GeSo09 – Möllevången	Möllevången, Rådmansvången, Södervärn, Allmänna sjukhuset, Västra och Östra Sorgenfri, Norra och Södra Sofielund, Annelund, Sofielunds Industriområde, Lönngården

GeSo10 – Rosengård	Emilstorp, Östra kyrkogården, Apelgården, Kryddgården, Törnrosen, Örtagården, Rosengårds centrum, Herrgården, Västra Kattarp, Persborg

Firstly, the three city area foodscape maps were conducted in Google Maps, where food stores were sought and mapped from the following search words: *matbutik* (food store), *livsmedelsbutik* (food store), *livs* (small grocery store), food market, *bageri* (bakery), *konditori* (patisserie), *kött* (meat), *slaktare* (butcher). Secondly, the foodscape maps were expanded with food stores from the municipal food control register over food stores in Malmö. The register was accesses as a public document. Every registered food store within each city area respectively was mapped in Google Maps. In the cases where Google Maps and the municipal food store register did not coincide either with food store name or location, Google Streetview (2022) was used to assess the presence of a food store. Food stores which were present in the municipal food register, but not on Google Maps or Google Streetview, were not included in the foodscape maps, since the data was then assumed to be outdated. The municipal food store register did not have a fulfilling categorization of food stores, why an alternative was created based on store ownership, size and main assortment. Finally, the data was exported to QGIS for visualization. It can be assumed that the urban foodscape mapping has not managed to include every single food store in the three city areas, although they are considered to offer a qualitative depiction of what the physical landscape and the citizens' access to food looks like and how it differs between the areas.

The foodscape maps were complemented with photographs of the cityscapes and the food stores in them. The aim was to photograph a characteristic setting in each neighbourhood, as well as a representation of the various food stores from each food store category. Touring the city areas by bike meant that photographing was conducted alongside field observations of the areas and the food stores. According to Bohn & Tomkins (2024), photography and field observations are additional urban foodscape mapping methods which contribute to the visual understanding of an issue, an area and the people who live there.

3.5.3 Sociodemographic profiles

The sociodemographic profiles for the three city areas of Ribersborg, Möllevången and Rosengård were based on a municipal compilation of socioeconomic data (Malmö Stad, 2024a). The compilation is made from data from Statistics Sweden's regional database or statistical area database (OSDB), or the region of Scania's database of Scania (ibid). The data was compiled by Malmö municipality in 2024, but the data has varying collection years, why the data included in the sociodemographic profiles ranges from 2018, 2021 and 2022. The latest data for each socioeconomic factor was consequently selected. For the data in the sociodemographic profiles which was calculated from data in the municipal compilation (Malmö Stad, 2024a), the numbers were rounded up to the nearest whole number. Due to the scope of the investigation, the sociodemographic profiles do not include every socioeconomic factor presented in the municipal socioeconomic compilation. A selection was made based on the relevance for the inquiry. The following socioeconomic factors were not included: relocation, birth country, commutation, daytime population, nighttime population, earned income, earned and capital income, financial aid, cars in traffic, and driving license possession.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Critical social science research requires the researcher to acknowledge its own social construction as a prerequisite for understanding the world. As mentioned, the PAR approach recognizes the need for reflexivity, self-awareness and scientific integrity while navigating biases and assuring research validity (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2017; Chevalier & Buckles, 2019). Beyond this, for an agroecological and action researcher it is of outmost importance to consider one's own situatedness and positionality in the research context.

Academia is a formal system for knowledge generation with a certain set of formal social "rules, roles, relationships, and responsibilities" as noted by Lawson (2015). I recognize the situatedness of my own epistemology as an academic, as I recognize the complexity of entering a research field which promotes a plurality of epistemologies – such as agroecology and participatory action research does. There is great challenge in the paradox of knowledge diversity within social research as it "is embedded in a social system designed to make research-based knowledge valid, reliable, and useful", as put by Lawson (2015). Existing biases and assumptions were frequently discussed with my supervisors. Furthermore, as a highly educated, white person from Sweden I acknowledge the privileged social position I hold in the country where I live and globally. A nuance to this is that I grew up in, and still belong to, a low-income family in Sweden, which is why I have a certain understanding of the challenges of socioeconomic weaker urban communities. Identifying as a white person I do not have the lived experience of racialization that black, indigenous and people of color in Sweden have. It is with respect, humility and curiosity that I have chosen to approach this research.

4 BACKGROUND

The following background section aims to set the scene of food retail in Sweden. As such, it presents a brief overview of the national food consumption and food retail sector to support the understanding of the political and societal context of the research that follows.

4.1 Swedish food consumption

Sweden is the most economically unequal country in the Nordics, with current income inequality reaching levels not precedented since 1975 (The Lancet Regional Health – Europe, 2023). Furthermore, Sweden ranks lowest of the Nordic countries in Oxfam's global ranking of political commitment to reducing economic inequality (Walker et al., 2022). Relative poverty is on the increase in Sweden, and although it is still among the lowest in the EU, the differences in poverty between domestic-born and foreign-born citizens are the highest in the EU (Sveriges Stadsmissioner, 2022). As inflation and poverty is on the rise, so is food insecurity and food poverty in Sweden (ibid). The last year's surges in food prices, with a peak of 25% in March 2023 (SCB, 2024), have caused a change in the food consumption patterns of the Swedish population. In general, food consumption has decreased, although more money is spent on food (Hagberg et al., 2023). Current trends in Swedish food production are dominated by buying fewer products in general and organic products in particular, cheaper alternatives, less online shopping, and more private label brands (ibid;Konkurrensverket, 2024). As a food category, consumption of fresh vegetables stands out as having decreased the most due to increased prices, a pattern with large differences between socioeconomic weaker and stronger household (Livsmedelsverket & Fritz, 2023). Swedish household currently spend 13% of their income on food, as compared to 33% in 1952 (Svensk Dagligvaruhandel, 2024). This number indicates that although prices have indeed risen, food has never been cheaper historically.

The Swedish food system is characterized by being globalized and heavily dependent on import of foods and agricultural inputs (Hansson et al., 2024; Jordbruksverket, 2024b). Sweden has an estimated degree of national food self-sufficiency of 50%, as compared to 75% in the 1970's

(LRF, 2023). Swedish food consumption has among the highest levels of negative climate and environmental impacts in the world, of which most of pressure is exerted abroad (Hansson et al., 2024; Röös et al., 2024). This is largely due to high levels of animal-based foods. Although the Swedish population in general have availability to diverse and high-quality foods, poor diets, such as the overconsumption of ultra processed, high-energy and low-nutrition foods, are threatening public health in the country (Folkhälsomyndigheten & Livsmedelsverket, 2024). Importantly, this deterioration of health in Sweden is systematically unequal, where children and socioeconomic weaker or marginalized individuals and communities are at greater risk (ibid). A recent study found that Swedish supermarket chains largely promote unhealthy foods which are in contradiction to the Nordic Nutrition Recommendations, and that they do so to a greater degree in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas as compared to more advantaged areas (Mjöberg et al., 2023). The new Nordic Nutrition Recommendations encourage a more plant-based diet, and emphasize the link between nutrition and sustainability, food consumption and production (Blomhoff et al., 2023). A recent study (Bendz et al., 2023), suggested that there is currently a lack of political will to regulate food towards sustainable and healthy consumption in Sweden, justified by the argument of the individual's freedom of food choice, although this is not an argument frequently adopted in the general, public discourse.

4.2 The Swedish food retail sector

Sweden has one of the world's most concentrated food retail sectors (Howard, 2016). The sector is dominated by six national food retail chains: ICA, Axfood, Coop, Lidl, City Gross and Matrebellerna (Eng: The Food Rebels). Of these, only three – ICA, Axfood and Coop – own 90% of the market (DLF & Delfi, 2023), which makes the Swedish food retail sector an oligopoly. The market concentration is high also from a European perspective (Konkurrensverket, 2018), although not when compared to the other Nordic countries (DLF & Delfi, 2023). Compared to European standards, there is a low proportion of discount stores in Sweden, the majority of which are located in the Southern parts of the country. Figure 4.1 and Table 4.1 present the market shares and total sales of the six dominating food retail chains, as summarized in the "Food Retail Map" (Swe: *Dagligvarukartan*), an annual brief on the Swedish food retail sector (DLF & Delfi, 2023). Apart from these companies, food is also sold through general retail, specialty stores, bakeries, farm sales, etc.

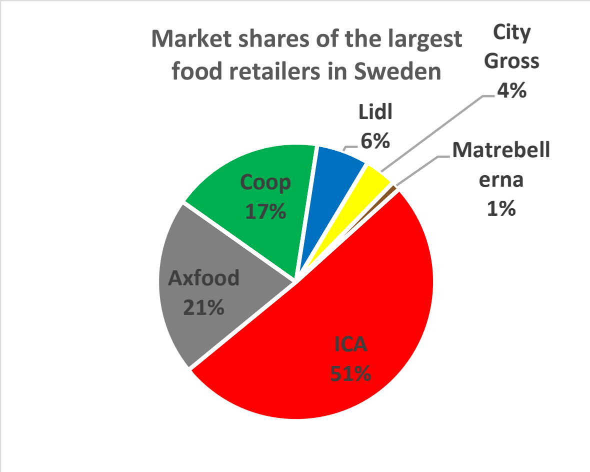
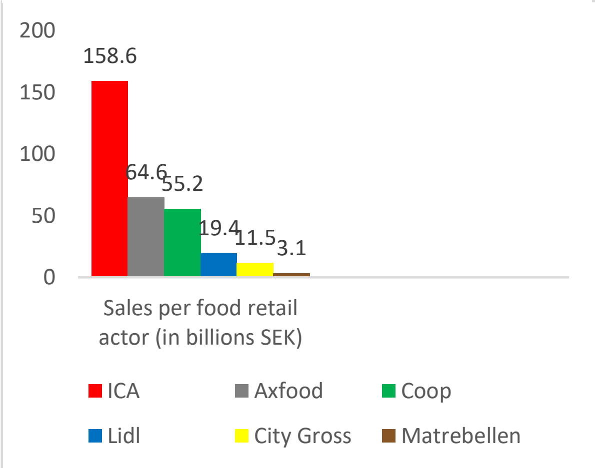


Figure 4.1: Market shares of the dominating food retail chains, based on percentages of total sales in 2022. Adapted from the Food Retail Map (DLF & Delfi, 2023).

Table 4.1: Sales of the dominating food retail chains in 2022. Adapted from the Food Retail Map (DLF & Delfi, 2023).



The sector's total sales account for 315.4 billion SEK in 2023 (ibid), with an economic growth of 7.5% as compared to 2022 (Svensk Dagligvaruhandel, 2023). Online food retail has grown in Sweden by 25.2% in the last 5 years. Around 30% of the total sales are constituted of the food retail chains' private label brands, a trend which has increased during the last years' food price surges (SCB, 2022). On the contrary, organically certified food has decreased, and now accounts for 4.4% of total sales (ibid). There is no currently available data on the number of kilos or calories of food traded and sold in the Swedish food system, neither through the dominating food retail chains, independent food retail traders, or alternative food networks (Livsmedelsverket, 2024a). The nationally dominating chains vary in organization structures and forms of ownership, although they are all centrally organized businesses. ICA, Axfood and Coop hold central wholesale functions in Sweden (Konkurrensverket, 2018). Together with Lidl, these four chains are vertically integrated actors. The companies are briefly described below, and then compared in Table 4.2.

ICA is the leading food retail chain in Sweden, by far superseding the other national chains in terms of both market shares (51%) and sales (158.6 billion SEK), as seen in Figure 4.1 and Table 4.1. The ICA Group (Swe: *ICA Gruppen AB*) includes food retail companies ICA Sweden and Rimi Baltic, property company ICA Properties, the ICA Bank, and the Heart Pharmacy (ICA Gruppen, n.d.). The national association of ICA-traders owns the ICA Group. ICA Sweden is the common wholesaler, and exclusively retails food for the independent ICA-traders, who are responsible for assortment and price setting (Konkurrensverket, 2018). The traders purchase ca 75% of their assortments through ICA Sweden. ICA Sweden owns both the ICA brand and the right to store premisses. There are ca 1.300 ICA stores in all of Sweden (ibid). Store profiles include ICA Kvantum, ICA Maxi, ICA Supermarket and ICA Nära (Table 4.2), as well as ICA online food retail and grocery subscriptions. ICA Sweden has seven private label brands.

AXFOOD is the second largest food retail chain in Sweden (21%, 64.6 billion SEK) (Figure 4.1, Table 4.1). The Axfood group own food retail companies Willys, Hemköp, Tempo, Urban Deli, Handlar'n and Matöppet, the wholesaler Dagab, the restaurant wholesaler Snabbgross, and grocery subscriptions Middagsfrid (Axfood, 2024a)(Table 4:2). Parts of the stores are owned by independent traders. Willys, Hemköp, Dagab and Snabbgross also have online food retail. Axfood partially owns the online pharmacy Apohem and food retail companies Eurocash, with minority shares in City Gross (ibid). Axfood's wholesale company Dagab is open for independent traders and deliver to City Gross. There are ca 830 Axfood stores in all of Sweden (Konkurrensverket, 2024). Axfood has 19 private label brands (Axfood, n.d.).

COOP is the third largest food retail chain in Sweden (17%, 55.2 billion SEK) (Figure 4.1, Table 4.1). Coop Sweden stands out from the other retail chains in its cooperative business model, where the Cooperative Association (Swe: *Kooperativa Förbundet*, KF) and Consumer Association Stockholm (Swe: *Konsumentföreningen Stockholm*) own the company (Konkurrensverket, 2018). Coop Sweden owns and manages ca 250 stores, including the closed Coop wholesaler and the online Coop food retail. KF also owns KF Property, the *MedMera* Bank, a conference facility, and media publisher *Vi Media* (KF, 2019). The 26 food retailing consumer associations which are members of KF, independently own and manage ca 400 stores (Konkurrensverket, 2018). Store profiles include Stora Coop, Coop, and X:-tra (Table 4:2) (ibid). The consumer associations are member-based, which means that the 3.8 million Swedish Coop members co-own the retail chain (Coop, n.d.-a). Coop Sweden has 3 private label brands (Coop, n.d.-b).

LIDL is the fourth largest food retail chain in Sweden (6%, 19.4 billion SEK) (Figure 4.1, Table 4.1). Lidl is the fastest growing and most recent food retailing chain in Sweden, and the only European company in the Swedish sector (Konkurrensverket, 2018). Lidl Sweden is owned by Lidl Stiftung & Co. KG, Europe's largest food retail chain, which is a part of the Schwarz concern, the second largest food retail corporation in the world (GlobalData, 2024). Lidl is distinguished through its standardized discount assortment made up largely of private label brands. On Lidl Sweden's website they only account for 9 of their non-food private label brands (Lidl, n.d.), why the total number of brands has not been possible to find. Lidl owns and manages ca 200 stores in all of Sweden, with only one store profile (Table 4:2). Lidl owns its own closed wholesale.

CITY GROSS is the fifth largest food retail chain in Sweden (4%, 11.5 billion SEK) (Figure 4.1, Table 4.1). City Gross is mainly owned by the concern Bergendahls, and partially owned by Axfood (Konkurrensverket, 2024). Reportedly, City Gross has been sold to Axfood and will be fully consolidated from September 2024 (Axfood, 2024b). There are ca 40 City Gross stores in all of Sweden, with only one hypermarket store profile (Konkurrensverket, 2024) (Table 4:2).

