



Sociologiska institutionen

KVIBERG: FROM FLEA MARKET TO MEETING POINT  
A STUDY OF SOCIAL INTERACTION IN KVIBERG'S MARKET

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Kandidatuppsats: SOCK01, 15 hp. Internet

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Handledare: Birgitta Ericson

## Abstract

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The following paper documents the experience of a fieldwork realized in July 2012 in Kviberg, a marketplace in the outskirts of Gothenburg. It is located in an area of high unemployment and a high number of inhabitants born outside Europe. A series of conversations with its merchants were documented and consequently, contrasted with other information sources, mainly articles from the local newspaper, Göteborgs Posten.

What it was most significant from the collected data was the possibility to appreciate the actors' interests and their actions towards the others, in order to explain how the interactions in this market take place and what makes it a meeting point of particular relevance for the city.

It was revealed that the interviewees worked in the market because they want to interchange knowledge, get some source of financial support, amuse or entertain themselves (as a distraction from their everyday life), find comforting or some kind of emotional support and belong to a group. This input, combined with a functionalist and interactionist theoretical perspective, was prominent to come up with three roles categories performed by the actors in the market: knowledge facilitators, supporters (rather material or emotional) and companions (with different trust degrees).

The market itself is immersed in a context of urban development of the surroundings and its existence causes controversy, with different interpretations by both merchants and outsiders. For the formers, it represents security and freedom from judgment; for

the latter it has been a scenario for crime events and an almost-two-decades confrontation between supporters and adversaries.

**Keywords:** marketplace, flea market, meeting point, action, actor, relationship, interaction.

## Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1. <i>The aim of this research project</i>	2
1.2. <i>Research questions</i>	2
1.3. <i>Problem formulation</i>	3
<b>2. Theory</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1. <i>Of action, actor and interaction</i>	5
2.2. <i>The theory in context: reformulating the concepts</i>	8
<b>3. Method</b>	<b>9</b>
3.1. <i>Method discussion</i>	9
3.2. <i>Reliability</i>	11
3.3. <i>Outlines</i>	11
3.4. <i>Sampling</i>	11
3.5. <i>Boundaries</i>	12
<b>4. The study</b>	<b>14</b>
4.1. <i>Kviberg in the media, a study background</i>	14
4.2. <i>Previous research</i>	17
4.3. <i>Collected data</i>	24
<b>5. Analysis</b>	<b>27</b>
5.1. <i>Kviberg in context</i>	27
5.2. <i>About the actors</i>	29
5.3. <i>Redefining the actors through their relationships</i>	30
5.4. <i>The market in society</i>	33
<b>6. Final discussions</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>7. Literature list</b>	<b>36</b>
7.1. <i>Secondary sources</i>	40
<b>8. Annexes</b>	<b>41</b>
<i>Annex a. Interviewing in Kviberg's market – conversation guide</i>	41
<i>Annex b. Story telling. Conversations with actors in Kviberg's market. July 2012.</i>	42



## 1. Introduction

The second decade of the 2000s revealed a case of class, political, economic and social struggle in one of the most sensitive suburbs of Gothenburg, where several politicians and private sector representatives had been discussing the possibilities of closing down a marketplace called Kviberg, on the ground of new real estate projects taking place in its surroundings and a questioned reputation of the market. The area was supposed to be used for creating a sport complex and new housing projects.

Its facilities are part of the old stables of the Kviberg's Artillery Regiment, located between the neighborhoods of Kortedala and Gamlestaden in the northeast district of Gothenburg (called SDN Östra Göteborg), with a multicultural population of almost 41% of the people born abroad and one of the biggest rates of unemployment, about 12%. (Samhällsanalys och statistik, Göteborgs stadsledningskontor, 2011).

Kviberg's market was founded in 1995 but one year later its property became part of the municipality of Gothenburg, which in 1999 decided to create a sport complex in the area, without leaving space for the market. Since then, there has been a series of attempts to close down this market but they haven't been postponed year after year, until the 7<sup>th</sup> of December 2012, when a municipal council agreed to keep the market going on in the same place (Frisk, 2012: 4). These closing attempts were continuously postponed, partly because it was necessary to find another place for it, but also because of the market supporters' struggles.

Despite the existence of several critics and opinions about Kviberg's market, e.g. the trade of stolen goods and problems with waste disposals, it is a workplace, as well as a venue to interact with people. It has between 10,000 and 15,000 visitors every Saturday and Sunday between 10:00 and 15:00 and about 250 fixed-employed workers, without mentioning its flea market vendors (Bozinovska, 2010). This turns the market into a meeting point; it is a hall where different individuals work, sell, buy, spend time together and meet new people. In Gothenburg, where there are many suburbs far away from each other, it is very difficult to find meeting points where inhabitants have a chance to interact and gather around without giving importance to differences like religion, ethnicity or origin.

It results interesting to see how both sellers and sympathizers' struggle to defend the market ended up in the achievement of their goal. Therefore it is possible to

appreciate how the market has gained a role in the city, providing a space where many actors are able to create new relationships. This research project tries to explain how such dynamics take place and why Kviberg's market starts been recognized, or should be recognized, as a meeting point.

### **1.1. The aim of this research project**

This research has as a general goal to describe in which ways can Kviberg's market be perceived as a stage where different actors can meet and interact, but at the same time, as a key actor for Gothenburg's development.

Such aim gives place to the next specific goals: (a) to offer an overview of how has the market been described by the available sources of information; (b) to identify several workers in the market and the social role they execute; (c) to describe how the workers' relationships take place and evolve in time; and finally, (d) to find out if the market has a social role for the rest of the city.

### **1.2. Research questions**

Several questions will guide the data collection and analysis processes. As a steppingstone it is necessary to find out (a) who are the actors in Kviberg's market and what are their roles? Assuming that everybody has a role in this scenario means that there are interchanges, actors performing actions towards the others but as time passes by, such actions and roles might change and therefore the next question: (b) can the interactions between the workers in Kviberg be turned into deeper relationships, how does it happen?

The next step is to try to know those actors in a deeper way, allowing them to tell personal stories, in order to know (c) at what stand has their work in the market brought positive or negative contributions to their personal lives?

Once having an idea about who the actors are and how they perform, a turning point is given by trying to identify if for them, the market, more than a scenario, is also an actor itself... (d) can Kviberg's market be considered a meeting point in Gothenburg, why, and what is its contribution to the city?

### **1.3. Problem formulation**

Considering the difficulties that many people face in order to integrate to the Swedish society, the financial situation of the families that would have been affected by a closure, the difficulties to find new jobs or alternative ways of subsistence, the long distance between one place to another in Gothenburg, the stereotypes present in the perception of its neighborhoods, and therefore, the reduced chances to interact with new people; it is important to ask ourselves in which way the market serves as a meeting point.

In other words, the problem of this research project should be situated in how to describe the emerging of interactions between different actors who work in Kviberg's market?

Who are these actors? It is tempting to come up with categories such as country of origin, ethnicity, religion or mother language, but in order to answer the question it is necessary to process not only demographic data. Émile Durkheim said that in society, individuals are seen as actors performing actions, which affects other actors. In the way such actions affect others, there are social contracts that make participants presuppose what kind of actions to expect from the others (Hughes, 2003: 145-201). If we see the participants as actors, we can identify those who sell, buy, socialize, meet and build business or even personal relationships in Kviberg's Market; but we can also identify them according to how their roles are socially interpreted: confidants, friends, enemies, supporters or rivals?

Their nature's actions make them perform roles and therefore, specialize and differentiate from each other. The workers (entrepreneurs, employees or flea market vendors) at Kviberg's market experience and interpret this specialization but why are they the only ones considered in this study? At a first sight, it is tempting to point out that it is because of their struggle to defend the market. It goes beyond that; it also has to do with their permanence... Unlike visitors, workers have stayed there in a more stable way, gaining the necessary experience to describe in depth how they see the market and them selves in this place. Their voices might produce new data to expand



the knowledge about how a meeting point is established and why it should gain recognition.

## **2. Theory**

This section tries to deep down in the concepts of actors and interaction and how these conceptions can be used to explain the dynamics observed in a specific social context, e.g. a marketplace. In order to understand why individuals are considered here as actors it is necessary to understand what action means without sticking up to just one definition.

As a start, a functionalist approach is considered because it deals with basic concepts related to interaction and therefore offers instrumentation and practical guidelines to understand the study object. It is expected that by adopting concepts from Parsons (1951) and Durkheim (1893) but also commented and revised by contemporary sociologists like Engdahl and Larsson (2006) and Huges (2003), it will be possible to identify who is who in Kviberg and what do they do, as well as what do they want.

A difficulty for this study is that functionalism has also been criticized for been materialistic because it sustains that action has to be intentional; in addition, the terminology offered by action theory should not consist of just isolated definitions, they all covey together in a single situation and this changes the rules of the game. To try to counteract this, a mixed of functionalism and interactionism is presented as the way to explain interaction in Kviberg's market. Interactionism will let us understand the situation where actors perform and how the context contributes to shape themselves, their actions and interaction patterns. In other words, the former approach is used to get hold of who are the subjects and what do they want but the latter give us understanding of the whole and not just the part, which means to understand why do the subjects want what they want.