MATREBELLERNA is the sixth largest food retail chain in Sweden (1%, 3.1 billion SEK) (Figure 4.1, Table 4.1). The chain is made up of 23 independent supermarkets (Table 4:2) which have unified through a common wholesale organization (Konkurrensverket, 2024). The food stores are all owned by independent traders and are mainly located in the metropolitan area of Stockholm (Matrebellerna, n.d.).

Table 4.2: Comparison of the dominating Swedish food retail chains in terms of store profiles. Adapted from (Konkurrensverket, 2018).

Company/Profile	ICA	Coop	Axfood	Lidl	City Gross	Matrebellerna
Supermarket (10-15.000 articles, central or residential location, medium-high price level)	ICA Kvantum, ICA Supermarket, ICA Nära	Coop	Hemköp, Tempo, Handlar'n, Matöppet			Matrebellerna
Hypermarket (minimum 2.500 m^2 store area, 12-20.000 articles, broad assortment, peripheral location, medium-low price level)	ICA Maxi	Stora Coop			City Gross	
Discount market (5-12.000 articles, narrow assortment, residential and trading area location, low price level)		X:-tra	Willys	Lidl		

The dominating food retailing companies are collectively organized in the national trade association Swedish Food Retail. According to its website, the trade association "represents the whole sector" and work to promote an active and joint responsibility for "competition neutral" issues (Svensk Dagligvaruhandel, 2023). Amongst other things, this includes co-ownership of packaging recycling industries and the certification "From Sweden" (Swe: *Från Sverige*). The members of Swedish Food Retail are ICA, Axfood, Coop, Lidl, City Gross and the traders' national members' association "Food Traders" (Swe: *Livsmedelshandlarna*)

(Svensk Dagligvaruhandel, n.d.). On the board of Food Traders are representatives only from ICA and Axfood (Livsmedelshandlarna, 2024).

Since 2022, the public discourse has grown more critical towards the concentrated food retail sector in Sweden following “historically high food prices” (Konkurrensverket, 2024). “The food price shock” (Swe: *Matprischocken*), as it has popularly been named, has provoked a spark in the public debate of the interrelated issues of increased food prices, food retail market concentration and “record profits” for dominating food retail chains. Criticism has been raised in national media (Bränström, 2023; DN, 2022; Hatt & Hellman, 2020; Kulle, 2024), as well as by voices from civil society (Bertoft, 2024; Skiftet, n.d.). In 2023, the Swedish Minister of Finance called ICA, Axfood and Coop for a meeting to address the “inacceptable” increase in food prices and promised she would “keep her eyes on the three food giants” (SVT Nyheter, 2023). The Swedish Competition Agency declared that there is a “need for sharper tools in the regulation of competition”, which would require a change in the national competition laws (Konkurrensverket, 2022). Since 2023, the Swedish Competition Agency has investigated the competition within the food sector, which resulted in a report. The reports summarized conclusion is that competition in the Swedish food sector is limited and characterized by high market concentration in several parts of the value chain, including food retail (Konkurrensverket, 2024) (see Section 5.1.1).

5 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings of the research, as well as these findings are analyzed and discussed from the theoretical framework of political agroecology and urban food planning. The transdisciplinary theory and methodological pluralist approach of the investigation revealed the complexity of the research subject which was in turn reflected in complex research results. Due to this, it was considered suitable to include the discussion in the analysis. The chapter has been organized into three parts:

1. Public governance of the Swedish food retail sector
2. Stakeholders' perceptions on the Swedish food retail sector
3. Urban foodscapes in the Swedish food retail sector

Part i and Part ii aim to contribute to a deepened understanding of the preconditions and challenges for food retail at the national level in Sweden. This is done through reviewing public governance of food retail, as well as presenting a selection of Swedish food system actors' opinions of the sector. Through exploring how the food retail sector is shaped by public governance and in turn shapes the national food system – as experienced by stakeholders – the national conditions for the food retail sector are investigated. These in turn set the frames for food retail at a local level.

Part iii explores food retail on a local level and investigates how the sector shapes urban foodscapes through a qualitative case study of Malmö, Sweden. A comparative foodscape mapping of the spatial distribution and actor diversity of food retail is conducted in three areas of the city. The foodscape mapping lays the foundation for a discussion on the citizens' accessibility to food and its implications for food sovereignty and food justice in Malmö, and beyond.

5.1 Public governance of the Swedish food retail sector

The following sections presents a brief analysis and discussion of the public governance of the Swedish food retail sector.

5.1.1 National governance

In Sweden, there are a total of 367 public authorities on a national scale (Regeringskansliet, 2023). The task of these authorities is to work at the request of the government and the parliament. The authorities include administrative authorities, courts, and public institutions, such as SLU, with varying sizes and degrees of organizational independence.

SWEDISH COMPETITION AUTHORITY

The task of the Swedish Competition Authority (Swe: *Konkurrensverket*) is to "work for an efficient competition in private and public operations for the benefit of consumers" (Konkurrensverket, n.d.-b). Importantly, since 2021 the Swedish Competition Authority has the responsibility of supervising a new law on unfair trade practices in the food chain (Konkurrensverket, n.d.-c). The aim is to balance negotiations between typically strong buyers and weaker deliverers and prevent unfair negotiations at the expense of producers and deliverers (Konkurrensverket, n.d.-a). This includes both agricultural and food products.

The recently published report "The Competition Authority's examination of the food sector 2023-2024" (Konkurrensverket, 2024) concludes that the competition in the Swedish food sector is faulty due to high market concentration in several sections of the food system, particularly the food retail sector. This is for example reflected in the last years' disproportional increase in food prices, which has led to increased profit margins for the dominating food retail chains at the expense of consumers and producers. The report highlights the many lock-in effects – such as contracts between buyers and deliverers and agreements between the food retail chains – which hinder the market entry for new national food retail chains and risk homogenization of assortments and prices. The Competition Authority emphasizes these power imbalances and unfair trading practices in the Swedish food sector in their report, although variation within the country and between food producers is noted. Importantly, the report states that food retail market concentration is higher at the local level which negatively affects consumer food store choice locally. The establishment of new food stores is concluded to be "unnecessarily difficult", and the report identifies food retail actors' agreements with property owners and faulty municipal governance of competition within food retail as hinders (ibid). The importance of municipalities' role in planning and construction of food stores is stressed. Finally, specialty wholesalers and deliverers are also identified to have limited market access and expansion possibilities (ibid).

SWEDISH CONSUMER AGENCY

The Swedish Consumer Agency (Swe: *Konsumentverket*) has the mission of safeguarding consumers rights in purchases of goods and services (Konsumentverket, 2023b). The Consumer Agency has a strong focus on making sustainable consumption more accessible, and they supervise consumers' possibilities of making environmentally responsible choices (ibid).

In the Swedish Consumer Agency's report "Methods to change dietary habits: Focus on efforts to reduce meat consumption" (Konsumentverket, 2020), it was concluded that the state and the food retail sector, including individual food stores, are the two food system actors with the most potential influence over dietary shifts. Furthermore, the report stated that food retail companies could "intensify their work for a reduced environmental impact of the food that is sold" (ibid). In the report "The price is important, but not everything: To promote consumers' price awareness and mobility within food retail" (Konsumentverket, 2023a), the Swedish Consumer Agency identified that deciding factors in food shopping are price, distance to food stores, assortment and habits. Furthermore, the report (ibid) points to difficulties for low-income consumers to access the cheapest food items, because of limited mobility. The report suggests that a strong focus on price within food retail risk leading more sustainability- and quality-aware consumers away from the stores. Finally, a strong focus on price, according to the Swedish Consumer Agency, can exacerbate the difficulties which smaller food stores in "service-sparse" areas face, since they typically have higher prices (ibid).

SWEDISH FOOD AGENCY

The Swedish Food Agency (Swe.: *Livsmedelsverket*) has the task of ensuring safe, honest, healthy, and sustainable food production, trade, and distribution in Sweden (Livsmedelsverket, 2024b). Furthermore, the Food Agency has a central role in the implementation of the national food strategy.

The Swedish Food Agency and together with the Public Health Agency authored the report "A sustainable and healthy food consumption", which identifies national goals and intervention areas for a sustainable and healthy food consumption in Sweden (Folkhälsomyndigheten & Livsmedelsverket, 2024). The report explicitly states that the Swedish food retail market undermines sustainable and healthy food consumption. The possibilities of public regulation of private food retail actors' assortment, marketing, pricing, and exposure of food towards a more sustainable and healthy direction are highlighted, as are the possibilities and responsibilities of the food retail companies themselves, although on a voluntary basis, for example through trade associations. Furthermore, the Food Agency and Public Health Agency affirm that Sweden has a limited regulation of food which contributes to non-contagious diseases or climate and environmental impacts (ibid).

SWEDISH PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY

The Public Health Agency (Swe: *Folkhälsomyndigheten*) is a "knowledge-authority" who works with the promotion of improved and equal public health (Folkhälsomyndigheten, 2023). The Public Health Agency co-authored the report "A sustainable and healthy food consumption" with the Swedish Food Agency (Folkhälsomyndigheten & Livsmedelsverket, 2024).

THE SWEDISH NATIONAL FOOD STRATEGY

The national food strategy of Sweden 2017-2030 is governed by the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (Swe: *Tillväxtverket*) and the Swedish Board of Agriculture (Swe: *Jordbruksverket*). The Agency for Economic and Regional Growth work for the goal of sustainable development and economic growth in all parts of Sweden (Tillväxtverket, n.d.-b), and is responsible for the coordination of the implementation of the food strategy (Tillväxtverket, n.d.-a). The Board of Agriculture works to promote an increased and sustainable food production, animal welfare, and lively countryside in all of Sweden (Jordbruksverket, 2023), and is responsible for the assessment of the national food strategy, as well as matters of primary production in the strategy.

The overarching goal of the national food strategy is “a competitive food chain where the total food production increases, while relevant national environmental goals are achieved with the purpose of creating growth and employment in the whole country” (Regeringskansliet, 2019). The voluntary strategy extends to 2030 and includes the whole food chain. The food strategy emphasises competitiveness, economic profitability, growth opportunities, innovation capacity and increased resilience in the whole food chain (ibid). Food retail is not mentioned explicitly. Importantly, the strategy states that the goal of an increased primary production is up to consumer demand, whether conventional or organic (ibid). The 21 regions or county boards of Sweden each have their own food strategy, although the implementation of them is voluntary, both on a regional and municipal level. The Swedish Minister of Rural affairs’ national food policy council is constituted of representatives from food industry and trade associations, such as LRF, Arla, and Coca Cola. On the establishment of this council, the minister stated that:

> It is important for me to hear from you what you think that the government can do to give you the conditions to increase your production. Because that is what the food strategy is about, to increase Swedish food production (Regeringskansliet, 2024).

The annual report on the national food strategy (Jordbruksverket, 2024a) concludes that Swedish public health is deteriorating and requires the engagement of politicians, authorities and food retail. It also concludes that the last years’ increased food prices have had a negative effect on the organic sector in Sweden, which is continuously decreasing (ibid). This has had a negative effect on the environmental goals for Swedish primary production in the national food strategy, of which none is assessed to be reachable by 2030 (ibid).

5.1.2 Municipal governance

In Sweden, the local governance is carried out by the municipalities. Sweden’s 290 municipalities are run by the municipal councils and have autonomy and the right to taxation (Regeringskansliet, n.d.). The Swedish state has a responsibility of the municipalities’ “good and equal conditions to conduct an efficient welfare with a high quality” (ibid).

Physical planning

Physical planning refers to planning the location, use and design of land, water, buildings and infrastructure. In Sweden the physical planning is the sole responsibility of the municipalities, with support from the county boards and the Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning (Swe: *Boverket*) (Boverket, 2023c). This is referred to as the municipal planning monopoly. The physical planning is regulated through the Planning and Building Act and is divided into three parts: the comprehensive plan, detailed plan, and area regulations (ibid).

Food retail is controlled by the municipalities mainly through the detailed plans, which specify the designs of development, changes in, or conservation of urban areas (Boverket, 2023b). They are legally binding and must consider social and environmental interests of the public, as well as rights and duties between landowners and society. The detailed plans are developed by the municipal urban planning board, constituting of jurors selected by the elected municipal council (Boverket, 2020). Through the specifications of terms of use and property determination, the detailed plan can regulate the use and design of the indicated area (Boverket, 2023a), for example the location of store premises. The detailed plan cannot regulate which type of operation the store premiss should host, such a decision is up to the property owner. But through determining factors like store size and accessibility the detailed plan controls the conditions for a potential operation. Area regulations allow the municipality to regulate land and water use according to the comprehensive plan or national interests (Boverket, 2023c). It is up to the municipalities to interpret such national interests, as well as interpret and include national strategies such as the national food strategy. As mentioned, the municipal physical planning has been criticized by the Swedish Competition Agency for not considering conditions for fair competition within food retail(Konkurrensverket, 2024). Importantly, in matters of urban development where the municipalities are the property owner, they sell land to private property developers according to the regulations of the National Agency for Public Procurement (Upphandlingsmyndigheten, n.d.). Often, agreements between the municipalities and the private actors are determined before a detailed plan of the area is concluded (ibid).

MUNICIPAL FOOD CONTROL

The municipalities have the responsibility to conduct local food control on behalf of the Swedish Food Agency to ensure food safety, correctness of food information and marketing, and an efficient inner market (Livsmedelsverket, 2024c). This municipal food control is compulsory for all food facilities after the primary production, including food retail stores.

5.1.3 Key findings

In summary, food retail governance in Sweden is too complex to get a complete overview of. This policy review found five reports produced by Swedish national authorities 2018-2024 which in distinct ways criticized the current composition of food retail as well as the interrelations between food retail, increasing food prices, instability for producers and increased unhealthy and unsustainable food consumption. These reports were all assigned by the Swedish government but have seemingly not yet led to any policy changes. Importantly, within Swedish food governance, food is not referred to as *mat* – feed or foodstuff – but *livsmedel* – food product or goods – which can be interpreted as a reflection of a hegemonic perspective on food as a commercial product, and not a means by which humans sustain, nurture, connect and enjoy themselves. This phrasing is void of the social and cultural meanings of food.

The public reports reviewed found that the limited competition in food retail has contributed to a disproportionate increase in food prices at the expense of producers and consumers, as well as a limited consumer food store choice, especially on a local level where a food retail monopoly is not uncommon in Sweden. Secondly, food price, distance to food stores, store assortment and consumption habits are all deciding factors in food shopping and low-income citizens face greater difficulties in accessing cheapest food items. Furthermore, Swedish food retail undermines the possibilities of sustainable and healthy food consumption, and companies and state authorities have possibilities and responsibilities in changing this trend. The Swedish national food strategy does not mention food retail but focuses on increased food production and consumer responsibility, while big food and agricultural industry are favoured. This is particularly evident in the newly established food policy council of the Minister of Rural Affairs. The voluntary implementation of the national, regional and municipal food strategies suggests a soft policy approach to food systems transformation that risks being toothless in the face of powerful agri-food industry, including food retail.

Municipalities have a planning monopoly in Sweden and plan the location of store premisses. They are criticized for not adequately nor sufficiently considering conditions for fair competition in food retail on a local level. The municipalities face challenges and opportunities in interpreting national interests and strategies and ultimately have great power on a local level.

5.2 Stakeholder perceptions on the Swedish food retail sector

This section presents the key perceptions on the Swedish food retail sector by the interviewed stakeholders. The research participants include an ICA-trader, an agricultural producer, a representative from the food innovation support system, a gardener and horticultural producer, and a researcher within food and agricultural economics.

5.2.1 ICA-trader

The ICA-trader identifies the structure of the independent traders unified by a common wholesaler as the strength of ICA compared to the other food retail chains. Together with ICA's national presence, and engagement in local associations and schools, he claims that this is the reason behind their large market shares:

> All stores are run by their own traders. That is our business idea and strength to be the local master in the locality. Local entrepreneurs adapt to the local market.

The ICA-trader argues that ICA, in its role as the leading food retailer in Sweden, plays an important role in the food system, and that ICA due to its strong negotiation position can improve standards on prices, quality and working conditions in the whole national sector. According to the ICA-trader, innovation is also standardized more efficiently with one large food retail actor on the market. He remarks on the market conditions for Sweden, a long, peripheral country with a small population, which in his opinion requires big food retail actors to deliver food in the whole country. He says that "past Stockholm there's no profitability", but that ICA delivers food out of a sense of concern:

> ICA has big [market] shares because we are present in all municipalities and there are not many other actors that would be interested in opening stores in those localities that ICA has. We want to take a societal responsibility.

The ICA-trader also argues that ICA is not as dominating in the food retail sector as other actors make it seem, since they increasingly compete with general retail companies. He emphasizes how the relatively small Swedish food retail sector, including ICA, is "completely dominated" by the "giant" transnational food industry, for example Nestlé and Mondelez. In relation to which food retailing companies that get access to food store localities, the ICA-trader explains that real estate developers and property owners can sell or lease store premises according to their own requirements:

> Simply put, it's the real estate owners who have the power and decide… They want the ones who pay the most.

The ICA-trader is positive towards collaborating with farmers and notes ICA's long history of supporting farmers, such as dairy producers Arla and *Skånemejerier*. He is also positive toward buying from smaller, local food deliverers and producers, and wishes to increase such collaborations in the long term. He remarks the challenge which smaller food producers face in the food retailing sector's need for big volumes:

> I see small deliverers as a great strength, I'm glad to benefit them… But the whole food industry is built on volumes, so if you talk to a farmer with a small farm, it's really tough for that person.

This statement was made knowing that the farmer in question, see Section 5.2.2, manages 600 ha. The ICA-trader doesn't answer the criticism presented regarding the negative effect of ICA's profit margins of primary producers.

5.2.2 Agricultural producer

The fundamental issues with the national food retail sector, as identified by the farmer, are the unfair competition with imported goods and not being paid sufficiently for the added value of his environmental work. The farmer displayed great criticism towards ICA as driving these issues in Sweden:

> ICA runs our world and the pricing of our products, that's the central challenge. The other challenge is unfair conditions for competition with imported agricultural products. It's the middle hands that take all the added value which doesn't belong to them, they're thieves.

According to the farmer, ICA sets the national food retail standards through their dominance on the market which forces the other food retailers to depend on ICA, their prices, marketing, etc. According to the farmer, this presents a great disadvantage for Swedish producers with high levels of animal welfare and high costs for infrastructure and real estate.:

> It is counterproductive for us and the environment, in the sense that we do not get paid for the extra work that we are obliged to do according to the law. And, because they fly in products which they sell in Sweden much cheaper than what we can and are allowed to

> produce here so that they can earn their profit margins… What happens is that you export employment opportunities and import bad climate.

The farmer experiences constraints in his livelihood opportunities because of the concentrated market and limited sales channels. He also mentions the effect that the large-scale food retailing system has on transport and distribution, which increases prices for smaller producers like himself and poses yet a disadvantage. The farmer believes that ICA is failing its social and environmental responsibilities, and that "it is a shame" that they do not support Swedish farmers. The farmer emphasized great disbelief in ICA who he claims "are only concerned with their own profitability", and that "they have no morals". He states:

> It cannot be reasonable that you're allowed to import things to our country which you are not allowed to produce here.

The responsibility for this supposed failure is shared between the state and the ICA Group centrally, according to the farmer. He acknowledges the good intentions of many local ICA-traders, and he identifies large, centralized corporations as the foundation of the problem. When asked about the possibilities for sustainable food systems transformation, the farmer does not believe that can happen with the current food retail, but that it rather relies on closer relationships between producers and consumers.

5.2.3 Representative from the food innovation support system

The main focus of the representative from the food innovation support system was the concentrated food retail market and its effects on the food system, especially in regard to innovation and entrepreneurialism. The effects of these "faulty market dynamics" are identified as: limited market access for innovative food products, the devaluation of added value of food production, difficulties in building long-term business relationships, and a homogenized food retail sector in terms of pricing, marketing, assortment, etc. The representative from the food innovation support system is very critical to the ways in which ICA has been allowed to grow to own 50% of the food retail market shares, how that limits market competition, and how ICA has the power to set the standards in the Swedish food retail sector. He talks about how even the big food industry show reluctance to releasing new, innovative products on the market if ICA are not interested in selling them:

> To me, that is a non-functioning market, the consumer doesn't even get to try [the product], if it's not released because ICA says 'no'. When you own 50% of the consumer market, you're too big for the driving forces of the market to function properly.

He also mentions his concern of ICA expanding their business to import, production and other sectors, such as banks, insurance, real estate, and pharmacies:

> This means that no matter what you do you end up giving money to ICA and that is not sound in my opinion, in a democratic, market-driven society.

The food innovation representative is specifically critical to the food retailers' private label brands, which he considers are favored through lower prices and better shelf placement in stores but offer less stable and profitable contracts for producers and deliverers. He considers that the food retailers' own brands "kill innovation" in the food chain through undermining food producers' and innovators' autonomy and incentives for producing added value, while for consumers it is sometimes the only option in the store:

> The problem is that it removes the market in a sense, because [the food retail chains] sit on the last piece of the puzzle… 'Do you want to produce? Do that, but you need to do it for us. And we decide the prices and where and how it is going to be sold'… There's a skewed power balance in that.

The representative from the food innovation support system identifies the responsibility of the concentrated food retail market as being that of the Swedish state first and foremost, and criticizes the Swedish Competition Agency for being too passive in the matter:

> In the end, it is actually a political responsibility, but no one dares.

He also criticizes the food retail corporations and their lack of corporate responsibility, as well as he identifies a certain consumer responsibility. Regarding the possibilities of sustainable food systems transformation within the current food retail sector, the innovation representative identifies food retail as one of many hinders in the food system but ascertains that change can only come when primary producers are paid for the added values that they are obliged to contribute to according to the law.

5.2.4 Gardener and horticultural producer

The gardener mainly spoke about the role which food retail plays in the food system, as well as having an explicit focus on corporate responsibility. She believes that the current food retail sector in Sweden reflects a capitalist economic system and politics which supports it, as well as the high levels of imported foods reflect EU trade and agricultural policies. She also believes that this hinders the possibilities for Swedish agricultural policies to promote the increase in domestic food production for domestic consumption:

> The food companies and food retail earn a lot more [money] on the imported food simply because it is produced under other circumstances. Perhaps more sun hours, yes, but mostly because the work force is cheaper, environmental legislation is weaker, many more [agro]chemicals and so on.

Thus, she identifies EU and Swedish politicians as responsible for a food system which creates severe social and environmental crises, as well as she identifies corporations equally responsible for the types of production and working conditions that they make money off. According to her, consumers do not have the responsibility to educate themselves, and they should be able to trust that the food retailers take their corporate responsibility. Furthermore, the gardener believes that the idea of supply and demand as market regulators is "something [the companies] can hide behind". She argues that food retail companies base the supply with what is the most profitable for them to sell, not the consumer demand, exemplifying with product campaign offers, product shelf placements in stores, etc.:

> It's like a whole ecosystem of income for the [food retail] chains. The task is to drive sales… It's based on a cynical business idea.

She continues:

> What I demand and what I would like to see from the [food retail] chains is that they take responsibility based on their own policy documents.

The gardener points to the use of Swedish, small-scale, and organic farmers in food retail marketing, but expresses frustration in her perception of the food retail chains' lack of financial support and stability for farmers. In her own words, there's "a lot of talk, but not a lot of action". She mentions the difference in the number of campaigns for conventional and organic produce, respectively, as an example of this. And as "campaigns drive sales", she argues that the food retailers' lack of support for organic production and the higher demands on organic produce (certification, etc.) is reflected in the decrease of the organic sector in Sweden. On the question of sustainable food systems transformation, the gardener does not believe that it can rely on consumer demand, but that such a transformation rather depends on political decisions:

> [Food systems transformation] depends on a very different political reality where the corporations actually have to pay for the production that they support or what their production chain looks like… Today we only have the market price, the real costs are neither paid for by the corporations nor the consumers.

5.2.5 Researcher in food and agricultural economics

The researcher pointed to economic efficiency and consumer demand as determining the spatial distribution patterns of food retail stores nationally, and that the South of Sweden has more food retail stores due to cost benefits, such as proximity to distribution centrals and a larger demand on a smaller area. The researcher mentioned the non-willingness of European food retail corporations to enter the Swedish market, due to it being too small, and thus not profitable enough. In the opinion of the researcher, the Swedish market, by being small, peripheral and with large distances, is particularly benefitted by economies of scale. He did confirm the potential negative effects the concentrated food retail system can have for deliverers and producers and claimed that it does so more than for consumers. Regarding the prevailing presence of small, independent grocery stores in socioeconomic weaker areas, he commented:

> The [small neighborhood stores] first and foremost serve the immediate environment, and sometimes consumers in the immediate environment do not have the possibility to travel to larger stores. How people choose and can choose among stores differ.

Furthermore, the researcher did not identify any food justice issue on the matter:

> [Food stores] are very good at regulating the supply from the consumer demand. I don't really understand where the consumer justice perspective comes in. Large stores indeed have large assortments, so in that sense there's something for everyone in them too.

Regarding the food retail sector's environmental considerations, the researcher mentioned the efficiency of the economies of scale as being environmentally beneficial, as well as he mentioned the energy-efficiency in transportation and store appliances:

> I don't see any obvious environmental benefits of transitioning to a smaller scale as large-scale often promotes efficient logistics and through that lower negative environmental impact.

When asked about the possibilities for sustainable food systems transformation within the current food retail sector, the researcher was not comfortable answering the question.

5.2.6 Key findings

The main subjects which rose during the interviews were: the question of oligopoly in the food retail market and how that affects the national food system, the matter of sustainability in food retail and corporate social and environmental responsibility.

The farmer, the gardener and the representative from the food innovation support system were more aligned in their perceptions of food retail than the ICA-trader and the researcher in food and agricultural economics. These three stakeholders all expressed great frustration at the current Swedish food retail chains and their perceived lack of sustainability considerations and social and environmental corporate responsibility. These interviews revealed the stakeholders' criticism toward how the competition within the Swedish food retail sector lacks fair regulations, how ICA dominates the sector and the negative effects this has on the whole food system, and how the maximization of profit is a great driver of the largest Swedish food retailers. The farmer, the gardener and the innovation representative identified the Swedish government along with the food retail chains as responsible, and no not consider that sustainable food systems transformation can happen within the current food retail sector. Instead, the three stakeholders believe that such change relies on closer relationships between producers and consumers and paying for the added value and true cost of food.

The ICA-trader and the researcher in food and agricultural economics did not express such critical opinions, but rather focused on how the food retail market reflects the consumer demand and the efficiency of the economies of scale. Efficiency in distribution and transport, as well as energy-saving store technologies was the focus of sustainability of these two stakeholders. The ICA-trader argued for the social responsibility that ICA takes, and that ICA is dominated by both property owners and international food industry. An emphasis was put on food retail's need for big volumes, and how that can have negative effect on producers. The researcher identified no food justice matter in food retail as he believes that the supply is regulated by consumer demand. He did identify any connections between food retail and sustainable food systems transformation.

These interviews have thus highlighted the complexity of the function of food retail in the food system, and how a concentrated food retail market can be considered to have both advantages and disadvantages depending on the stakeholder that you ask.

5.3 Urban foodscapes in the Swedish food retail sector

This section focuses on the qualitative and comparative case study of the thesis. Through mapping the foodscape of food retail in Malmö, and in the city areas of Ribersborg, Möllevången and Rosengård, this section investigates local urban foodscapes and their implications for food sovereignty and food justice.

5.3.1 The foodscape of Malmö

Malmö is situated in Scania, the agricultural region of Sweden and has a rich industrial history. Malmö is Sweden's third largest city with a population of ca 350.000 inhabitants (Table 5.1). Due to high birth, immigration and domestic migration, rates, Malmö is Sweden's fastest growing city (Malmö Stad, n.d.-a). It is also a young city, where ca 50% of the population are under 35 years old (ibid), and ca 20% are under 18 years old (Table 5.1). Notably, Malmö is a highly multicultural city with 186 nationalities represented (ibid), and more than 30% are born outside of the country (Table 5.1). By Swedish standards, Malmö is a city with high levels of economic and social inequality as well as segregation (Malmö Stad, 2023d). It is the city in Sweden with highest levels of economic vulnerability, child poverty and food poverty (Sveriges Stadsmissioner, 2022). Average disposable income is ca 230.000 SEK (ca €20.000) (Table 5.1), and local unemployment rates are 30% (Table 5.1) compared to the national level of 6.6% (Malmö Stad, n.d.-b). Unemployment rates are especially high for the foreign-born population (Malmö Stad, 2023a). In Sweden, Malmö is renowned for its extensive criminality, although the data shows that criminality is in fact decreasing (Malmö Stad, n.d.-c).

Table 5.1: Sociodemographic profile of Malmö municipality. Adapted from Malmö Stad (2024a).

Sociodemographic factor	Malmö
Population	
Total population	357 377
Women (%)	50
Men (%)	50
<19 years old (%)	22
20-64 years old (%)	63
>65 years old (%)	15
Households	
Total households (no.)	167 871
Singles without children (%)	44
Singles with children (%)	8
Couples without children (%)	19
Couples with children (%)	20
Households of >5 persons (%)	7
Private economy	
Unemployment rate (%)	30
Average disposable income (SEK)	226 400
Education	
Post-secondary education (% of population 20-64 years old)	51
Foreign background	
Foreign born (%)	36
Domestic born to two foreign born parents (%)	13
Health	
Average no. of sick days per year (20-64 years old)	17
Transportation	
Car owners (% of population >20 years old)	32
Housing type	
Small houses (detached, semi-detached, terraced houses) (%)	16
Apartment buildings (>3 housing units) (%)	78
Tenancy (%)	47
Condominium (%)	40
Proprietorship (%)	14

The last ten years in Malmö have seen an increased municipal and public interest in food. This has manifested in manifold private and public initiatives on food, for example the founding of MFC and the former municipal food policy on sustainable public procurement (Malmö Stad, 2023c; Moragues-Faus & Morgan, 2015), not to mention the establishment and development of food tech and industry, urban agriculture, cafés and restaurants, many of which with a high-quality and sustainability profiles. Malmö municipality has no current food policy, although the recent collaborative municipal project "Innovation Platform City" has the objective that a third of the food consumed in Malmö by 2033 will be produced, processed and sold within the city (Malmö Stad, 2024d). The project does not include food retail. The number of nationalities in Malmö gives an indication of the globalized and cosmopolitan food cultures that are present in the city, and the diversity of consumer demand which is put on retail. There was no data found which details the value of the sales or volumes of food sold through food retail in Malmö, nor the local distribution of market shares between the nationally dominating food retail chains mapped in Figure 5.1. Therefore, it has not been possible to make a direct comparison between the food retail sector in Malmö and on a national level.