Furthermore, functionalism can be considered as a starting point in conceptualization, while interactionism will allow this project to find methodologies that are suitable to be applied in a market context, a space whose aesthetic, spatial, economic and sociocultural conditions create new demands of flexibility from social researches.

## **2.1. Of action, actor and interaction**

From a classical point of view, Weber (1978) points out that “we shall speak of action insofar as the acting individual attaches a subjective meaning to his behavior - be it overt or covert, omission or acquiescence. Action is social insofar as its subjective meaning takes count of the behavior of others and is thereby oriented in its course” (pp. 4). For Weber, the difference between action and behavior lays on the particularity that the former is subjectively meaningful, while the latter refers to acts we might not be aware of or do not suggest any meaning to us, e.g. in biological terms, the behavior of our cells.

The concept of meaning is explained in the intentional character of the actors' actions; for Engdahl & Larsson (2006: 32), an action always consists of an individual having an idea about the intentionality of his/her action. They also claim that an action is supposed to have four components: as already said, (a) an intention and meaning, which lead us to question our selves what is the actor's goal or why does it means something to him/her; (b) competence, resources or help in order to make it possible to perform the action; (c) an environment or context where the actor has possibilities and limitations; and (d) a result or consequences.

As it can be observed, the intentional character of actions is what suggests to speak about actors when referring to subjects, the contrary case would be to speak about agent, which suggest that individuals act under the control of different social forces (Engdahl & Larsson, 2006:33); however it is assumed here that a person can take decisions and act and produce meanings.

Actors and their actions are not to be isolated; they are trapped in a relationship of what Engdahl and Larsson (2006: 85) call a mutual orientation or interaction. On the other hand, Durkheim points out that because our reactions to how others behave are expressive (meaningful), we react by approving or disapproving them (Hughes, 2003: 151). This observation explains how interaction is done, it is based on our freedom to choose if we rather approve or disapprove. Furthermore, this symbolic dimension makes us notice how “a society is essentially defined on the basis of membership, that is, on the distinction between those who are within it and those who are outside it” (Hughes, 2003: 153).

Nevertheless, it is not just membership what explains how individuals interact. Durkheim distinguishes in his book, *The division of labor in society* (1893) two types of societies: mechanical and organic, being the former conformed by members with a more homogenous life and characteristics; and the latter, by specialized individuals where their specialization is exactly what make interactions possible through contracts between them; these contracts gain credibility because they are legitimized by other parties (Hughes, 2003: 169). The specialization and its resulting contracts provide what Parsons (1951: 36-37) calls an agreement of values and norms; but far beyond, it will also provide a way to define who the actors are, because it is their actions what defined what can be predictable in them, this is called their roles.

A role comes to be the setting of shared expectations upon what actors should or not perform in a social situation. Parsons (1951: 2) explains that a situation is giving by objects that orient actions and these objects can be rather social (individuals performing actions), physical (empirical entities that condition the actions), and cultural (symbolic elements like ideas and beliefs or value patterns) At the same time, their roles are framed under structures of major order (institutionalized) and perceptions assigned to them (status). This specialization is consequent with previous approaches like Durkheim did in *The Division of labor in society* (Hughes, 2003: 164-165). Individuals perform specialized actions in order to affect others and therefore, they must perform, in words of Parsons, expected roles in society or, as stated by Durkheim, a contract of solidarity (Hughes, 2003: 169).

Durkheim and Parsons were crucial in functionalist theory, but were also criticized for being based on the fact that humans make use of others according to personal interests. Such importance given to the attainment of goals means that functionalism only focuses on the consequences of those actions and ignores their causes. Another theoretical perspective is interactionism, a reframing of structural linguistics, which pointed out that language contains elements called signs, which reveal relationships in a system. The interpretation of those signs could be mistaken if the context is not taking into account; here is where interactionism takes place, considering that signs have importance in the process of actions and not separately.

Symbolic interactionism focuses on interactions. This theory is a reformulation of Parsons' functionalism, trying to go deeper in the interaction processes between actors, giving them an active role and contrary to functionalism, explaining their

actions based on “the ways in which they understand the circumstances in which they find themselves” (Sharrock, 2003: 163), this is, according to meanings rather than just interests.

Under this perspective it is possible to re-think how interaction can be understood. According to Mead (1976, in: Engdahl & Larsson, 2006: 105-106), to establish an interaction it is necessary that persons communicate, this means that they not only react to others but also try to understand each other; three requirements in this matter define a relationship: initialization with a initial gesture, an interpretation and a response. This approach let us think that interpretation processes are also affected by the knowledge, culture and contexts of the participants, and since it can be learnt, it can be reformulated from time to time.

The communicative dimension of relationships let us differentiate between symbolic and normative relationships; the latter is formed by expectations about each other that must be fulfilled according to what functionalist called contract, but according to interactionists, norms are constantly in change, because so are the others’ actions and understandings (Engdahl & Larsson, 2006: 107).

On the other side, the breach of expectations or the appearance of different interpretations without consensus can lead to ruptures in the interaction processes. One of them could be giving in form of stigma. For Goffman (2003, in: Engdahl & Larsson, 2006: 112-113), this is a generalized and permanent judgment that makes the person discredited, its use is given in order to show something unconventional in the individual’s morals status. Goffman compares everyday life with that of a theater in his work *The presentation of self in everyday life* (1956). His comments regarding judgment are given because individuals are expected to act in a certain way, but they can also choose to act differently or unconsciously do it. His analysis concludes that to have interactions with coherency, it is necessary that actors had already come to a definition of the situation; in other words, that they had collective agreements about what to expect from the others and how to react. The particularity that action can be expected is not observed only in the other individuals who the actor interacts with; this means that there is a third party, which is compared to the audience in a theater play.

## 2.2. The theory in context: reformulating the concepts

The theory so far revised collaborates to explain that Kviberg's market, as a meeting point, can be understood as a place where different actors meet and a series of interactions take place. From a functionalist perspective, this meeting point has rather advantages or disadvantages in order to reach its participants' expectations.

Those expectations vary from person to person. In Kviberg a shoe seller can expect something from a customer (a question about prices), from the merchant nearby (changing a bill by coins) or from the caravan cook (a warm lunch). But taking in mind that relationships are communicative, therefore emotional, the same shoe seller can also expect to socialize more or gaining a deeper friendship. The expectations are the ones to define who is who in the market or who does what (roles).

On the other hand, a meeting point has to be assumed as hub of interactions, regulated by expectations, interpretations and rules. An interactionist way to define the actors in Kviberg is based on their goals and interpretations of the others under specific circumstances; it is not just what they do, it is also how and why.

While an action is whether an attempt to reach a goal, or a response to other's action, a relationship or interaction is a constantly changing construction of meanings between two or more actors. Thereby an actor is that individual who performs actions to reach a goal or give a response, adapting his/her performance to the understanding of the other (because he/she is active in a communicative process), others' expectations (because is assigned a role and asked to respect a contract) and surrounding circumstances (because his/her actions takes meaning in a given context). In the way his/her actions are modeled by these factors, he/she is creating relationships.

An actor is a set of interactions. Under this perspective, it is not enough to describe *actor* in terms of e.g., a *hair stylist* but a *listener*, not in terms of *the seller next door* but a *supporter*, this means that traditional roles (given by observable actions, as in functionalism) obey to a superficial look over people but interpretative roles (given by the subjective interpretation of their actions) offer a more participative approach to study the dynamics taking place in Kviberg's market.

## 3. Method

### 3.1. Method discussion

This project tries to explain actions happening between actors in a marketplace, how are they presented and how is the scenario where all this happens. In this matter, ethnography was used as an effort to understand the site in context, to identify its actors and their actions but also, how those actions appear on scene, how they create relationships and become active participants. Ethnographic methods are, according to Crang and Cook (2007: 35), different ways of studying a variety of communities, being the most common ones: participant observation, interviewing, focus group and video/photographic work.

Observation would have been pertinent as an activity to find out how the dynamics work between individuals, what do they talk about, how did they get to meet and how did they extend their social networks? But this project did not count with the time necessary to document such participation for a long period; instead, it was suggested to use observation while performing interviews; all in all, participative observation will always imply making questions to find out about individuals' profiles, positions and what they have to say (Fangen, 2005: 33).

Following an ethnographic orientation, interviews were used to collect data. This decision was mainly based on the possibility of ensuring a direct contact between interviewer and interviewee (Börjesson, 2005: 7). But to research in Kviberg turned to be sensitive; it was difficult to find interviewees because many of them were afraid of the use of their answers. This is why there was no structured questionnaire but a semi-structured conversation guide. An advantage in this matter was that the interviews were flexible enough to allow the participants tell their perceptions.