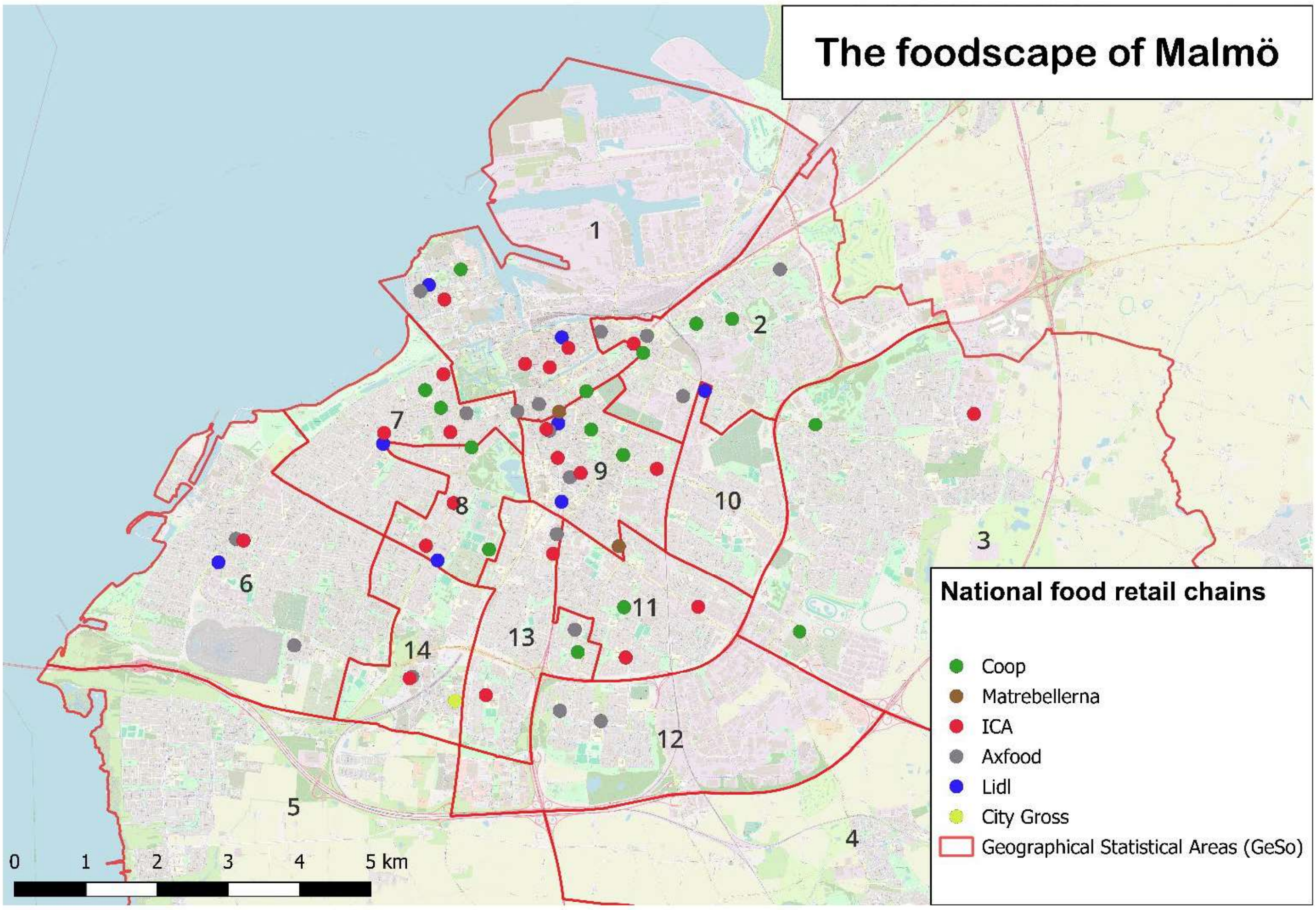


Figure 5.1: Foodscape map of the six dominating Swedish food retail chains in Malmö.

The map of food stores from the six dominating food retail companies in Malmö can be seen in Figure 5.1. The map shows the spatial distribution of these nationally dominating food retailers within in the Outer Ring road. A total of 64 food stores were mapped, see Appendix A (Table A). From the map, the following spatial distribution patterns can be interpreted:

1. The dominating food retail chains are represented in all areas.
2. ICA, Axfood and Coop have the greatest spatial distribution throughout the city, Lidl is mainly found in centrally located areas, as is Matrebellerna, and City Gross is only found in a peripheral area.
3. There is a concentration of food stores in the centre of the city, which decreases towards the periphery, although the degree of this decline varies and depends on the area.
4. There is a ribbon of food stores along the periphery of the city.
5. The area with the least amount of food stores (1) is GeSo10, and the area with the most food stores (12) is GeSo01.
6. The average number of food stores in Malmö is (5) per area, and the median number of food stores in Malmö is (4.5).

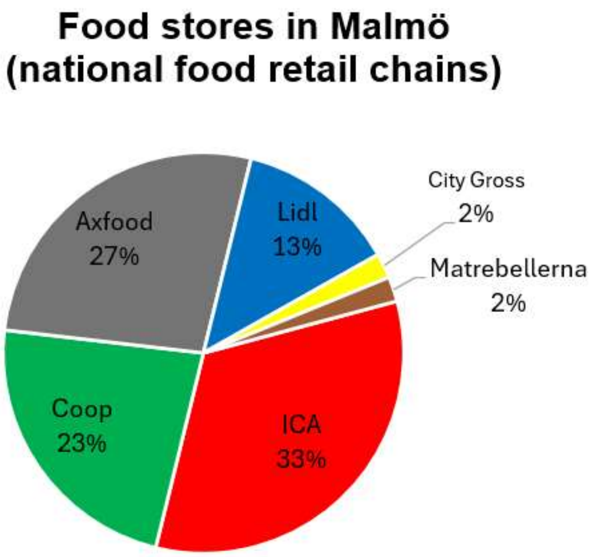


Figure 5.2: The percentual distribution of the national food retail chains in Malmö.

*Table 5.2: Results from mapping the national food retail chains in Malmö. *Discount stores.*

Food retail company	No.	Percentage
ICA (total)	**21**	**33**
ICA Supermarket	7	
ICA Kvantum (Malmborgs)	5	
ICA Maxi	3	
ICA Nära	6	
Coop (total)	**15**	**23**
Coop	10	
Stora Coop	2	
*X:-tra**	3	
Axfood (total)	**17**	**27**
*Willys**	8	
Hemköp	4	
Handlar'n	2	
Tempo	1	
Matöppet	2	
Lidl (total)	**8**	**13**
*Lidl**	8	
City Gross (total)	**1**	**2**
City Gross	1	
Matrebellerna (total)	**2**	**2**
Mathallen	2	
Total	**64**	**100**

The foodscape map of the nationally dominating food retail chains in Malmö reveal the following food retail actor diversity (Fig 5.2) and company composition (Table 5.2):

1. The percentual distribution of the nationally dominating food retail chains in Malmö differs from the national market shares (Fig 4.1), although the ranking is the same (1. ICA, 2. Axfood, 3. Coop, 4. Lidl) apart from City Gross and Matrebellerna.
2. The biggest difference between local and national food retail market shares (Fig 4.1) is ICA (-18 percentage units, -35%) and Lidl (+7 percentage units, +116%).
3. Of all store profiles, the supermarket Coop is the most represented store in Malmö.
4. ICA is the dominating food retail company with 33% of the total number of food stores mapped. All store profiles are represented with the supermarkets ICA Supermarket and ICA Nära having the majority of stores.
5. Axfood has 27% of the total number of food stores mapped with all of its store profiles represented, with the discount store Willys having the majority of stores.
6. Coop has 23% of the total number of food stores mapped with all of its store profiles are represented with the supermarket Coop having the majority of stores.
7. Lidl has 13% of the total number of food stores mapped.
8. City Gross has 2% of the total number of food stores mapped.
9. Matrebellerna has 2% of the total number of food stores mapped.
10. ICA's and City Gross' geographical market shares are less than the national market shares of 51% and 4% (Fig 4.1), respectively, indicating that ICA and City Gross are less dominant on a local level in Malmö than in the national sector.
11. Axfood's, Coop's, Lidl's and Matrebellerna's geographical market shares are bigger than the national market shares of 21%, 17%, 6% and 1% (Fig 4.1), respectively, indicating that these four chains are more dominant on a local level in Malmö than the in the national sector.
12. Supermarkets are the most prominent store type with a total number of 39 (61%), including all national supermarket profiles ICA Kvantum, ICA Supermarket, ICA Nära, Coop, Hemköp, Tempo, Handlar'n, Matöppet and Matrebellerna (Table 4:2).
13. The total number of hypermarkets is 6 (9%), including all national hypermarket profiles ICA Maxi, Stora Coop and City Gross (Table 4:2).
14. The total number of discount stores is 19 (30%), including all national discount stores/profiles Lidl, Willys and X:-tra (Table 4:2). This number indicates that discount stores are more prominent in Malmö than in Sweden in general.

5.3.2 The foodscape of Ribersborg

The administrative area GeSo07 (Figure 3.1), here referred to as Ribergsborg, is located along the coast in the Western, central part of Malmö. The Northeastern, more central areas of Ribersborg – such as the neighbourhoods *Ribersborg* (Fig 5.3), *Rönneholm* (Fig 5.4), *Hästhagen* and *Kronprinsen* – are entirely made up of apartment buildings ranging from three- to nine-storeys, apart from the skyscraper *Kronprinsen* (Eng: The Crown Prince), which stands out with its 27 storeys as Malmö's third tallest building. The neighbourhoods *Fridhem* (Fig 5.5), *Mellanheden* (Fig 5.6), *Erikslust* (Fig 5.7), *Västervång* (Fig 5.8) and *Solbacken* in the middle of Ribersborg are made up of a blend between apartment houses (>7 storeys) and small houses (detached, semi-detached and terraced houses). The Southern and Southwestern most neighbourhoods *Nya Bellevue* (Fig 5.9) and *Bellevue* (Fig 5.10) are entirely made up of small houses (detached, semi-detached and terraced houses). Thus, there is an evident Northeastern-Southwestern gradient in regard to housing type in the area, which is sure to affect the types of residents in different neighbourhoods. There is a limited integration between residential and commercial areas.

The whole of Ribersborg is characterized by being open, spacious, calm and well-kept. Although there is a certain architectural variation in terms of style throughout the area, the administrative area of Ribersborg comes across as unison, due to the beforementioned housing-type-gradient as well as the house colours, which are either red brick or a range of brighter pastel colours and white (Fig 5.3-5.10). There are plenty of green spaces in the area, mainly private gardens but also in between residential houses or along the streets. The only two parks in the area are *Rönneholmsparken* and *Mellanhedsparken*. The park along the beach, *Ribersborgsstranden*, is well-known and well-used by residents from all over Malmö. Ribersborg is also in direct proximity to Malmö's two largest parks *Pildammsparken* and *Slottsparken*. No urban gardens were observed in the city area during field research.

Figure 5.3: Ribersborg

Figure 5.4: Rönneholm

Figure 5.5: Fridhem

Figure 5.6: Mellanheden

Figure 5.7: Erikslust

Figure 5.8: Västervång

Figure 5.9: Nya Bellevue

Figure 5.10: Bellevue

Table 5.3: Sociodemographic profile of Ribersborg. *Adapted from* Malmö Stad (2024a).

Sociodemographic factor	Ribersborg
Population	
Total population	31 296
Women (%)	53
Men (%)	47
<19 years old (%)	18
20-64 years old (%)	62
>65 years old (%)	20
Households	
Total households (no.)	16 920
Singles without children (%)	50
Singles with children (%)	7
Couples without children (%)	22
Couples with children (%)	16
Households of >5 persons (%)	3
Private economy	
Unemployment rate (%)	20
Average disposable income (SEK)	325 903
Education	
Post-secondary education (% of population 20-64 years old)	68
Foreign background	
Foreign born (%)	17
Domestic born to two foreign born parents (%)	5
Health	
Average no. of sick days per year (20-64 years old)	13
Transportation	
Car owners (% of population >20 years old)	35
Housing type	
Small houses (detached, semi-detached, terraced houses) (%)	9
Apartment buildings (>3 housing units) (%)	87
Tenancy (%)	47
Condominium (%)	45
Proprietorship (%)	7

The administrative area of Ribersborg has been developed and built over the course of several periods, mainly in the 1890's, the 1930's and 1960's. Historically renowned urban planners, real estate developers, architects and business owners have conjointly developed the area. Amongst these, prominent Kockums had the first apartment building constructed for its workers (ibid). The whole area was planned for high car-accessibility, tram lines (1887-1973), as well as the former railroad which connected Malmö with Limhamn (1889-2009) was constructed along the coast (ibid).

Ribersborg is the socioeconomic wealthiest of the three city areas mapped in this investigation. It has a population of 31.296 people, with the majority being in working age (Table 5.3). The average disposable income in Ribersborg is ca 325.000 SEK (ca €30.000) annually, and most people have a higher degree education. 17% of the population in Ribersborg are born outside of Sweden. The vast majority of the housing units are apartments (87%) with equal shares tenancy and condominium. Half of the population lives in single households.

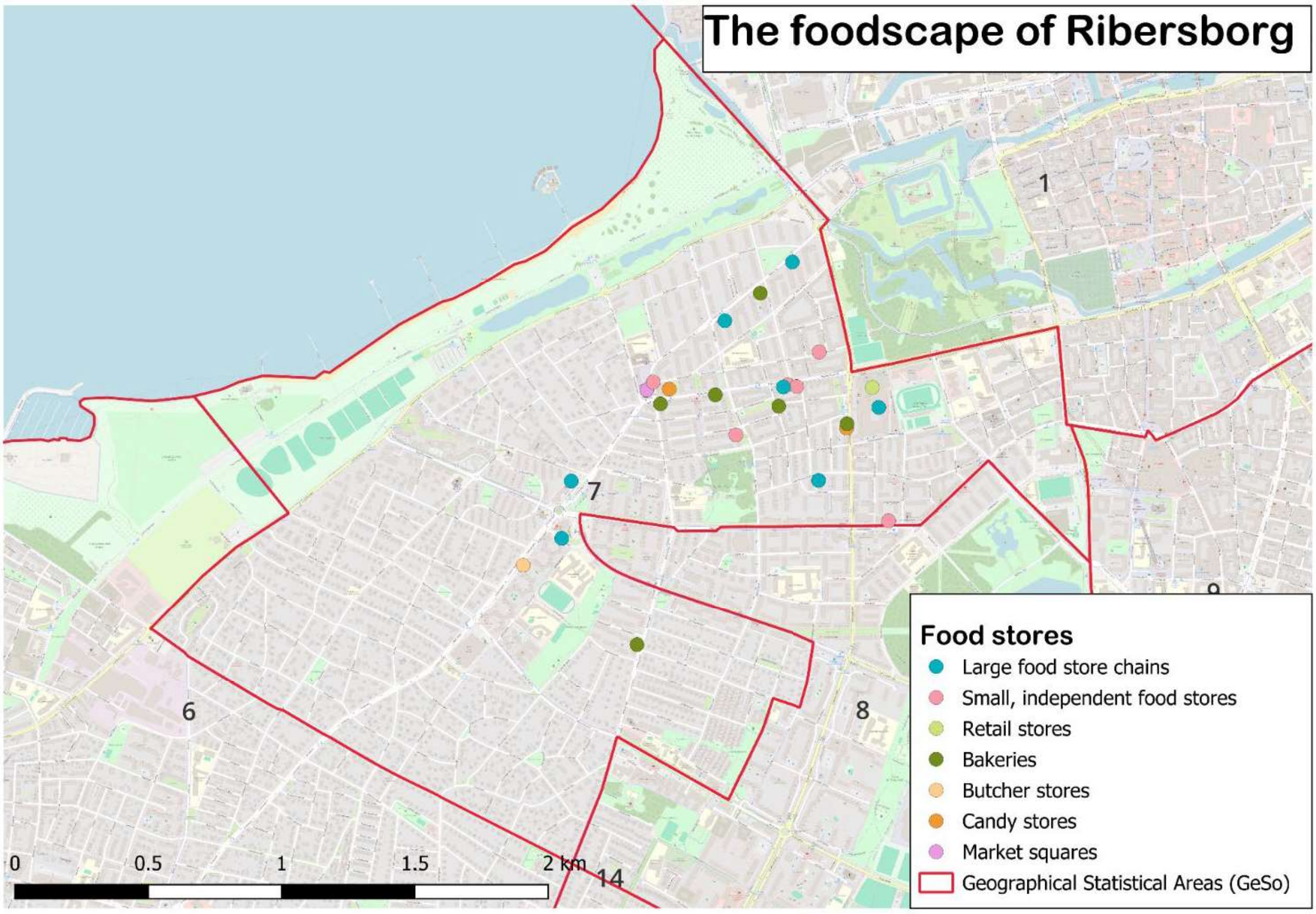


Figure 5.11: The foodscape map of the food stores in Ribersborg.

The map of food stores in Ribersborg (GeSo07) can be seen in Figure 5.11. The map shows the spatial distribution of all food stores in the area. A total of 24 food stores were mapped, see Appendix A (Table B). From the map, the following spatial distribution patterns can be interpreted:

1. There is a concentration of food stores towards the Northeastern, more central parts of the city area.
2. The food stores are mainly located along the larger streets in the area, namely Tessins väg, Regementsgatan, Mariedalsvägen, Erikslustvägen, and Bellevuevägen.
3. The mall Kronprisen is also a node for food stores.
4. Neighborhoods without food stores are: Hästhagen, Västervång, Bellevue, Nya Bellevue, and Solbacken. All of these areas, apart from Hästhagen, are mainly made up of small houses (detached, semi-detached and terraced houses).

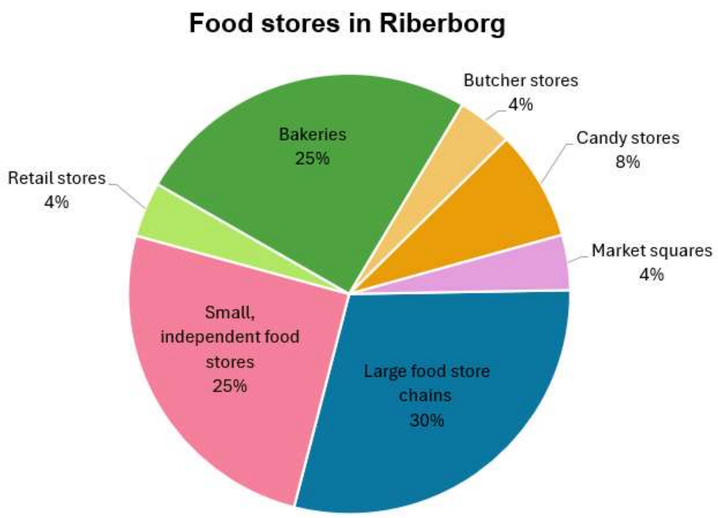


Figure 5.12: The percentual distribution of the total number of food stores in Ribersborg.

Table 5.4: Results from the foodscape map of food stores in Ribersborg in food store categories.

Food store category	No.	%
Small food store chains	0	0
Large food store chains	7	29
Small, independent food stores	6	25
Large, independent food stores	0	0
Retail stores	1	4
Bakeries	6	25
Butcher stores	1	4
Candy stores	2	8
Market squares	1	4
Food donation places	0	0
Total	**24**	**100**

The results of the foodscape map of food stores in Ribersborg organized into food store categories can be seen in Figure 5.12 and Table 5.4. The 24 food stores reveal the following food retail actor diversity based on store ownership, size and main assortment:

1. The most prominent food category is large food store chains (29%). Supermarkets from ICA, Axfood and Coop (Fig 5.13) are represented. Lidl is the only discount store. There are no hypermarkets present.
2. The second-most prominent categories are bakeries and small food stores (25%).
3. Out of the bakeries, two are from larger chains and the rest are independent (Fig 5.16).
4. Out of the small, independent food stores, two are delicacy stores (Fig 5.14), one is a kiosk (Fig 5.21), and three of them are grocery stores (Fig 5.17; 5.19). One of the food stores has a specific international profile, and one an Italian.
5. The third-most prominent category is candy stores (8%), both owned by national chains, one smaller (Fig 5.15) and one larger.
6. There is one retail store from a larger chain, one independent butcher store (Fig 5.20) and one market square consisting of one vendor (Fig 5.19).
7. There are no small food store chains, large, independent food stores, or food donation places present.
8. There are no food stores mapped with an explicit healthy, local, Swedish, sustainable, or organic assortment.

Figure 5.13: Coop, large food store chain, Ribersborg.

Figure 5.15: Sweeet, candy store, Rönneholm.

Figure 5.14: Italianissimo, small, independent food store, Rönneholm.

Figure 5.16: Bellevue Conditori, bakery, Mellanheden.

Figure 5.17: Tropical Food Store, small, independent food store, Ribersborg.

Figure 5.18: Signalen, small, independent food store, Rönneholm.

Figure 5.19: Fridhemstorget, market square, Fridhem.

Figure 5.20: Erikslust Kött, butcher store, Mellanheden.

Figure 5.21: Direkten, small, independent food store, Rönneholm.

5.3.3 The foodscape of Möllevången

The administrative area GeSo09 (Figure 3.1), here referred to Möllevången, is located in the very centre of Malmö. Out of the three cityscapes mapped in this investigation, Möllevången is the most heterogenous. As a central city area, the residential areas are blended with commercial areas, as well as there are industrial areas still present in Möllevången (Fig 5.25). The residential areas mainly constitute apartment buildings, but host a multitude of architectural styles, varying in ages, colours and number of storeys (Fig 5.22-5.31). As such, there is a great variation between the neighbourhoods, although the neighbourhoods themselves show certain characteristics. *Rådmansvången* (Fig 5.24), *Möllevången* (Fig 5.22) and parts of *Västra Sorgenfri* (Fig 5.28) and *Södervärn* (Fig 5.26) are the oldest neighbourhoods and characterized by their 4-5 storey brick buildings, some of which have an industrial history. *Annelund* (Fig 5.23), *Norra Sofielund* (Fig 5.29), *Södra Sofielund* (Fig 5.31), *Östra Sorgenfri* (Fig 5.30), and parts of *Västra Sorgenfri* (Fig 5.28) and *Södervärn* (Fig 5.26) are all characterized by being developed as workers' housing in the late 19th century, or as part of the Swedish "Million Program" from the 1940's and onwards. In all neighbourhoods there are also newly constructed buildings, adding to the heterogeneity of the cityscape, as well as of the residents in this city area.

Möllevången is also the city area with the least green spaces out of the three city areas mapped, which is not surprising considering its central location. Many of the apartment buildings have shared outdoor spaces, although the "greenness" of these varies widely. The only larger parks in the city area are *Folkets park* and *Eskifteshagen*, although there are many smaller parks, as well as the Northen, Central and Southern St Pauli cemeteries function as recreational green spaces. The Westernmost parts of Möllevången also have a direct proximity to the large park *Pildammsparken*. There are a few, smaller urban gardens located around the city area.


Figure 5.22: Möllevången


Figure 5.23: Annelund


Figure 5.24: Rådmansvången


Figure 5.25: Sofielunds industriområde


Figure 5.26: Södervärn


Figure 5.27: Lönngården


Figure 5.28: Västra Sorgenfri


Figure 5.29: Norra Sofielund


Figure 5.30: Östra Sorgenfri


Figure 5.31: Södra Sofielund

The administrative area of Möllevången is characterized by its industrial history. A variation of industry was developed in the neighbourhoods Möllevången and Sorgenfri under the late 19th century, as was housing for the industrial workers in the same neighbourhoods along with Sofielund (Malmö Stad, 2023b). The area has since then been closely affiliated with working class politics and culture. Möllevångstorget has hosted countless demonstrations through the years. Möllevången is also known for its entertainment industry, in which venues along Bergsgatan and in Folkets park have played an important role.

Möllevången has a population of 45.247 people and is thus the most population-dense area of this investigation (Table 5.5). The majority of the population in Möllevången are of working age and live in single households. The average disposable income is ca 200.000 SEK (ca €18.000) annually, and 60% of adults have a higher degree education. 36% of the population are born outside of Sweden. Almost all housing units in Möllevången are apartments, with similar shares tenancy and condominium.

Table 5.5: Sociodemographic profile of Möllevången. Adapted from Malmö Stad (2024a).

Sociodemographic factor	**Möllevången**
Population	
Total population	45 247
Women (%)	50
Men (%)	50
<19 years old (%)	17
20-64 years old (%)	73
>65 years old (%)	10
Households	
Total households (no.)	25 255
Singles without children (%)	56
Singles with children (%)	7
Couples without children (%)	16
Couples with children (%)	11
Households of >5 persons (%)	4
Private economy	
Unemployment rate (%)	31
Average disposable income (SEK)	200 171
Education	
Post-secondary education (% of population 20-64 years old)	59
Foreign background	
Foreign born (%)	36
Domestic born to two foreign born parents (%)	11
Health	
Average no. of sick days per year (20-64 years old)	17
Transportation	
Car owners (% of population >20 years old)	21
Housing type	
Small houses (detached, semi-detached, terraced houses) (%)	1
Apartment buildings (>3 housing units) (%)	94
Tenancy (%)	55
Condominium (%)	44
Proprietorship (%)	1

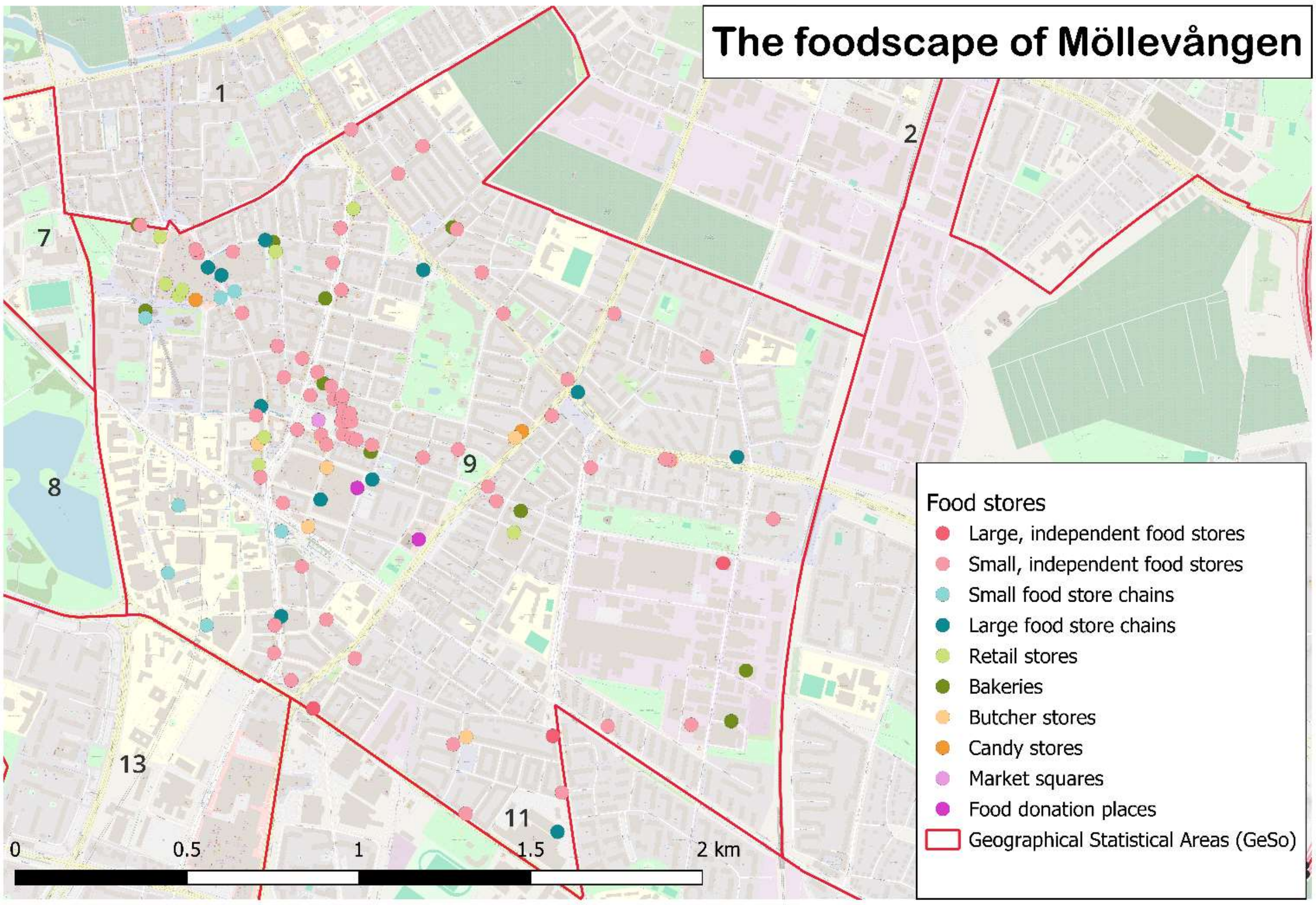


Figure 5.32: The foodscape map of the food stores in Möllevången.

The map of food stores in Möllevången (GeSo09) can be seen in Figure 5.32. The map shows the spatial distribution of all food stores in the area. A total of 116 food stores were mapped, see Appendix A (Table C). From the map, the following spatial distribution patterns can be interpreted:

1. There are food stores located throughout the whole city area and in every neighborhood.
2. There is a concentration of food stores in the Western part of the area, especially around Möllevångstorget but also in proximity to the mall Triangeln.
3. Food stores are located mainly along the larger streets Amiralsgatan, Nobelvägen, Södra Förstadsgatan and Bergsgatan, and to a lesser degree within the residential areas.

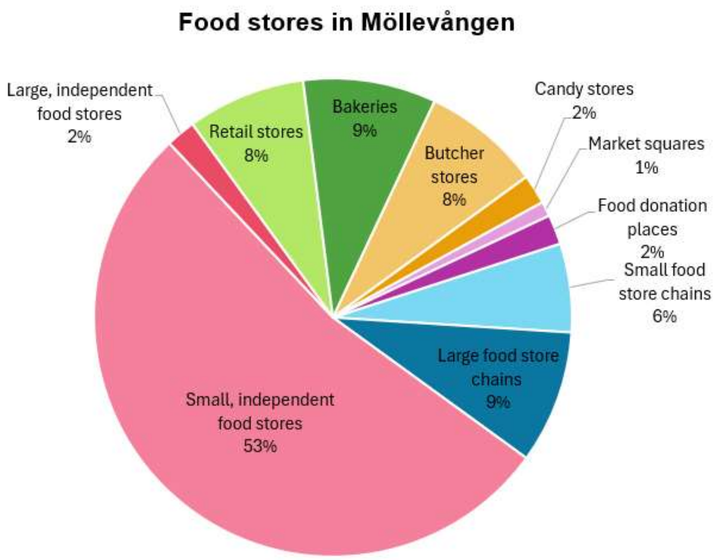


Figure 5.33: The percentual distribution of the total number of food stores in Möllevången.

Table 5.6: Results from the foodscape map of food stores in Möllevången in food store categories.