**3.1.1. Interviews.** The interviews were performed in the market, in order to be able to observe the context and get to observe the participants' different attitudes. The market is opened to the public Saturdays and Mondays from 10:00 to 15:00; with this schedule, it took the first two weekends of July 2012 to perform the five interviews included in this report, two of them took place on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> and the three other ones on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Each interview lasted between 35 and 40 minutes, they could not be extended more because the interviewees could not stop helping their customers (in

case it was need it) while they also talked to this researcher; this meant an extra effort to perform the interviews because of the distractions given by people passing by, making questions, asking for favors, etc. Nevertheless, these situations were at the same time positive because they allowed observing how are the participants' interactions with others. Their locations in the market were quite separated in order to find people with diverse profiles and occupations (read more about sampling in the section 3.4, p.11).

The number of interviews included here is affected by the fact that most of the vendors were afraid of participating; despite they were explained that the interviews would be used only for academic proposes and that their identities would be protected, it was very difficult to make them accept participate, especially when they were asked for permission to be recorded.

The merchants' apathy and fears to speak to the interviewer also suggested abandoning the idea of performing formal interviews; it was more reliable setting up informal conversations instead. These ones were intentionally structured in three moments: a first approach allowed the interviewee to talk about him/her self; this allowed the researcher to identify who the actor was. Possible questions in this moment were about their seniority in the market, economic activity, occupation, a typical working day, etc.

Subsequently, the instrument guided the conversation to talk about the interviewee's connections with others (colleagues, friends, customers, etc.), which made it possible to obtain appreciations about other actors and their relationships; in this matter they were asked, for instance, how they have manage to know others and what kind of relationships they keep up with them. And to conclude, the respondent's opinion about the market was interpreted to see if the market was personalized and treated as another actor. This moment turned to become more sensitive because after a while talking, the interviewees seemed to have a more opened attitude in the conversation; when asking them their perceptions about the market and about its importance for Gothenburg, there were cases in which the participants wanted to be heard, criticize and denounce different issues the market has experienced. These three moments were suggested in order to match the specific goals of this project, being the first moment appropriate to answer who are the actors and their roles, the second one to show information about relationships and the third one, about perceptions upon the market

(a more detailed instrument is available in annex *a*: *Interviewing in Kviberg's market – conversation guide*, pp.41).

### **3.2. Reliability**

The method here described collected information from just one perspective: the interviewees', which is somehow valid because "the main aim of interviewing in ethnographic research is to allow people to reveal their own versions of events in their own words" (Crang & Cook, 2007: 69). However, it was necessary to contrast the results with other information sources.

Since this topic has not been researched previously, the lack of documentation suggested to compare the results of the interviews with the theory analysis and several features published by the local press, especially Göteborgs Posten, which kept the topic of Kviberg's market in the agenda while controversy raised up after its possible foreclosure; these features are used to contextualize and offer a background about the market (more information in this matter is detailed in the chapters 3. *Kviberg in the media, a study background* and 4. *Previous research*, pp. 14 and pp. 17, respectively).

### **3.3. Outlines**

The results presentation starts offering a general knowledge about the market as well as how the media in Gothenburg has presented it to the public opinion. This was elaborated based on the counting of 46 articles published between 2006 and 2012. Consequently, interviewees are presented according to their personal characteristics, actions with others and perceptions about the market; the annex *b* includes a story telling recompilation from the interviews. The fifth chapter (pp.27) shows an analysis divided in these sections: context, actors' roles, relationships and the role of the market.

### **3.4. Sampling**

For most of ethnographers and qualitative researches there is a dilemma when trying to find an adequate sample for their projects. A first alternative is the theoretical saturation principle, this means, being interviewing until no new data is emerged from



the data collection techniques (Crang & Cook, 2007: 15). Nevertheless, other authors point out that new data will always give new results and therefore, it is difficult to understand when the saturation point is reached (Mason, 2010).

Two other approaches, and the ones used in this case, are quota and purposive sampling (Mack et al., 2005: 5). By using quota sampling the researcher decided the number of interviews according to the resources and the time available and the attainment of the study's objectives. The five participants were found using these criteria, not only because of the limited time, but also because of the already observed fear to participate in interviews. The latter was used to decide which kinds of people were included; this means, individuals with some experience in the market, at least of one year, hoping that, after this time, they could tell about the development of their relationships in a deeper way.

### **3.5. Boundaries**

This project is ambitious in the way that it tried to explain complex relationships happening in a complex context, and even though it made use of a participative methodology, it had the challenge of starting from zero.

The novelty factor was precisely its strength and weakness, with barriers such as (a) a limited scope: since this study is qualitative, it cannot be used to generalize the interviewee's answers to the rest of the population. (b) Distractions: in qualitative research it is common to perform interviews of probably one hour or more, but this was not the case here. To realize interviews inside the market was crucial to observe gestures, attitudes and interactions in a real context but it was not possible to hold them for more than 40 minutes. The participants collaborated at the same time they were working. (c) And an exploratory character: this project makes new contributions to academic communities in Sweden due to its emphasis on new research scenarios, like a marketplace, but it was also affected by the lack of previous research.

**3.5.1. Method limitations.** A study like this would have gotten deeper results if it had been a long-term project. Future initiatives in this matter, instead of being transactional, would try to get a long-term character in order to avoid difficulties to approach to the people, get to know the study group, sympathize with the community and identify key opinion leaders or actors who could provide information relevant to

answer the research questions. In this case, the transactional design resulted being an obstacle to find interviewees, the five persons included here offered very different approaches and that is appreciated, however a long-term study secures more participants and more freedom to choose from.

It is so far satisfactory to have been able to identify actors and explain their appreciations but if the study had been mixed with a quantitative approach it would have been also possible to generalize the results and find out about a broad perception about Kviberg's market. Nevertheless, a 100% quantitative approach would not be possible because the population is sensitive to questionnaires and formal inquiring techniques; this could be realized only throughout the right contacts in the market.

Finally, the researcher's bias can always affect the results. Though objectivity has always been something to keep in mind, interviews turned to be more emotional than expected. Some interviewees have a very positive concept about the market and some others have grudges towards external actors and the way they perceive it, which turns this ethnography into a study to be considered as a collection of appreciations by the participants and the researcher.

## 4. The study

### 4.1. Kviberg in the media, a study background

It has not been possible to find any research upon Kviberg's market or market places in Gothenburg. So far, all the literature found about Kviberg is about the development plans for this area and architectural guides; nevertheless the local newspapers have published a series of articles, talking about a possible market's foreclosure between 2010 and 2012; this eventuality encourages media to let the readers know a little bit more about the market.

The material found about Kviberg's development consists of design plans from the municipality. They point out that Kviberg should be an area for sports and take in mind the design of a park that includes a school, local shops and sport fields but do not say anything about the market. The 2003 floor plan for Kviberg area does mention the current existence of Kviberg's market (a flea market as it states on the document) in the old stables but no more than that (Göteborgs Stad Stadsbyggnadskontoret, 2003: 17). It also states that the facilities are owned by the real estate firma Higab (who also rents out the stables to Kviberg's market) and that this company has its own plans to decide the use of them, being sports, their main interest (2003: 32).

Higab belongs to the municipality of Gothenburg and owns 300 buildings with a total of 630.000 m<sup>2</sup> (Higabgruppen, 2010: 2). This company had interests in closing down Kviberg's market in order to develop sport facilities and as its CEO, Göran Sylvesten, said in a press release, both Higab and the municipality had worked together trying to find a place to relocate the market; "the stables and its surroundings in Kviberg are worth it of being developed into a sport zone" (Sylvesten & Håkansson, 2010).

In another report, the municipality of Gothenburg revealed to have plans to build sport halls and renew the appearance of the stables in Kviberg with a new elongated façade that does not "look monotonous and boring" (Göteborgs Stad Stadsbyggnadskontoret, 2009: 11), again, nothing is said about the market. The same happened in the report 'Kviberg's park, designing plan', where the stables are mentioned only as place of importance to build one of the main entrances to the new Kviberg's park (Göteborgstad, 2011: 20).

On the other hand, there are two architectural guides, *Uppteck Nordost* (Hansson, 2006) and *Gamlestaden: historik och arkitekturguide* (Atlestam, 1999), where the area of Gamlestaden (close to Kviberg) and the rest of north-western Gothenburg is described in terms of architecture history and places of public interest. These texts include a vast description of Kviberg’s quarters and other edifications but when it comes to the market, they only mention its existence in the stables area.

Regarding information from newspapers, the features found on Kviberg’s market can be categorized in different ways. In this matter, *Göteborgs Posten* is the one presenting more relevant articles; it is also the most read paper from western Sweden, with an average of 215.000 daily editions from Monday to Friday (TU, 2012: 5). After performing a search with the words ‘*Kvibergs marknad*’ (in Swedish) at the newspaper website, a total of 46 articles published between 2006 and 2012<sup>1</sup> are listed (figure 1).

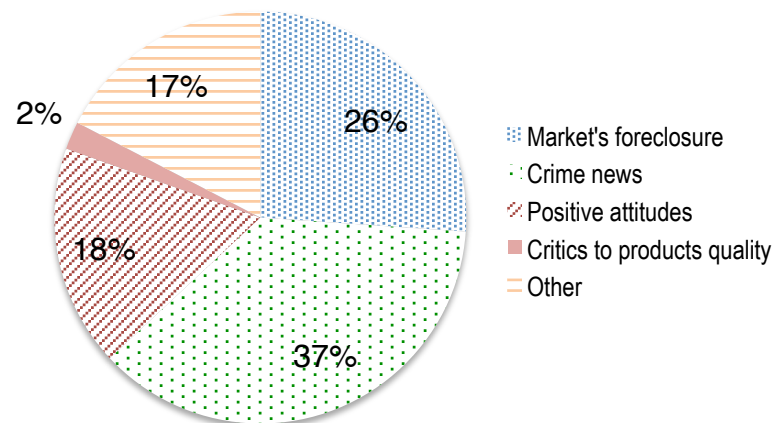


Figure 1. *Categorization of news about Kviberg's market. Göteborgs Posten, 2006-2012. Elaborated with articles found online: www.gp.se*

Most of these articles have to do with the topic of crime, followed by the eventual foreclosure between 2009 and 2011; the rest of the news are grouped in the categories called ‘positive attitudes’ and ‘other’, the former refers to cases in which the media or interviewees seem to identify them selves with the market, e.g., a composer who wrote a song protesting for the market’s closure, or a writer encouraging ‘Swedes’ to

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<sup>1</sup> This period was not decided by the author, it was the result given by the search engine.

visit the market or to go there and sell some trinkets and make a little extra money. The latter obeys to those articles in where the market is mention for some reason but is not part of the main topic, e.g., the quality of the water in the area or an interview to a politician.

The year 2010 was probably the most significant for the market in terms of media coverage, when the discussion about the market's future was at its height... some examples in this matter are *Kviberg's market can be saved*, *S-politicians have no opinion about Kviberg* and *Kviberg's market's future was postponed* by Snezana Bozinovska (2010); followed by *New party wants to save Kviberg's market* and *Kviberg's market remained until 2011* by Gunilla Grahn-Hinnfors (2010).

As a parenthesis it might be interesting to note that at a first sight it would be expectable that the intensive coverage of one topic would reduce others, but in this case it did not necessarily happened. A Pearson correlation was performed between the variables 'market foreclosure and crime news'; with a result of  $r=0,5$  it is possible to observe that while the coverage about the market's foreclosure grew up, there was also some increase in the news related with crime (Figure 2). This can be seen with publications like *Wide range of alcohol in Kviberg* (Henriksson, 2010), *20 year-old shot in Kviberg* (Bozinovska, 2010) or *Police on the way to solve burglary* (Olsson, 2009).

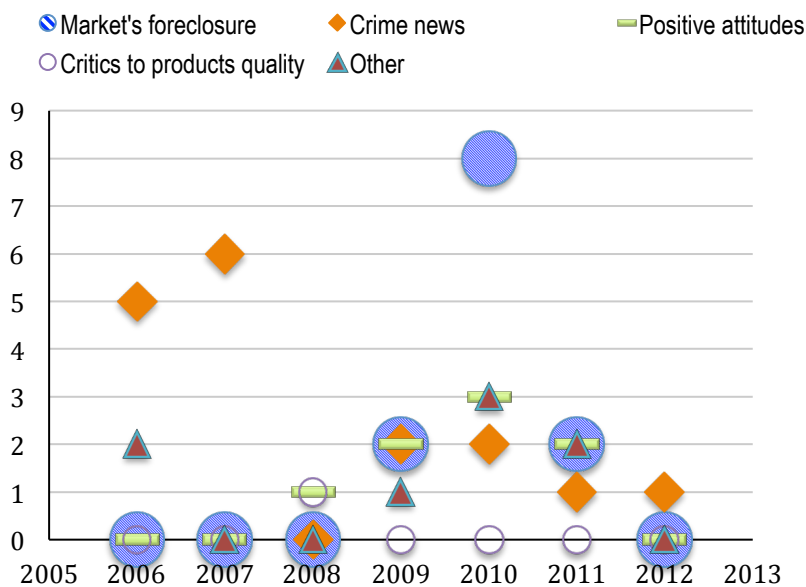


Figure 2. Evolution of news about Kviberg's market. Göteborgs Posten, 2006-2012. Elaborated with articles found online: [www.gp.se](http://www.gp.se)

A special attention in the articles about the foreclosure is necessary because they tell a whole story all together, unlike the rest of them that narrate isolated happenings. In the story it is possible to identify several actors involved in the conflict but not the actors inside the market; however, understanding this conflict is basis to comprehend the context in which the actors inside the market perform.

The functionalist approach can explain the dynamics of this conflict. The relationship presented here is given by responses in order to defend their own interests. On one side there are the market (founders and workers) and supporters, on the other side, the adversaries (the municipality real estate company Higab and other associations and sport clubs). They acted according to their interests, rather than the understanding of the other's position (continuing vs. foreclosure).

The conflict lied upon those two actors but the newspaper and the public opinion were also involved as observers and why not, judges. The former had the power to decide what to publish and how to write it, rather if the news would be about his conflict or another; most of the articles are related to controversy topics (65%, Graph 1); in other words, the media has seen in Kviberg's market an instrument to keep its readers' attention. The latter is affected by the former, who decides what to cover and how to treat the information.

Even though this foreclosure did not happened, the controversy built around the market still exists. The fact that the market will remain in the same place does not mean that perceptions about it have changed, on the other hand, the fact that the media put a special interest in describing this conflict does not mean that they have explained what the market really is, on the contrary, the newspaper still offers coverage about crime in this place.

## **4.2. Previous research**

After performing several databases and Internet searches about marketplaces, it was possible to observe that social interaction in these establishments has traditionally been of academic interests all over the world; most of it was found in United States, though. No research projects about marketplaces in Gothenburg or in Sweden have been found, which has been a limitation from a local point of view; however, the rest

of the studies listed have provided a series of findings that can be comparable with Kviberg's market and contribute to provide a broader background when it comes to understand the concepts, perceptions and uses of such markets.

Another limitation was that even though exhaustive list of publications have been noted, the access to the reports was restricted, available only for members of specific institutions, databases and networks. The research included in this chapter has been accessed freely on the Internet or through the catalogs and databases linked to the Lund University Library.

Six publications were taken into account, one of them published in the United Kingdom, another one in Germany and four in United States. One of them is a compilation and categorization of previous research, which suggested a vast list of worldwide secondary sources, but most of them are also of restricted access. One study illustrates a case of a flea market in the Pacific Islands and the rest (four) are about marketplaces in United States.

**4.2.1. Sherman, McCrohan and Smith (1985).** They analyzed consumer involvement with flea markets, as they considered them as informal retailing institutions based on over 600 interviews with shoppers at 15 marketplaces in suburban communities of a northeastern city of United States. Using a Likert scale, they categorized these interviewees into "heavy" and "light" consumers, and then proceeded with four hypotheses: (1) those individuals who present less risk in shopping behavior would have higher expenditures at flea markets. The conception of risk meant that consumers would prefer nationally advertise brands and brands on sale (this was not supported by the data analysis); would not buy the cheapest brand (supported); and would buy more from the vendors they already know (also supported). (2) The authors thought that attitudes would be related to expenditures in the market, which was supported in the research, meaning that when attitudes are positive more money is spent in these establishments and vice versa. (3) They also confirmed that the "heaviest" consumers are also those ones who plan to spend more in the future (next year) and the "lightest" would spend less. And last, (4) they also stated that shopping with friends would result in more consumption (partly to reduce the risk factor) but the study did not support this hypothesis.

Some other findings were that consumers with positive attitudes perceived a fun factor in bargain and strolling around the market place, while those ones with negative attitudes were more concern if the goods were stolen or if the vendors would avoid taxing. In addition, they concluded that flea markets tend to grow in consumption; however, they left aside the discussion of if these ones should be moved from informal to formal economy, which was one of the factors that had motivated the realization of their project.

**4.2.2. Sherry, John F. (1990a).** Also regarding concerns about the impact of informal economical activities, Sherry considered that this sector was underestimated in the filed of marketing and consumer research. With the aim of analyzing the experience of dealing in flea markets or institutions alike, his two and a half year project presented an ethnography collecting stories of eight dealers of the Dalton Valley Flea Market, Georgia, which has between 356 and 1310 vendors and between 5045 to 23,685 visitors depending on the season of the year, but still opened year-round the first Sunday of every month (181). Participative observation was mixed with interviewing both in the market as well as surrounding places like restaurants and private homes. The author says that the long-term character facilitated the access to the informants as they had time to adapt to the interviewers.