Food store category	No.	%
Small food store chains	7	6
Large food store chains	11	9
Small, independent food stores	61	53
Large, independent food stores	3	2
Retail stores	9	8
Bakeries	11	9
Butcher stores	9	8
Candy stores	2	2
Market squares	1	1
Food donation places	2	2
Total	**116**	**100**

The results of the foodscape map of food stores in Möllevången organized into food store categories can be seen in Figure 5.33 and Table 5.6. The 116 food stores mapped reveal the following food retail actor diversity based on store ownership, size and main assortment:

1. All food store categories are represented in the map.
2. The most prominent food store category is small, independent food stores (53%). Out of these food stores there is a great variation in terms of assortment, which is only in part represented in Fig 5.44-5.51. The small, independently owned stores range from kiosks (Fig 5.49), grocery stores and delicacy stores with variations of Middle Eastern (Fig 5.50), Asian (Fig 5.51), African (Fig 5.50), South American, European (Fig 5.48) and Swedish profiles. One is cooperatively owned.
3. The second-most prominent food store categories are large food store chains and bakeries (9%), closely followed by retail stores and butcher stores (8%).
4. Out of the large food retail chains, supermarkets from ICA (Fig 5.39), Axfood, Coop (Fig 5.40) and Matrebellerna are represented. Willys and Lidl (Fig 5.36) are the two discount stores represented. There are no hypermarkets present.
5. Out of the bakeries, two are from chains, one national and one regional, and the rest are independently owned and a blend of one Eastern European (Fig 5.35), four Middle Eastern (Fig 5.47), and three Swedish bakeries.
6. The retail stores are a combination of larger, international retail chains mainly focusing on non-food products (Fig 5.38), independently owned food and non-food stores with African or Middle eastern profiles, and one independent gym.

7. The butcher stores are all independently owned with a Middle eastern profile (Fig 5.34).
8. Small food store chains make up 6% of the food stores mapped, all of which belong to national kiosk chains (Fig 5.42), apart from one national coffee store chain.
9. Large, independent food stores, Candy stores, Food donation places, and Market squares are all minority food store categories of 2% and 1%, respectively.
10. The large, independent food stores are a blend of Southeast Asian, Central Asian and African (Fig 5.43), and Middle eastern (Fig 5.41) food stores.
11. The two candy stores are both owned by national chains, one smaller and one larger.
12. The two food donation places are run by non-profit civil society organizations.
13. There is one market square consisting of multiple vendors (Fig 5.37).
14. There are 6 food stores mapped with an explicit healthy, local, Swedish, sustainable, or organic assortment. Three are small, independent grocery stores (Fig 5.44) and three are bakeries.

Figure 5.34: Bilad al Sham, butcher store, Möllevången.

Figure 5.35: Donau Bageri, bakery, Möllevången.

Figure 5.36: Lidl, large food store chain, Södervärn.

Figure 5.37: Möllevångstorget, market square, Möllevången.

Figure 5.38: Normal, retail store in Triangeln mall, Rådmansvången.

Figure 5.39: ICA Nära, large food store chain, Östra Sorgenfri.

Figure 5.40: Coop, large food store chain, Möllevången.

Figure 5.41: Orient Food, large, independent food store, Sofielunds industriområde.

Figure 5.42: Pressbyrån, small food store chain, Rådmansvången.

Figure 5.43: Indo-Pak, large, independent food store, Södra Sofielund.

Figure 5.44: Gram, small, independent food store, Västra Sorgenfri.

Figure 5.45: Sara Livs, small, independent food store, Västra Sorgenfri.

Figure 5.46: Victoria Livs, small, independent food store, Lönngården.

Figure 5.47:Al Rayyes Sweets, bakery, Sofielunds industriområde.

Figure 5.48: Pol-West, small, independent food store, Södervärn.

Figure 5.49: Zara Livs, small, independent food store, Östra Sorgenfri.

Figure 5.50: Èkó Hove Livs and Simrishamns-gatan Livs, small, independent food stores, Möllevången.

Figure 5.51: Östasien Livs, small, independent food store, Möllevången.

5.3.4 The foodscape of Rosengård

The administrative area GeSo10 (Fig 3.1), here referred to as Rosengård, is located in the eastern, central parts of Malmö. The cityscape of Rosengård is the most homogenous of the three city areas mapped in terms of housing type, building age, architectural style, housing colors and storyes. The neighborhoods of *Apelgården* (Fig 5.54; 5.56), *Kryddgården* (Fig 5.58), *Törnrosen*, *Örtagården* (Fig 5.55; 5.57), *Hohög* (Fig 5.60), *Herrgården* (Fig 5.53), and *Persborg* (Fig 5.61) are entirely made up by apartment buildings ranging from three- to ten-storeys. The neighborhoods, which were all developed as part of the Swedish "Million Program" from the 1960's and onwards, are characterized by their uniform architectural style and colors ranging in scales of grey, beige and red and yellow brick. Only the neighborhood of *Västra Kattarp* (Fig 5.59) is made up of small houses (detached and semi-detached houses).

Non-residential neighborhoods in Rosengård include the commercial and public service area *Rosengård centrum* (Rosengård centre), *Emilstorp* (Fig 5.52) which is an industrial area, and *Östra Kyrkogården* which is a cemetery. The central parts of Southern Rosengård are also non-residential and made up of schools, preschools, urban gardens, a church, sports fields, a public pool, and the old manor Rosengård, which has given name to the city area. There is a very limited integration between residential and commercial areas in Rosengård, although a high integration between residential and recreational areas. Rosengård is the city area with the most green spaces of the areas mapped, in between residential houses, along the streets and many large parks. There is a vast net of bike paths and few car roads within the neighbourhoods.

Figure 5.52: Emilstorp.

Figure 5.53: Herrgården.

Figure 5.54: Apelgården from a distance.

Figure 5.55: Örtagården from a distance.

Figure 5.56: Apelgården.

Figure 5.57: Örtagården.

Figure 5.58: Kryddgården.

Figure 5.59: Västra Kattarp.

Figure 5.60: Hohög.

Figure 5.61: Persborg.

Table 5.7: Sociodemographic profile of Rosengård. Adapted from Malmö Stad (2024a).

Sociodemographic factor	Rosengård
Population	
Total population	23 334
Women (%)	49
Men (%)	51
<19 years old (%)	32
20-64 years old (%)	57
>65 years old (%)	11
Households	
Total households (no.)	8 503
Singles without children (%)	34
Singles with children (%)	12
Couples without children (%)	12
Couples with children (%)	24
Households of >5 persons (%)	18
Private economy	
Unemployment rate (%)	50
Average disposable income (SEK)	123 191
Education	
Post-secondary education (% of population 20-64 years old)	26
Foreign background	
Foreign born (%)	63
Domestic born to two foreign born parents (%)	26
Health	
Average no. of sick days per year (20-64 years old)	23
Transportation	
Car owners (% of population >20 years old)	23
Housing type	
Small houses (detached, semi-detached, terraced houses) (%)	5
Apartment buildings (>3 housing units) (%)	84
Tenancy (%)	70
Condominium (%)	25
Proprietorship (%)	4

As mentioned, Rosengård was developed as a city area from the 1960's and onwards, as part of the Swedish "Million Program". Before this, the area was agricultural land under the manor Rosengård, former property of the Kockums family (Malmö Stad, 2024c). Under the Million Program, Rosengård was deliberately planned to demonstrate the modern urbanity of the time. The functional segregation within the area, such as limiting localities for commercial and social activities to Rosengård Centre (Rosengård Centrum, 2020), is an example of this. Criticism of the urban planning has been raised since its establishment (Simonsen, 2008). The area of Rosengård has received negative media attention and been stigmatized for decades, much due to the high levels of foreign-born citizens. It has even been known as a Swedish "ghetto".

Rosengård is the socioeconomic weakest of the three city areas mapped in this investigation. Rosengård is also the least population-dense area with a population of only 23.334 people (Table 5.7). Around a third of the population in Rosengård are children and youth, as half of the population of working age are unemployed. The average annual income is ca 120.000 (ca €10.000), and a quarter of the population has a higher degree education. The vast majority of the housing units are apartments (84%), and although most households are single households, couples with children make up a quarter of all households. Tenancy is the most common form of housing type.

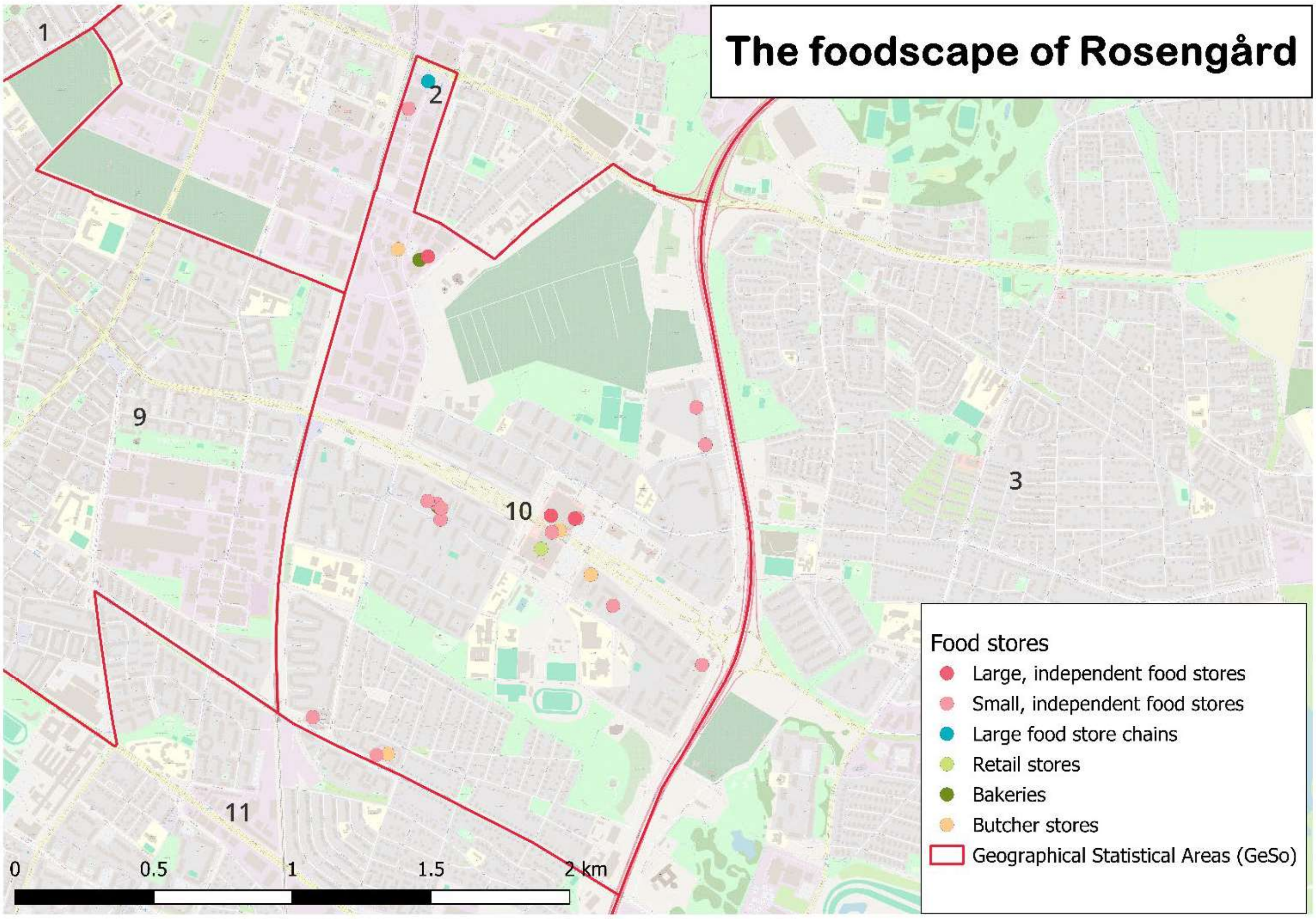


Figure 5.62: The foodscape map of the food stores in Rosengård.

The map of food stores in Rosengård (GeSo10) can be seen in Figure 5.62. The map shows the spatial distribution of all food stores in the area. A total of 24 food stores were mapped, see Appendix A (Table D). From the map, the following spatial distribution patterns can be interpreted:

1. There is a concentration of food stores (30%) located in Rosengård centrum.
2. There is a sparse distribution of food stores in the area, with concentrations around the following nodes: Rosengård centrum and Örtagårdstorget to a higher degree, Emilstorp industrial area, Kryddgården and Västra Kattarp/Persborg to a lesser degree.
3. Neighborhoods without food stores are: Östra kyrkogården, Apelgården, Törnrosen, Herrgården, and the whole central area of Southern Rosengård with the schools, sports fields and urban gardens.

Figure 5.63: The percentual distribution of the total number of food stores in Rosengård.

Table 5.8: Results from the foodscape map of food stores in Rosengård in food store categories.

Food store category	No.	%
Small food store chains	0	0
Large food store chains	1	4
Small, independent food stores	13	54
Large, independent food stores	3	13
Retail stores	1	4
Bakeries	2	8
Butcher stores	4	17
Candy stores	0	0
Market squares	0	0
Food donation places	0	0
Total	**24**	**100**

The results of the foodscape map of food stores in Rosengård organized into food store categories can be seen in Figure 5.63 and Table 5.8. The 24 food stores reveal the following food retail actor diversity based on store ownership, size and main assortment:

1. The most predominant food store category is small, independent food stores (54%). All these food stores are small grocery stores (Fig 5.65; 5.69; 5.70; 5.71; 5.73), with the majority having an international or Middle Eastern profile.
2. The second-most predominant category is butcher stores (17%). They are all independently owned with a Middle eastern profile, apart from one which is a small, local chain with a Swedish profile (Fig 5.68; 5.72).
3. The third-most predominant category is large, independent food stores (13%). The three supermarkets have an international or Middle eastern profile (Fig 5.66; 5.67).
4. The two bakeries (8%) are both independently owned with Middle eastern and Balkan profiles, respectively.
5. Only Lidl is represented out of the large food store chains (4%) (Fig 5.64). The location of the discount store is peripheral to city area of Rosengård and is geographically closer to the area of *Katrinelund*. There are no national supermarkets or hypermarkets present.
6. The retail store (4%) is independently owned and mainly focused on non-food products.
7. There are no small food store chains, candy stores, market squares, or food donation places present.

8. There is one food stores mapped with an explicit healthy, local, Swedish, sustainable, or organic assortment, which is the butcher store with Swedish meat.

Figure 5.64: Lidl, large food store chain, Emilstorp.

Figure 5.65: Kvarterets Livs, small, independent food store, Kryddgården.

Figure 5.66: Abdos, large, independent food store, Emilstorp.

Figure 5.67: Bazaar Food Market, large, independent food store, Rosengård Centrum.

Figure 5.68: Västchark, butcher store, Emilstorp.

Figure 5.69: Alsafady, small, independent food store, Rosengård Centrum.

Figure 5.70: Mini Bazaar, small, independent food store, Örtagården.

Figure 5.71: Mejeri Alhana, small, independent food store, Rosengård Centrum.

Figure 5.72: Bulltofta Kött, butcher store, Västra Kattarp.

Figure 5.73: Ryff Livs, small, independent food store, Persborg.

5.3.5 Key findings

Malmö is a young and multicultural city which struggles with issues of economic inequality and segregation. In Malmö there are many food cultures and great differences in accessibility to food between different socioeconomic groups. There is a focus on food in the municipal and public discourse, although there is no current municipal food policy. The main municipal objective related to food is in project form and does not target food retail.

The foodscape map of Malmö (Fig 5.1) demonstrated the spatial distribution and food retail actor diversity of the nationally dominating food retail chains. This in turn can indicate the availability of food which these channels provide throughout the city. This foodscape map revealed the following results: all national food retail chains are represented in Malmö, with the ranking of local, geographical market shares being the same as the national market shares based on sales. ICA dominates the local market in number of stores, but Coop is the most prominent store profile. Supermarkets are the most common store type. Discount is more prominent in Malmö than in the national market. The stores of the nationally dominating food retail chains are mainly located in the central areas of Malmö, with varying degrees of spatial distribution per chain. There are big differences between city areas in terms of the food retail chains and number of stores present.