The information was recollected in the form of field notes, tape recordings and photographs and was presented with a series of eight ethnographic vignettes that led to some integrating statements: informality and festivity are the factors that make this flea market attractive to both consumers and retailers, in which bargaining has gotten a semiotic intensity with dealers using verbal challenges to engage consumers in a relationship of adversaries who enjoy this experience made possible by the informal atmosphere (190-191). In addition, creations of meaning are not only giving to interactions but also to the items. Objects can be perceived as second-hand item, collectibles and antiques, object d'art or rubbish (195), depending on the nostalgia feelings, individual perceptions, previous knowledge and experiences and bargaining skills.

The author concluded that flea markets can be seen as alternative markets having significant impacts upon the purchasing and trading behavior, as well as sources of cultural and psychological significance. He insisted that this phenomenon has been



ignored in market research and that ethnographic investigation of certain markets can lead to cross-market comparisons.

**4.2.3. Sherry, John F. (1990b).** The same author continued with his efforts to bring flea markets into more consideration by marketing researches after publishing a study to change its perception of second order marketing system into an alternative marketing system. The research is conducted in the same market and with the same methodology as in the previous study, but this time, the researcher showed a direct role in participation together with several actors: managers, regulators, dealers and consumers, doing all the same activities they did (buying, selling, supervising, etc.).

The author pointed out that the market is placed in a situation that causes a series of tension relationships in the middle of the formal and informal, the economic and the festive. This scene provides spaces for a series of consumer highly patterned behaviors: searching (heterogeneous consumers looking for heterogeneous goods, anything can become collectible), dickering (perceived as combat and game) and socializing (in search of experiences).

To conclude, Sherry assured that a marketplace can be seen as a conjunction of actions with many voices communicating at once (*multilogue*), that is able of “decentering” and “decontextualizing” consumer experiences because its informality offers a sort of anti-structure (27-28), appreciated by its participants, besides providing processes of sociocultural significance.

**4.2.4. Brown, Richard P.C. & Connell, John (1993).** From a micro-economic perspective, the authors analyzed the dynamics in Noko’alofa market in the Kingdom of Tonga, related with the phenomenon of remittance-based economy of the country. Two thoughts in that matter were discussed: a traditional view claiming that remittance affected economies are not sustainable and have only temporary benefits; and another less orthodox position... that such new subsistence sectors should be preserved and fostered. The findings of Brown and Connell added a new perspective to this dilemma, suggesting that in Nuku’alofa’s flea market, “the volume of sales for particular types of goods has been so substantial that it has eroded the market in the formal retail sector which now finds itself unable to compete in certain lines of goods” (632).

By surveying 26 stalls selling goods from remittances as second-hand items obtaining 23 completed questionnaires; the researchers found out that vendors have managed to develop a strong economy after they received goods from their relatives or contacts abroad; they have created a long lasting flow of cash and even made profit to be used, not only in food and bills expenses, but in donations and investments in other types of businesses.

Even though this study does not count on a strictly social science perspective, it is important to see how a flea market has turned into a recognized source of income. Nuku'alofa's market might have possible become a meeting point too, but what the study can tell us is that if it has already an impact on the national economy, it surely brings consequences of social and cultural matter.

**4.2.5. Dean, Wesley; Sharkey, Joseph & John, Julie ST. (2011).** Their study's purpose was to get preliminary information of food availability in the so-called Pulgas (flea markets) in the *colonias* of Hidalgo County, Southern Texas. Such *colonias* are disadvantaged communities of mostly American citizens of Mexican origin, characterized by poverty, high rates of diabetes and obesity.

Their study is included here because the method strategy seems to be also suitable to be adopted in future research about Kviberg, given the vulnerabilities of the study group and the respondents' fears of participating in research projects. The method was quantitative, surveying 141 vendors and getting a 65% response rate. Prior to fieldwork, the researchers had to get hold of permissions from the *pulgas* owners. The authors identified four *pulgas* with help of community informants and popular *colonia* residents who were recruited in the form of project-affiliated promoters and were trained to be able to contact participants, do survey and observation work and write field notes; it was done these way because they could speak the same language and relieve fears from the respondents.

Dean, Sharkey and John concluded that *pulga* vendors' demographic characteristics are similar to those of the *colonias* inhabitants, resulting in short commuting distances and even the presence of family ties and friendship relationships.

From a nutritional perspective, the authors recognized that *pulgas* were significant sources of fruit, vegetables and other foods, as well as culturally significant foods (in

this case Mexican), and as an extra to the study goals, they could also deduct through anecdotal evidence that pulgas were recognized as common encounter places.

**4.2.6. Pottie-Sherman, Yolande (2011).** After searching throughout electronic databases using no parameters regarding time period, region or publishing date, the author made a selection of 40 studies focused on diverse markets and grouped them into seven thematic areas: (1) Sociability of exchange, where she identified two types of researchers, the pessimistic ones who claimed that profit was more appreciated over social interaction by market vendors; and the ones with a magical view over the marketplace, who considered it as a playing field with equal conditions for diverse groups and with capacities of offering social experiences, constructions of cultural meaning and scenes for social performance. (2) Spaces of contact, this was defined as the recognition of the market as a point of contact where both advantages and disadvantages are given, for example, feelings of otherness reinforcements (in the case of markets characterized by the presence of foreigners and/or foreign goods) but also the challenges to the status-quo (like the presence of female vendors in middle eastern male dominated culture markets), adoption of new cultural practices (when locals adopted practices from immigrants) and access to globalization (appropriation of modern-perceived places, like the case of a gas station used as meeting point by street vendors in Uganda). (3) Consuming ethnicity, like the case of postcolonial South African market places or eastern bazaars or any other where they are supposed to sell the “authenticity” of a specific group or country due to a “fascination of the exotic and desire to consume the other” (p. 15).

So far, Pottie-Sherman has observed in the literature that the marketplace is a social act but “this interaction is not always positive—as it can reinforce difference, inequality, and ‘otherness’. Although, in theory, the marketplace situates people on an equal playing field, in reality, unequal power dynamics often stymie meaningful interaction” (p. 17). Therefore it is the capacity of creating meaning what possibly has motivated the research of other themes: (4) Markets and the state, governance and policy is a topic referring to the regulatory activities of States, from normative to urban generation initiatives in order to carry capitalist values to the citizens and make the market more available for consumption. (5) Political economy of the marketplace, a theme related to those researches interested in the use of these markets for the economic inclusion of disadvantaged groups, like in the cases of network creation and

fostering of entrepreneurship. (6) Markets and social inclusion, this wants to say that a marketplace has a role in the inclusion of immigrants and minorities by the construction of safety networks and means to meet other people. The last theme is (7) Spatiality of the market, in which the author finds a definition of the marketplace as a public space with descriptions about its facilities, e.g. compact, concentrated and heterogeneous.

The author's conclusions are that marketplaces are spaces of open social or economic exchange but these interchanges can be both positive and negative, that such interactive patterns can contribute to both integration and isolation and that those marketplaces viewed as "equal playing fields" are not always so "equal".

**4.2.7. Previous research overview.** In general, it can be observed that the literature included in this chapter has different approaches in methodological and theoretical matters. There are mainly two directions: quantitative survey-based studies, which in some cases included a more qualitative pre-research phase, and those ones that are truly qualitative, making use of observation and interviewing. In both cases, they have been long-term studies.

From a thematic perspective, marketplaces have been a point of interest for several disciplines in the field of economics, health and social science. There are those studies more concern about demographic data collection and consumer behavior approaches as well as those ones in which the authors have presented several strategies of legitimization, mainly because they had preconceived them as a social, economic or political concern and came up with outcomes that try to legitimize them in different aspects: (a) legitimization of informal economies, e.g. Brown and Connell (1993), (b) legitimization of vulnerable communities, as seen in Dean, Sharkey and John (2011), (c) and legitimization of alternative ways of consumption that have to be recognized by marketing practitioners, as in Sherman, McCrohan and James (1985) and Sherry (1990a,b). The exception in this matter is probably Pottie-Sherman (2011) because her approach is strictly for academic use by putting all possible previous research together; however, the already observed strategies of legitimization of marketplaces are also illustrated in her thematic classification.

Similarly to how Pottie-Sherman has found researches with two perspectives about sociability of marketplaces (pessimistic and "magic"-oriented), the bibliography

included in this chapter also presents two types of researches: (1) skeptics, whose research is more concerned about the marketplace as a source of informal economy (and that by chance is also more fond of adopting positivist approaches like statistical methods); and (2) supporters, who show themselves more interested in the social character of the markets and use it to legitimize their presence in national economies and societies.

### **4.3. Collected data**

In Kviberg's market, the visitors' experience is organized in the way that they come inside the first stable, divided in two sections, left and right and each of them with a surrounding corridor and stalls in both sides. Whereas they choose to go, they would come back to the center of the building and continue through the back door to find a parking lot with more stalls and caravans used as snack bars, to the back, a second building organized in the same way as the first one, then another parking lot and finally the last building.

All of these spaces offer a vast variety in shops, products, merchants and visitors. There are sections for flea market and antique sellers; others specialized in vegetables, meat or clothes and others with no specialization at all. Some merchants have access to fixed stalls and some others rent them occasionally, some of them are inscribed as entrepreneurs and some others are private persons who come to sit and sell every time they have collected some merchandise.