The foodscape maps of Ribersborg, Möllevången and Rosengård revealed that these city areas are highly diverse in terms of populations, cityscapes and foodscapes. Comparing key sociodemographic factors (see Appendix B, Table E), such as total population, parts of the population under 19 years of age, foreign-born, with higher degree education, and registered sick days per year makes it very clear just how different these city areas are, and how different the lived realities of the citizens residing there must be. For example, the average disposable annual income varies between €30.000 in Ribersborg (+3.0), €18.000 in Möllevången (+1.8), and €10.000 in Rosengård (0).

The results from the spatial distribution and food retail actor diversity mapped in Figures 5.11, 5.32 and 5.62, respectively, indicate the availability of food through the collection of food stores in each city area. The foodscape maps revealed the following summarized and comparative results:

Table 5.9: A comparison of the foodscapes of Ribersborg, Möllevången and Rosengård.

	Ribersborg	**Möllevången**	**Rosengård**
Spatial distribution of food stores	Medium	High	Low
No. of food stores	24	116	24
No. of food stores per capita	$8*10^{-4}$ (0)	$26*10^{-4}$ (+3.25)	$10*10^{-4}$ (+1.25)
Food store category diversity	Medium (7/10)	High (10/10)	Low (6/10)
Food retail actor diversity	Low (Many chains, fewer independent stores)	High (Many independent stores, many chains)	Medium (Many independent stores, only one chain)
Food cultures represented	Low	Highest	Medium
Food stores with a healthy, local, Swedish, sustainable, organic profile	Low (0)	High (6)	Medium (1)
Urban gardens observed	None	Few and small	Larger

As Table 5.9 shows, Möllevången is overwhelmingly the most diverse of the three foodscapes mapped in terms of spatial distribution, food stores per capita, food store categories, food retail actors, food cultures represented and healthy/local/Swedish/sustainable/organic food stores. These results suggest that the population of Möllevången has the highest availability to food of the three city areas mapped. The low number of urban gardens in the area indicates that there are low possibilities for autonomous food production in the area.

Ribersborg and Rosengård have the same number of food stores mapped (24) but varies in terms of spatial distribution and food retail actor diversity, see Table 5.9 where the city areas alternately ranked “medium” and “low”. For example, Ribersborg has a low level of food cultures represented and food stores with a healthy/local/Swedish/sustainable/organic profile, and Rosengård has a low level of spatial distribution and food store category diversity. These results suggest that food availability, and the food retail realities, of the citizens of Ribersborg and Rosengård are highly different and perhaps even contrasting.

6 REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This final section of the thesis presents reflections and conclusions on the results of the research, how the research was conducted and what relevance it has in the bigger picture. The purpose of the thesis was to investigate the Swedish food retail sector from an agroecological food systems lens and to explore whether the current food retail in Sweden constrains sustainable food systems transformation in accordance with agroecology. The following research questions led the inquiry:

1. How is food retail in Sweden shaped by public governance and how does it in turn shape the national food system?
2. What does the food retail sector look like in Malmö in terms of spatial distribution and food retail actor diversity, and why?

This thesis has sought to contribute to the research gaps identified in Section 1.3 in multiple ways. In general, the thesis contributes to the broad field of agroecology by applying a political and urban food systems lens in the Global North. More specifically, the investigation contributes to the research gap of understanding how food retail shapes food systems through exploring public food retail governance in Sweden, both on a national and local level. The stakeholder perceptions of food retail complemented and deepened the understanding of the food system preconditions and challenges which are related to food retail in Sweden. Furthermore, the research explored how food retail shapes urban foodscapes and citizens' availability to food through the case study of Malmö, Sweden. Through bridging national and local studies on food retail in Sweden, the thesis contributed to the need of clarifying how urban populations are fed, as pointed out by Bohn & Tomkins (2024).

The call to unpack power dimensions in the urban by Tornaghi & Dehaene (2020) was addressed through the application of a political agroecology framework when analyzing food retail in Sweden. Political agroecology is committed to investigate and addressing power imbalances in food systems, as well as promoting transformative food systems change (Anderson et al., 2021), of which one key component is governance, such as urban food planning (Moragues-Faus & Battersby, 2021). The value-laden and rights-based concepts of food sovereignty and food justice were bridged in this investigation to support a theoretical development of agroecology in the Global North, as encouraged by Tornaghi & Dehaene (2020). These concepts are believed to guide sustainable food systems transformations to secure the choices and agency of citizen/consumers and food producers alike. The qualitative mixed methods approach inspired by PAR was designed as an attempt at contributing to the research gap of social science methodology to support such transformations. Of the chosen methods, the urban foodscape mapping is particularly considered as a valuable experiment in this cause.

Finally, the thesis research was designed as a scholastic exploration both in terms of theory and methodology. As before mentioned, the transdisciplinary theory and methodological pluralist approach of the study revealed the complexity of the research subject which was in turn reflected in complex research results. To simplify the conclusions, this section will reflect upon the matter of research methodology, the results in relation to key concerns of power, food sovereignty and food justice, as well as the concept of agroecological urbanism as a pathway moving forward in the cause for an agroecological transition of food systems.

6.1 Methodology

The thesis research was designed with a mix of qualitative methods inspired by PAR, and conducted as an exploration of the agroecological toolbox. The strength of the thesis methodology is considered to lie in its pluralism. The mixed methods allowed for the combination of both qualitative and semi-quantitative data collection, as well as the adaptation of methods to suit the transdisciplinary theoretical approach. Importantly, the research design was inspired by a PAR approach which allowed for the embeddedness of the research in "the real world". It is crucial to note that, according to scholars such as Lawson (2015) and Chevalier & Buckles (2019), PAR calls for the full participation of research participants in the data collection. Especially relevant is the inclusion of marginalized actors. Due to time constraints, this was not possible to achieve. There would have been many ways in which I could have designed a fully participatory action study – such as through participatory foodscape mapping with the residents of the city areas – which would be valuable to explore in future research.

The governance of food retail was anything but straight forward to investigate through the policy review. There was no direct explanation or stakeholder mapping over the decision-making processes and regulations which relate to the food retail sector. This means that this section most likely does not cover every Swedish public authority involved with regulating food retail. Nonetheless, the section does offer a partial insight into the complexity of the governance system of food retail and serves to shed light on the necessity of further investigation, and improved public communication, on the topic.

The interviews present the perceptions on Swedish food retail by a small selection of stakeholders. This limits the possibility to draw any conclusions from these interviews, and it can be considered that these interviews mainly add to the understanding of some of the opinions that Swedish stakeholders experience in relation to food retail.

The foodscape mapping was the most experimental part of the thesis. I had little guidance on how to do this from the literature, as well as I had very limited knowledge of QGIS. The final maps as seen in the results are therefore very simple, and not very aesthetically pleasing. I had many ideas for how to elaborate the maps – such as making heat maps from the presence of food stores – but I was not able to accomplish this due to knowledge constraints. Furthermore, the municipal food store register from which I partially based the foodscape mapping was unorganized, outdated, and inconsistent in terms of categories, as well as lacking several food stores. This is why it was complemented with a food store search based on key words, as well as why I defined my own food store categories. Some of these categories, such as "supermarkets" and "small, independent food stores" proved to be broad and difficult to use in the discussion on availability to food. This discussion was based on field observations and assumptions of food stores' assortments, why it is necessary to stress the need for developing the foodscape mapping method – perhaps in collaboration with residents? – as well as further investigating the assortments of food stores in Malmö and what food the citizens actually buy.

On reflection, I could have focused on Malmö in all of the parts of the analysis, to get a deeper understanding of food planning and policy in the municipality as well as local stakeholder experiences and potential challenges with food retail. Furthermore, as the study was very broad, it was difficult to conclude the results and adequately contextualize them in the reflection. A narrower case study could have facilitated the communication of the research as well as it could have led to more "actionable" knowledge for MFC and Malmö municipality.

6.2 Food retail in the Swedish food system

Swedish food retail follows global trends in a capitalist food system, particularly power imbalances due to high market concentration. Food retail in Sweden is horizontally consolidated, vertically integrated and hold key wholesale functions in the national food system. Food retail in Sweden is even defined by the six largest food retail chains, which further illustrates their dominance in the national food system, as well as the limitation of alternative sales channels in the country. As a gatekeeper in the national food system, as well as in between the national and the global food system, food retail in Sweden is concluded to occupy a powerful position to influence culture, society and politics.

The food retail sector is shaped by public regulations which are complex and difficult to get an overview of and insight into. Reports on government assignments by a handful of public authorities were reviewed and revealed that the current food retail sector in Sweden contributes to unfair trading practices and competition in the food system, skewed power relations, and unhealthy and unsustainable food consumption – and that the state and the companies themselves have responsibilities to answer these issues. These issues are particularly evident during the last years of food price surges, where the dominating food retail chains are concluded to have increased prices disproportionately at the expense of producers and consumers. The changes in consumption patterns this has caused are considered to primarily favor industrial food production and the food retail chains' private label brands. No concrete political action to counter the market concentration, or the issues it causes, has been taken thus far. On the contrary, Axfood was allowed to purchase City Gross the summer of 2024, just after the Swedish Competition Agency had released their report on limited competition in food retail (2024). The national food strategy does not even mention food retail, and its soft policy approach risks being toothless in the face of powerful agrifood business, including food retail. As such, Swedish national governance is concluded to be a supporting institution to hegemonic, corporate food retail monopolies.

Interviews with stakeholders revealed criticism of the leading supermarket chains' lack of corporate responsibility, valuing profit over people and environment. These opinions were countered with other stakeholders' opinions of the benefits of economies of scale and logistical efficiency in the supermarket chains.

On a local level, the municipalities govern food retail through their planning monopoly but are criticized for not taking fair competition into consideration sufficiently nor adequately. The municipalities also have the possibility of implementing their own food policies and can implement the national and regional food strategies to the degree which they choose. The foodscape map showed how historical urban planning still affects urban foodscapes today, particularly through the poor spatial distribution of food retail in the area of Rosengård. Furthermore, agreements of sales between private and public actors, including the development of new store premises, are usually made before the detailed plan is approved by the urban development board, which can be questionable from a democratic perspective. The municipalities' lack of consideration for power imbalances, food sovereignty and food justice in their work related to food indicate their embeddedness in agribusiness market dynamics. At the same time, there is only so much that the municipalities can control, and the operations which take place in store premises is a matter of private property owners. One stakeholder interviewed mentioned the power which private property owners have, which is a matter worth investigating further.

The foodscape maps of Ribersborg, Möllevången and Rosengård show that the majority of food stores mapped in these areas are independently owned. But, as there is no data available of the sales of or volumes sold by food retail on a local level, the degree to which independent and chain food stores dominate the market cannot be assessed. Based on the dominance of the national food retail chains on the national retail and wholesale market, their store sizes and large assortments, it can be assumed that these companies lead in the local market in economic terms. Further research is needed to conclude on corporate concentration in the urban foodscape of Malmö.

6.3 Food retail in the urban foodscapes of Malmö

The qualitative case study of urban foodscapes in Malmö showed that food retail, as the dominating form of food provisioning in the urban, shapes citizens' availability to food. This was demonstrated through mapping spatial distribution of food stores and food retail actor diversity in the areas of Möllevången, Ribersborg and Rosengård. The foodscape map concludes that food availability varies between socioeconomic weaker and stronger areas. The most diverse food retail sector was found in Möllevången. These results indicate that food availability is highest in the most central and densely populated city area. The majority of healthy and sustainable food stores and food cultures represented were also found in Möllevången. It was not possible to conclude whether Ribersborg, the socioeconomic strongest area, or Rosengård, the socioeconomic weakest area, had higher availability of food, as the two foodscape maps were found to be diverse in differing factors. It must be noted that poorer citizens' general limited mobility (Konsumentverket, 2023a), risks exacerbating the poor spatial distribution of food stores in Rosengård.

Beyond food availability, food sovereignty and food justice address citizens' accessibility to food, understood as having sufficient resources to access nutritious, sustainably produced and culturally appropriate food. Knowing the relative availability of food in the city areas and taking into consideration their distinct socioeconomic conditions, we can reflect upon food accessibility in the three areas of Möllevången, Ribersborg and Rosengård. The most evident demonstration of food accessibility is the average disposable annual income, which varies between €30.000 in Ribersborg, €18.000 in Möllevången, and €10.000 in Rosengård. Furthermore, food retail with an explicitly healthy/local/Swedish/sustainable/organic assortment constitutes only 4% of the food stores mapped in Malmö, the majority located in Möllevången. As healthy and sustainable foods are typically disadvantaged in dominating food retail, citizens' accessibility to healthy and sustainably produced foods in Malmö is presumed to be limited. As children and socioeconomic weaker individuals and communities in Sweden suffer from poorer health related to unhealthy food consumption (Folkhälsomyndigheten & Livsmedelsverket, 2024), it can be assumed that access to healthy food is constrained also in poorer areas of Malmö, such as Rosengård, which also has a young population. The case study revealed the greatest availability to cultural diversity in food retail in Möllevången, followed by Rosengård and Ribersborg. But to assess the citizens' accessibility to culturally appropriate foods in the city areas requires a deeper understanding of citizens' food cultures and consumption patterns and cannot be determined in this research. Considering these factors and reflections, it can be concluded that citizens' accessibility to food varies between socioeconomic weaker and stronger areas, where the citizens of Rosengård as the socioeconomic weakest area are disadvantaged. This is alignment with other studies which show how poorer urban communities suffer from inaccessibility to healthy and sustainably produced food (IPES FOOD, 2023).

These conclusions are limited by the fact that the study did not consider availability and accessibility of alternative food networks and online food retail, both of which have the possibility of extending the provisioning of both healthy and sustainable food (Fanshel & Iles, 2022). Possibilities of autonomous food production was only mentioned in relation to urban gardens observed, of which Rosengård had the highest availability.

6.4 Towards an agroecological urbanism

From the results it can be concluded that current food retail in Sweden constrains sustainable food systems transformation in accordance with agroecology. This is mainly due to asymmetric power relations by hegemonic food retail and supporting institutions which disfavours food producers, especially smaller and sustainable production, and the disadvantages that consumers-citizens experience through the promotion of corporate diets through the dominating food retail chains. Children and marginalized individuals and communities are particularly vulnerable. Little alternative to food provisioning, such as alternative food networks or autonomous food production, is available for urban residents in Malmö.

Moving forward from this negative picture, we can create not only “a bolder vision for the city” (Morgan, 2009), but for the whole national food system and the governance of it. Cities have opportunities and responsibilities in fostering the transition to sustainable and just food systems across the urban-rural continuum (Moragues-Faus & Morgan, 2015). Through new governance configurations, such as bottom-up, participatory and community-based approaches, citizens can exercise democratic management of food systems in alignment with food sovereignty and food justice. This could allow for cities to become “spaces of deliberation” (ibid). Agroecological and transformative food systems change in the urban could develop and expand independent food retail, alternative food networks and possibilities for autonomous urban farming. This calls for municipalities’ inclusion of marginalized voices, as well as communities’ access to sufficient resources and collaborative support. Foodscape maps, as have been produced in this research, can become an accessible tool in transformative urban food planning if it is done in a participatory manner (Bohn & Tomkins, 2024). Political agroecology in the urban sphere can guide the path from capitalist urbanisms and towards an agroecological urbanism.