In this context, five interviews were performed. The participants were reluctant to participate at the beginning but showed themselves more flexible when they were explained that their identity would be carefully handled, their surnames are not registered. For a deeper comprehension of their insights, there is a summary of the interviews, presented by using a story-telling technique (see annex *b*, pp.42). There is also a more precise data extraction from the conversations (see table 1, pp.26). Table 1's structure reflects how the interviews were conducted (see the instrument in annex *a*, pp.41), this means in three thematic moments:

**4.3.1. Who are the participants?** Considering that individuals have roles and statuses in society and this conducts to their specialization in order to understand who they are or what to expect from them (Durkheim, 1893; Parsons, 1951), the column of

personal qualities summarizes their occupations, seniority (years of experience in the market), economic activity (what do they sell) and periodicity (how often do they attend the market). The interviewees consist of two traders, one student, one public worker and one pensioner; three males and two females; dedicated to sell clothes, footwear and second hand clothes and ornaments; the one with more permanence in the market has seven years attending and the ones with less, one year.

**4.3.2. How do they act towards the others?** The second column describes how the interaction takes place in the market. A functionalist parameter claims that actions have a motivation or intentionality (Engdahl & Larsson, 2006; Parsons, 1951); when interviewees explained the reasons why they come to the market and what do they expect to find there, it is possible too understand what motivates their actions towards others. In general terms, they seek learning, amusement and belonging feelings reinforcement.

**4.3.3. Perceptions.** Since the last moment is about how do interviewees perceive the market, the statements obey to a series of perceptions of different order, like economic, sociocultural, emotional and of the type moral-conflict. Some assumptions emphasize the cheap prices and the profit gained or lost, others consider the market as hub of encounters, relaxation, leisure or emotional healing; others make emphasis in migration, crime and stereotypes.

Table 1  
*Interviews outlines*

	Personal qualities	Actions with others	Perceptions about the market
María	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employed in the public sector</li> <li>• Sells second-hand clothes and figurines</li> <li>• Approx. 2 years in the market,</li> <li>• Occasional attender.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intercultural exchange</li> <li>• Language practicing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal leisure/relief</li> <li>• A meeting point to discover more about others</li> <li>• An opportunity for people to discover them selves</li> </ul>
Razima	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Already retired</li> <li>• Volunteered for different institutions</li> <li>• Sells second hand clothes and carpets</li> <li>• 5 years in the market</li> <li>• Occasional attender</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support in daily affairs</li> <li>• Amusement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Companionship</li> <li>• Cure/treatment (therapeutic use)</li> <li>• Market is stereotyped (crime related)</li> <li>• More control is needed</li> <li>• Visitors are immigrants</li> </ul>
Rasinder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Merchant/trader</li> <li>• Sells clothes</li> <li>• 1 year in the market</li> <li>• Occasional attender</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support in daily affairs</li> <li>• Customer service oriented</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cheap prices</li> <li>• Employment source</li> <li>• Market is stereotyped (crime related)</li> <li>• "One does the harm, and another bears the blame"</li> <li>• Visitors are immigrants</li> </ul>
Sam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student full time</li> <li>• Sells clothes and choose, incl. fotball items and popular labels.</li> <li>• 1 year in the market,</li> <li>• Regular attender.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amusement</li> <li>• Hobbies and interest sharing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cheap prices</li> <li>• Employment source</li> <li>• Extra income source</li> <li>• High variety supply</li> </ul>
Senad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Merchant/trader</li> <li>• Came to the market with his own business idea</li> <li>• Sells shoes</li> <li>• 7 years in the market</li> <li>• Regular attender</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support in daily affairs</li> <li>• Dialogue initiator</li> <li>• Group adherence/ friendship facilitator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Magnet effect: the market has an attraction force towards all kinds of people.</li> <li>• Facilities need improvment</li> <li>• Not profitable but emotionally satisfactory.</li> </ul>

## 5. Analysis

### 5.1. Kviberg in context

When describing Kviberg's market, the first observable characteristic is its diversity, not just because of the qualities of its merchants and visitors, but also because of the products and services offered in the different sections the facilities are divided in. However, such diversity has hardly been used when referring to this market, instead, it is defined on the basis of just one of its attributes... been a flea market.

Kviberg has sections functioning as a flea market, but it also has a farmers' market, clothes stores, shoe stores, butchery, barbershops, etc. Nevertheless, it is categorized just as a flea market. This misunderstanding is probably the first obstacle that the market faces in order to legitimate its role in society. Furthermore, other stereotypes created from isolated events, e.g., robberies, fake items sales or questioned quality products findings, are also used when trying to identify how some interviewees and the press still define the market. Razima and Rasinder statements about crime perception are examples in this direction (see table 1).

Prejudices in the public opinion serve as distracting factors from other characteristics, struggles and events of public relevance. This is appreciated in the amount of news about Kviberg's market but somehow related to crime (see figure 1). The eventual foreclosure did not represent an opportunity to change perceptions upon the market because in the news there are selections of interviews where, in one way or another, the crime theme is still present.

Those preconceptions generate a defensive attitude and fear in some merchants, a proof of this was the difficulty experienced to find interviewees, what in the light of Parsons (1951), happens because the researcher, as a stranger in the social system, is not yet aware about the others' roles and is liable to have wrong expectations and if those expectations defined the actors' actions, there would be less interaction opportunities. In other words, Kviberg, as a meeting point, offers possibilities of interaction as long as the actors can feel safe with their expectations about each other; in practice it is possible to appreciate this with Senad, who has seven years in the market and could made more friends than Sam who has just one, or Razima who has peer support from a group of known landmen around her, while María interacts more



with new people every time. Relationships are affected by others' expectations but to learn what to expect from these others is a careful practice in Kviberg's market because the context has created feelings of uncertainty (see figure 3).

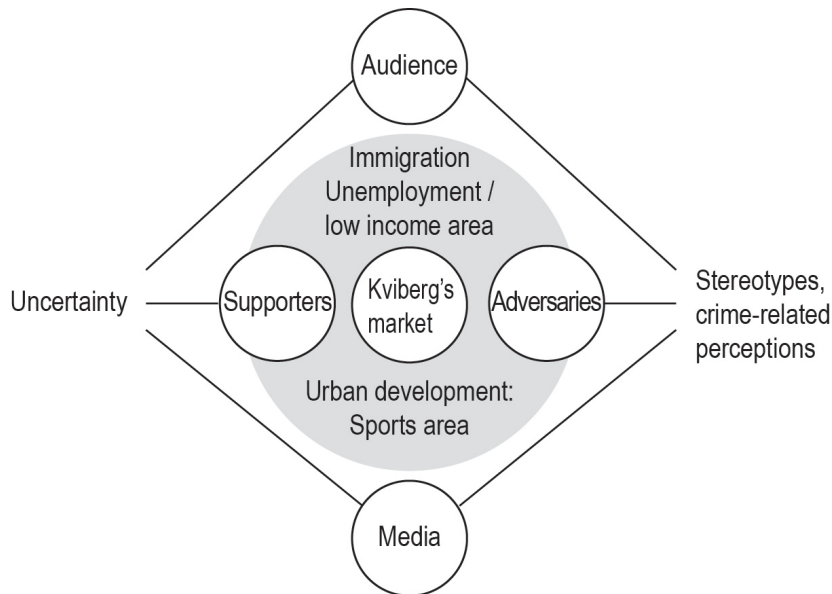


Figure 3. *Context around Kviberg's market.* Pressures regarding the existence of the market, the characteristics of its surroundings and the media coverage have contributed to develop feelings of uncertainty, as well as stereotypes.

The market can have rather supporters or adversaries, i.e. activists, politicians and sympathizers, who think that Gothenburg needs a market and that this is a meeting point of special importance, in confrontation with other politicians and entrepreneurs who have their own idea of development for the area. This confrontation has gone public because of the local media, which saw in this situation an opportunity to legitimate its ideological power by building perceptions about the conflict and the market.

The information collected about Kviberg and North-east Gothenburg shows that this area is characterized by high rates of unemployment and lower income per family (Samhällsanalys och statistik, Göteborgs stadsledningskontor, 2011). It also shows a major concentration of habitants with foreign background than in other parts of the city. The same area is also subject of urban development initiatives, which are supposed to bring improvements in infrastructure, recreation and housing; however, it also generated economic and political pressures to close down the market, resulting in

feelings of insecurity that dominated the scene for one and a half decades until the foreclosure was formally canceled, after this, there are still concerns about its prestige and reputation.

## 5.2. About the actors

The five participants offered different perspectives about their lives in the market, their background and cultural differences contributed to gather so much information that it made it impossible to include all their insights; nevertheless, these ones were grouped under thematic categories according to the questions already defined for this research. A started point was to identify their interests upon the market (see figure 4), because knowing what motivates (Parsons, 1951) them can lead to the understanding (Mead, 1976) of further questions like who they are and whom they interact with.