6.5 An agenda for further research

There is still so much to understand in the process of uncovering power structures related to food retail in the Swedish food system and in local urban foodscapes. The following is a set of ten questions, which have emerged from this research.

1. Where do people who live in Ribersborg, Möllevången and Rosengård actually buy their food and what types of food do they buy?
2. What are the needs, wishes and challenges in terms of food consumption of the people living in Ribersborg, Möllevången and Rosengård?
3. What do the actual assortments of the mapped food stores look like, and what does that mean in terms of availability and accessibility to healthy, sustainable and culturally appropriate food?
4. What do the urban foodscapes of food retail look like in other parts of Malmö in terms of food store spatial distribution and food retail actor diversity?
5. Who sells, distributes and produces the food consumed in Malmö?
6. What considerations for food justice and food sovereignty does the city of Malmö have in its work with physical planning and urban development?
7. Mapping private-public partnerships and agreements to understand how, and on what conditions, food retail companies get access to store premises?
8. What would an agroecological food strategy for Malmö look like and how could such a strategy be developed to realize a sustainable, democratic, just and enjoyable edible city for all of its citizens?
9. How does the Swedish Competition Agency plan to progress with their work on decreasing market concentration within food retail?
10. A systematic review of the government assignments related to food and agriculture during the period of the national food strategy exploring their understanding of sustainability, justice and regulation of private actors, and what policy changes they have resulted in?

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POPULAR SCIENCE SUMMARY

A decreasing number of corporations have increasing control over what, where, how and for whom food is produced, distributed and sold in the world. Such corporate concentration in markets matters because it is a question of power and justice. Leading companies have greater possibilities of influencing culture, politics and society to their own benefit and at the expense of others, particularly smaller food producers and vulnerable consumers.

In Sweden, food is mainly sold in supermarkets. These supermarket chains make up 90% of the food retail market, making the Swedish market a highly concentrated market. Swedish governmental authorities have concluded that the concentrated food retail sector has a negative impact on food prices and sustainable and healthy food consumption, at the expense of food producers and consumers. All the while the national food strategy, as the main policy on food in Sweden, does not even mention the food retail sector, and measures are not taken to decrease this market concentration. Current Swedish policy risks being toothless in the face of powerful food retail companies. Interviews with actors revealed criticism towards the leading supermarket chains' lack of responsibility, valuing profit over people and environment. These opinions were countered with other actors' opinions of the supermarkets' benefits of economies of scale and logistical efficiency.

Sweden's third biggest city, Malmö, is known for being a young and multicultural city. It is also a city of food. But the city struggles with segregation and increasing poverty and foreign-born citizens are particularly vulnerable. Food stores were mapped in three areas of Malmö with distinct socioeconomic conditions: Ribersborg, Möllevången and Rosengård. The maps showed that the three foodscapes, in this study the landscapes of food retail, varies between the city areas. Availability of food, in terms of the location and types of food stores, was highest in the most central and densely populated area of Möllevången. Most healthy and sustainable food stores and food cultures represented were also found here. It was not possible to conclude whether Ribersborg, the wealthiest area, or Rosengård, the poorest area, had higher availability of food. Citizens' accessibility of food, their possibilities of buying nutritious, sustainably produced and culturally appropriate foods, were discussed. The study concluded that current food retail in Sweden hinders the possibilities for sustainable food systems change in alignment with agroecology.

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APPENDIX A – FOOD STORES MAPPED IN MALMÖ

Table A: Food stores of the dominating Swedish food retail chains in Malmö, as mapped in Section 5.3.1.

Food retail chain and food stores
ICA
ICA Supermarket Värnhem
ICA Supermarket Hermodsdal
ICA Supermarket Rönneholm
ICA Supermarket Bellevuegården
ICA Supermarket Möllevången
ICA Supermarket Hansa
ICA Supermarket Söder
ICA Nära Triangeln
ICA Nära Ribersborg
ICA Nära Gamla Väster
ICA Nära Amiralsgatan
ICA Nära Lorensborg
ICA Nära Lindeborg
ICA Kvantum Emporia
ICA Kvantum Malmborgs Limhamn
ICA Kvantum Malmborgs Mobilia
ICA Kvantum Malmborgs Erikslust
ICA Kvantum Malmborgs Caroli
ICA Maxi Stormarknad Malmö
ICA Maxi Stormarknad Toftanäs
ICA Maxi Stormarknad Västra Hamnen
Coop
Coop Forum Jägerso
Coop Bulltofta
Coop Kirseberg
Coop Värnhem
Coop Västra Hamnen
Coop Nobeltorget
Coop Köpenhamnsvägen
Coop Regemensgatan
Coop Kornettsgatan

Axfood
Willys Lindängen
Willys Emporia
Willys Limhamn
Willys Katrinelund
Willys Katrinelund
Willys Mobilia
Willys Södervärn
Willys Möllevången
Hemköp Tröskgatan
Hemköp Fredsgatan
Hemköp Södra Förstadsgatan
Hemköp Mariedalsvägen
Tempo Fersens väg
Handlar'n Lilla Varvsgatan
Handlar'n Östra Förstadsgatan
Matöppet Serenadgatan
Matöppet Kronetorpsgatan
Lidl
Lidl Hyllie
Lidl Delsjögatan
Lidl Södra Förstadsgatan
Lidl Knivgatan
Lidl Spångatan
Lidl Östergatan
Lidl Västra Varvsgatan
Lidl Torupsgatan
City Gross
City Gross Hyllie
Matrebellerna
Mathallen Lantmannagatan
Mathallen Lugnet

Coop Norra Parkgatan
Coop Tessins väg
Stora Coop Stadion
X:-tra Tornfalksgatan
X:-tra Nydalatorget
X:-tra Lugna gatan
X:-tra Vattenverksvägen

Table B: Food stores in Ribersborg, as mapped in Section 5.3.2.

Food retail category
Large food store chains
Coop Regementsgatan
Coop Tessins väg
Hemköp Mariedalsvägen
ICA Kvantum Malmborgs Erikslust
ICA Supermarket Rönneholm
ICA Nära Ribersborg
Lidl Torupsgatan
Small food store chains
-
Large, independent food stores
-
Small, independent food stores
Direkten Zel Tobak
Italianissimo
Lilla Osteriet
Signalen Livsmedel
Tropical Food Market
Quick Stop

Bakeries
Konditori Valhall
Gateau Regementsgatan
Bellevue Conditori
St. Jakobs Stenugnsbageri Skvadronsgatan
Folkets Bageri & Konditori
Konditori Regement
Butcher stores
Erikslust Kött
Candy stores
Sweeet Mariedalsvägen
Hemmakväll Regementsgatan
Retail stores
Normal Regementsgatan
Market squares
Fridhemstorget
Food donation
-

Table C: Food stores in Möllevången, as mapped in Section 5.3.3.

Food retail category
Large food store chains
ICA Supermarket Möllevången
ICA Nära Amiralsgatan
ICA Supermarket Söder
ICA Nära Triangeln

Suzi's Livs
Alaaedin AB
Direkten Södervärn
Ismael Grossen
Pol-West
Ehsans & Pappas Tehus

Coop Nobeltorget
Coop Norra Parkgatan
Willys Möllevången
Hemköp Södra Förstadsgatan
Lidl Södra Förstadsgatan
Lidl Spångatan
Mathallen Lantmannagatan
Small food store chains
Kahls The & Kaffehandel
7 Eleven Rådmansgatan
Pressbyrån Södervärn Busstation
Pressbyrån Carl-Bertil Laurells gata
Pressbyrån Jan Waldenströms gata
Pressbyrån Långa Raden
7 Eleven Friisgatan
Large, independent food stores
Foodhem
Indo-Pak
Orient Food
Small, independent food stores
Korner Livs
Malmö Köp
Sara Livs
Nära dig Nobels Livs
Alzheri Market
Kina Center Livs
Lilla Ostaffären
Direkten Lantmannagatan
Möllans Ost
Gram Malmö
Gourmetboulevarden
Nära Dej Victoria Livs
Shamshad Market Livs
Nya Nobeltorgets Livs
Zara Livs
African Product Malmö
Nallens Livs
Polonus-Poldeli AB
Asian Mini Market
Albarka Ost
Bahram Livs
Asien Trading QS Lien
Sumer Livs
Nasima Livsmedel
Èkó Hove Livsmedel
Sham Livs
Öster Asian Livs
Amir Livs

Mathyllan
99:ans Livs
Dala Livs & Spel
Tawabel
Ekolivs
Radwan Livs Market
Södervärns Livs
Midan Alsham Nötter
Al-Rafiden Livs
Toko Livs
Rötter
Bergsgatans Mini Livs
Bagdad Livs
Heleneholms Livs
Bengtssons Ost Triangeln
Almosawi Livs
Alseedawi Kryddor & Nötter
Iskander
Bakeries
Donau Bageri
Gateau Rådmansgatan
Al Rayyes Sweets
Farina
Al-Basha Sötsaker
Bageri Leve
Zagros Baegri
Mormors Bageri
Nansi's Bageri
Söderberg och Sara
Butcher stores
Asia Kött
Bagdad Kött
Konya Mevlana Charkuteri
Nor Kött och Chark
Bilad Alsham Kött
Skåne Kötthanel
Möllan Kött
Skåne kötthandel
Zemzam
Candy stores
Sweeet Nobelvägen
Hemmakväll
Retail stores
Globisco
Samantha's Afrobutik
Flying Tiger Copenhagen Södra Förstadsgatan
God's Gift Afro Shop
Søstrene Grene Södra Förstadsgatan

Hamurabi Livs	Normal Triangeln
Desi Livs Wagron AB	Leader Fitness Gym
Möllans Livs	Tahara
Time	**Market squares**
Direkten Bergsgatan	Möllevångstorget
Buenos Aires 72 Suecia AB	**Food donation**
Mido Quality	Matcentralen Malmö
Swed Moon Livs	Folkets Skafferi
Amart	

Table D: Food stores in Rosengård, as mapped in Section 5.3.4.

Food retail category	Aryana Livs
Large food store chains	Grönfresh
Lidl Knivgatan	O&R Livs
Small food store chains	**Bakeries**
-	Bosna Burek Konditori
Large, independent food stores	Safsouf Konditori AB
Abdos Multifood	**Butcher stores**
Rocents Interfood AB	Bulltofta Kött
Bazaar Food Market AB	Alsafady Färskt Kött
Small, independent food stores	Jendouba Kött och Livs
Direkten Rocent	Västchark i Malmö AB
Al Attar	**Candy stores**
Adrian Livs	-
Shejk	**Retail stores**
Alamiri’s	Riad & Natur Marrakech
Ryff Livs	**Market squares**
Kvarters Livs	-
Dania Livs	**Food donation**
Irama AB	-
Kattarps Närbutik	

APPENDIX B – A COMPARISON OF THE CITY AREAS

Table E: Sociodemographic profiles of Ribersborg, Möllevången, Rosengård and Malmö municipality. Adapted from Malmö Stad (2024a).

Sociodemographic factor	Ribersborg	Möllevången	Rosengård	Malmö
Population				
Total population	31 296	45 247	23 334	357 377
Women (%)	53	50	49	50
Men (%)	47	50	51	50
<19 years old (%)	18	17	32	22
20-64 years old (%)	62	73	57	63
>65 years old (%)	20	10	11	15
Households				
Total households (no.)	16 920	25 255	8 503	167 871
Singles without children (%)	50	56	34	44
Singles with children (%)	7	7	12	8
Couples without children (%)	22	16	12	19
Couples with children (%)	16	11	24	20
Households of >5 persons (%)	3	4	18	7
Private economy				
Unemployment rate (%)	20	31	50	30
Average disposable income (SEK)	325 903	200 171	123 191	226 400
Education				
Post-secondary education (% of population 20-64 years old)	68	59	26	51
Foreign background				
Foreign born (%)	17	36	63	36
Domestic born to two foreign born parents (%)	5	11	26	13
Health				
Average no. of sick days per year (20-64 years old)	13	17	23	17
Transportation				
Car owners (% of population >20 years old)	35	21	23	32
Housing type				
Small houses (detached, semi-detached, terraced houses) (%)	9	1	5	16
Apartment buildings (>3 housing units) (%)	87	94	84	78
Tenancy (%)	47	55	70	47
Condominium (%)	45	44	25	40
Proprietorship (%)	7	1	4	14

APPENDIX C – FACT SHEET

Food Sovereignty and Food Retail

Considerations for agroecological municipal food policy and planning

This fact sheet is aimed for urban municipal policy makers and planners in Sweden. It highlights the importance of considering food sovereignty when regulating food retail on a local level.

CONCLUSION

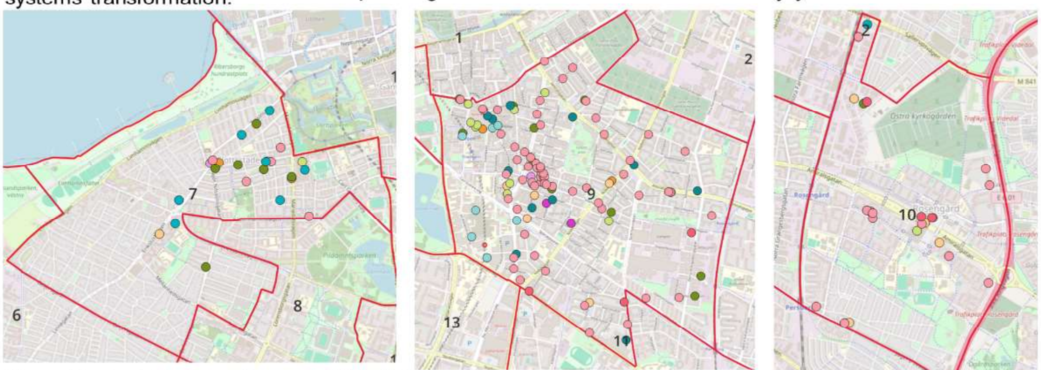
Food sovereignty is understood as people's right to nutritious, sustainably produced and culturally appropriate foods and their right to define their own food systems. The food retail sector in Sweden is characterized by high market concentration, dependency on imported foods, and promotion of unsustainable and unhealthy food. Food retail chains dominate the provisioning of food in Sweden, constraining possibilities for food sovereignty and sustainable food systems transformation.

MAPPING FOOD RETAIL

Mapping food retail in the city of Malmö (Fig 1-3), revealed that people's availability to nutritious, sustainably produced and culturally appropriate food is limited through food retail in Sweden. Particularly healthy and sustainably produced food is disadvantaged in the market dynamics of dominating food retail. Furthermore, availability to food retail varies between socioeconomic weaker and stronger areas, disfavouring children and marginalized people. Municipal policy and planning are identified with the power to break such negative trends through regulating food retail in municipal policy and planning.

AGROECOLOGY AND URBAN FOOD POLICY AND PLANNING

Municipalities have opportunities as well as responsibilities to foster transitions to more sustainable and just food systems. Through new governance configurations, such as participatory and community-based approaches, citizens can exercise democratic management of food systems. This includes independent food retail, alternative food networks and the possibilities for autonomous urban farming. The municipalities' inclusion of marginalized voices, and communities' access to sufficient resources and collaborative support can lay the foundation for sustainable, just and enjoyable edible cities for all.



Maps of food retail in three city areas of Malmö. Fig 1: (7) Ribersborg, Fig 2: (9) Möllevången, and Fig 3: (10) Rosengård. Left-right indicates the coastal-central-peripheral socioeconomic gradient of the city, which impacts the spatial distribution and diversity of food retail, ultimately affecting food availability and accessibility through food retail. .

Sitha Björklund Svensson
M.Sc Agroecology SLU
s.b.svensson95@gmail.com
+4542910129

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