	Financial support	Leisure /relief	Knowledge interchange	Emotional support & therapeutic use	Community membership
María		x	x	x	
Razima		x		x	x
Rasinder	x				x
Sam	x	x	x		
Senad	x	x			x

Figure 4. *Interviewees' interests in Kviberg's market.*

Let us take for example María; she said that her visits to the market made her feel abroad because of being exposed to other cultures, environments and experiences, this lets her broaden up her knowledge. She also said in the interview that Sweden makes her frustrated sometimes. Under an interactionist point of view, her statements could be reinterpreted with some help from the understanding of the context. We know already that the market offers a different landscape than any other boutique, shopping center or conventional meeting point in the city center, we also know that there has been uncertainty about the future of the market and there are still stereotypes about it, but María disagrees with these value judgments because she knows the market from other perspective; from her side, this place represent her holiday, what explains her

search of leisure and/or relief from her everyday life. Her eagerness in this matter takes so much importance that it even helps her, as she pointed out, to find her self and feel human warmth, what means that she also looks for comforting in some degree.

The other interviewees were analyzed in the same way. Razima pointed out that she enjoys her fellows' company, plays jokes and talks her mother tongue (she also looks for leisure, amusement, enjoyment); she was also clear enough when she said that she needs the market to reduce her loneliness feelings and her medicine doses, what means that she uses the market as a therapy. In addition, she found a group of similar characteristics to hers; belonging to a group allows her to feel accompanied and supported.

Group membership is also observed in Rasinder and Senad's cases, the former receives support from and offers support to his landmen in their work activities; furthermore, the profit made out of the sales is important to support the whole group and their families, i.e. his motivation comes from gaining financial support and community membership. The latter started his own business idea in the market, which proves that even if the sales are not so high as expected, the financial support is an important motivation, just as well as the possibility to entertain him self and, in his words, "not to get bored home alone"; he also talks about his group of friends; actually, it was possible for him to establish enduring relationships and belong to a group. Sam is also interested in financial support; he is a student, and for him, some extra income is welcome. He also has similarities with María, he wants to interact with others and spend some time to both entertain him self and enrich his knowledge in his favorite topics, like football.

### **5.3. Redefining the actors through their relationships**

If relationships are defined in a parallel way (Engdahl & Larsson, 2006: 85), the expectations and the understanding of the other affects the way to define all participants, to know who is the actor '*a*' depends on how this one establishes actions towards and expects something from an actor '*b*'. At the same time, '*b*' also defines '*a*' based on the same parameters, in other words, interaction in Kviberg's market is

an example of how the actors are not just individuals performing their respective actions, they are defined socially.

The understanding of the other is necessary to participate in this definition of who he/she is in Kviberg (Mead, 1976), it can be seen even if the original expectations are not fully accomplished, e.g., Sam has a preference to talk about football but this does not mean that he would not interact with somebody who dislike it; Razima has a group of landmen around her but this belonging feeling does not prevent her to change her chair with a woman from out of her group, maybe Razima did not expect to be asked this favor but she did it after understanding that the other woman's husband need it for health reasons.

Individuals' actions have to do with the expectations about the others but the things expected need to have a meaning for them (Blumer, 1971, in Sharrock, 2003: 166). Based on the fieldwork in Kviberg's market it was possible to define its actors as knowledge facilitators, supporters and companions (see figure 5) because it was observed that the meanings of their interests were in these directions. The first type was observed in interviewees who fit in there because they want to learn something but at the same time, teach something too; for instance, when María practice some of the languages she knows, she contributes to reinforce the other's knowledge as well as her own. So does Sam when he shares his knowledge about football. In order to look for knowledge they also give it away, the fact they turn in the one they are looking for can complement the theory saying that the actors expectations are a way to define the others as much as them selves, in interactionist words, it would sound like this: my relationships with others define my self.

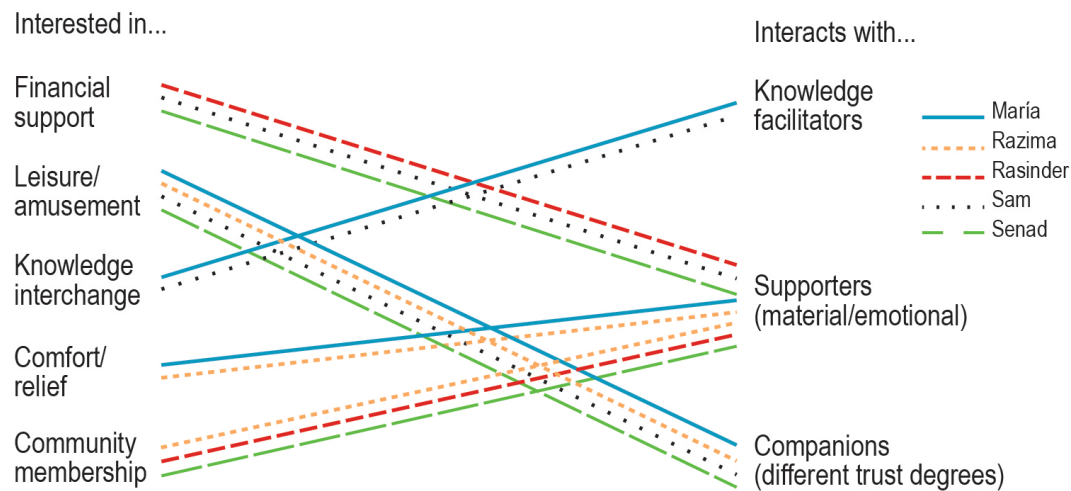


Figure 5. *Actors' definition in Kviberg's market model.* The interviewees interacted with actors, who were defined according to their expectations.

The second type of actors is probably the most visible. It can be supporters at any level or of any kind. For those ones who see the market as an extra income (even if during the interviews they said that it is no possible to earn much) it is necessary to help and receive help in any type of activities related with the work and organization; e.g., Rasinder helps to set up the stall and merchandise even if he does not stay the day and sell. In several cases, the customers also bring economic support but at the same time they are supposed to find cheaper prices than in other places out of the market. There is also emotional supporters: Razima needs to go to the market because she needs more contact with people, when she interacts with some other, she receives help even if this person is not aware of it; she looks for someone who listens but in the conversations she becomes a listener too. Peer support offers another way of describing actors: Senad, Rasinder and Razima have found a community they feel part of, give support to and received it from; this collaboration can be noticed in both daily activities and with a more emotional character.

Companions are observed in different ways, they can be just anybody who the actors talk to for a while, somebody they start to know better after being having dialogs for several days or even potential friendships. During the fieldwork it was observed that Maria does not visit the market so often and her relationships with other actors are more occasional, while Senad has developed enduring relationships after seven years working there. But companionship does not necessarily depend on seniority; it can

also be selective. The actors in the market are able to choose whom to have more contact with, depending on aspects regarding language and culture, like in the case of Rasinder and Razima, or depending on personal interests like in the case of Sam.

The parameters set up to define the actors can also suggest that their relationships are framed in a win-win situation (Engdahl & Larsson, 2006: 93), i.e., where the participants try to get positive results from their actions in a reciprocal character. The actors in Kviberg are also assigned with roles, assigned as a result of a mutual action, where somebody expects something from other but is also expected to act according to the other's expectation. In order to participate in this relationship, it is necessary that the actors are defined in the market, thus the relationships with outsiders can be described in a different way and are more sensitive to controversy in the context; furthermore they were not part of this study.

#### **5.4 The market in society**

After gathering some information about the market from the media, it can be seen that the market is presented to the society in several ways: a flea market, a meeting point and a controversy creator. But after performing conversations with the merchants, it can be observed that the market is able to be interiorized and create meanings.

For some actors (companions), it is like an oasis, a recreational place or distractor from everyday life. For others (knowledge facilitators), it is a hub of information and experiences where different cultures and interest converge. It can also be a refuge, haven or retreat, a safe place where to find somebody to be supported or to support to. For whatever the interest is, the market seem to be interpreted as a safe place by the interviewees and it offers some kind of security that they have not been able to find anywhere else in Gothenburg; Rasinder and Sam claimed that people find varied merchandise with cheap prices, Senad could start his own business and find a group to be part of, Maria and Razima said they have found comforting or emotional relief.

The interviewees' perceptions differ from the media's. While, most of the articles about Kviberg's market in Göteborg's Posten turn around crime and controversy (see figure 1), the interviewees showed themselves more supportive. In deed, two of them were concerned about the association of Kviberg with crime. They also made an association of Kviberg with immigration, what results in a chain of different concepts

that they have tied together: *Kviberg+immigration+crime*. As observed in their statements, they know that this association is stereotyped; nevertheless they did not avoid mentioning it, even when they were not asked about it. The pressure exerted by the context might be the reason to explain this. In Kviberg, the actors have their own perception about the market but they also know that it is their own and that it is not necessarily shared out of it.

Despite the differences found between the news' topics and the actors' perceptions, both merchants and media seem too have something in common. The market has a permissive character. For the newspaper, the market has been permissive to sell fake items, stolen or of a questioned quality, as a metaphor, the figure of a *permissive parent* would help to understand the media's point of view when it comes to interpreting the market as a whole but in relation to the rest of the city. For the merchants, the market has also been permissive but in a different way, allowing them to be them selves, to perform their respective activities without the outsiders' questioning. For them, the market can be represented in the figure of an *advocate* because it protects them from judgment.

All in all, the market is a meeting point where uncountable kinds of relationships may happen every weekend but it is also in the spotlight, where outsiders (media, audiences, politicians, entrepreneurs, etc.) keep an eye on it, probably because of its importance regarding the development of the area and the rest of the city, but also because there is no consensus upon if the market hinders or promotes this development and about how should it be understood.

## **6. Final discussions**

The method and theory used made it possible to identify the roles presented in the analysis but it does not mean that the actors in Kviberg's market are limited to these ones or that they perform just one of them. With some method variants (e.g., a more extended study or a larger corpus) it would have been possible to get more, or different definitions of who they are and how they are categorized. In addition, the roles proposed here are subject to change overtime because the actors can reinvent them selves and be influenced by or adapt to new situations.

Nevertheless, the categorization of the actors offered a way to study their interests and insights. It also served to comprehend how their relationships take place and to understand that they are reciprocal. Under this perspective, interaction in a meeting point or, in this case, a marketplace cannot be explain in terms of actions limited to the trade of assets and services. In a marketplace, actors trade meanings, which are shaped by variables like their goals or expectations, the understanding of the other and the context. As long as they participate in this interchange, they are able to defined who the others are and at the same time, define them selves. The relationships function like mirrors, e.g., knowledge facilitators are expected to teach something but they also want to be taught. A supporter knows that he/she can help with everyday activities but also to be eventually helped, and so on. And for those who expect some kind of company in their leisure activities (companions), it is inevitable to be others accompanists too.

All of these relationships take place in a situation surrounded by controversy; the market was just about to be closed down and is still criticized by outsiders. These critics reinforce associations of the market with crime and immigration; they even contribute to link these two latter concepts. Such points of view are also filtered inside the market because the actors' perceptions are not just their own production; they are also affected by the context.

Even though this research project is about one specific case and is not able to explain the perceptions of all the actors in all the flea markets or marketplaces around Sweden, it contributes to settle the foundations for a new research trend. The previous pages have shown that it has been possible to find a method to interview and analyze a series of actors with different profiles.

And with respect to the role of Kviberg's market in the city, the analogy of permissive parent vs. advocate serves as an illustration to exemplify that even if the market has the particularity of being an scenario to make things happen, it is interpreted differently, depending on the preconceptions and interests upon it. This confrontation questions and at the same time, reinforces the concept of Kviberg's market as a meeting point and as key participator in Gothenburg's development plans.



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## 8. Annexes

### Annex a. Interviewing in Kviberg's market – conversation guide

Structure	Goals	Examples of possible questions
<p>Moment 1, introduction  (Approx. 10 min.)</p>	<p>The interviewer introduces him/her self and the aim of the project, tries to identify who is the person he/she is talking to and accomplishes the spatial and seniority criteria required to continue the conversation.</p> <p>Get info about the person as both individual and trader/worker.</p> <p>Identify him/her as a social actor.</p>	<p>How do you describe your activity in this market? What kind of business do you have, how did you started, when? Which are your expectations of working here?</p> <p>How do you describe other traders/employees in this market in general?</p>
<p>Moment 2, getting deeper  (15-20 min.)</p>	<p>Observe if the respondent has made use of the market as a social meeting point and the connections built with others.</p> <p>Identify the type of relationship the interviewee has built.</p> <p>Get to know how these connections started to happened and evolved in time.</p>	<p>Have you known new people here? Have you made friends or developed closer relationships? How did you come to meet them? Do you keep in touch with them? Which is the best way to meet people in this market?</p>
<p>Moment 3, concluding the interview  (Approx. 10 min.)</p>	<p>Get the interviewee's general impressions. Encourage him/her to be conclusive.</p> <p>Identify attitudes about the market and if it has a meaning in their lives and for the city.</p>	<p>How do you describe your feelings about the market? What is your opinion about it? Do you consider this market as a meeting point? Where else in Gothenburg could people meet like they do here? Is this market necessary for the city, why?</p>

Interviewee's name \_\_\_\_\_

Date & time \_\_\_\_\_

Shop/Stall \_\_\_\_\_

## **Annex b. Story telling. Conversations with actors in Kviberg's market. July 2012.**

**María.** This woman in her '50s, born in Chile and full time employed in the municipality of Gothenburg for about 28 years is found in stall of approx. 3x3 m, where some jackets, jeans, t-shirts and blouses are hanging all over the walls; to separate her space from the walking corridor there is a table with dozens of decoration objects like figures and sculptures, more clothes, handbags and purses. But her walls do not look so stuffed as other stalls around, what makes me wonder if she has difficulties to gather her merchandise? The answer has to do with her periodicity... She says that she does not sell in the market every weekend, she might have done it five times this year (until July 2012); this is her second year doing it.

“-I collect items from all my friends and relatives and when I see that I already have enough stuff is when I decide to come. –But then how can you keep your stall? That is no problem, I just make a reservation through the municipality authorities and come and sit here -And how profitable can it be? –I do not do it for the money because the sales are really bad and there are not real winnings. One comes here and pays 500SEK for the right of selling here, I sell off these items in 10SEK each, look at the sign” (she points out a handmade poster saying: *ALL 10SEK*).

Since her reasons are not economical, she has built her own perspective of the market and has converted it in a symbol of recreation. Her motives to sell in Kviberg are mostly emotional. In a first moment she says that she likes to meet other people with different backgrounds and cultures, she also indicates that besides Swedish, she can speak Italian and English so she makes use of these skills to socialize in the market, but even more significant for her is the fact that she has found people who she can speak her native Spanish with.

To talk about Kviberg is to talk about immigration. María confesses that she feels comfortable speaking Swedish and that when she speaks Spanish she mixes both languages but then she makes a stop, put a hand on her chest and take a deep breath. Her body language exemplifies how to talk about Kviberg turns inevitably emotional and her next statement reveals how she has been able, not only to interiorize the market, but to conceptualize it and give it a meaning... “-Every time I come here I

feel like being abroad. Sometimes Sweden frustrates me and to come here feels like having a break”.

In the market, María says to find what she has not found out of it: “-calor humano” (a Spanish expression meaning human warmth/kindness). María’s statement demonstrates that it is not always easy for immigrants to socialize in the Swedish society and a possible reason for this might be a lack of meeting points.

According to María the market offers her the opportunity to talk with other people and enjoy diversity. The statement of perceiving the market as “her break” suggests that while Kviberg is a meeting point for her, there are not other places where she feels free to socialize, even if, according to her, she has not been able to create deeper relationships over time, probably because she does not frequent it so often. She claims that the market gives her a chance to find her people and diverse cultures “-people need this market because here they find *calor humano*, besides good prices”.

**Razima.** Sometimes, the need of interacting with other people is so urgent that it gives Kviberg’s market a therapeutic use, such is the case for Razima, a woman already retired, born in Bosnia. She has only a folding chair out on the parking lot, and sits surrounded by a box full of used clothes and a hip of old mats and carpets. She describes that she collects used clothes from friends and relatives and that the carpets were donated from her neighbors.

Razima claims that since she is retired, she does not need to come and sell in the market, “-the sales are too bad anyways, I sell very little but it is good for me to come sometimes, it is something I need”. She has already five years selling in Kviberg, not every single weekend but one or two times a month.

Her reasons to sell in the market are mostly social. She likes to meet her friends over there, who she feels comfortable to talk for hours and play jokes with; furthermore, these friends are also their customers. People come and go while she tells them “10 crowns, 10 crowns, 10 crowns” (she sells everything, except the carpets, for this price). Then a woman stops by, “-maybe this sweater for my husband? But I am not sure about the size, does it fit you? He is bigger than you” (talking to Razima). She places it back in the box and go.

After asking Razima how did she start meeting people at the beginning of her visits to the market, she says that most of her friendships are also from Bosnia; therefore it has



been easy to feel part of it. Unlike the previous interviewee, Razima shows a preference to hang mostly with people who share her mother language and traditions. María also wanted to meet people with different backgrounds. But the similarity found here is that they both use the market to meet others, even if they do not “need” to sell anything, then it is possible to appreciate how this market serves as an example of interaction in two ways: facilitating encounters within specific groups and facilitating encounters for different participants.

In the market, the sellers are not just workers; they have developed certain degrees of solidarity and confidence with the ones around them selves. For instance, a woman from a stall nearby approaches with a three-legged joint stool... “-He says that he has back pain, would you like to change the chair? What do you think about this one? It’s more stable, it’s better for you”. Razima does not look so very interested but answers: “-just take mine and give me that one in the mean time, I will look for another one later”.

Razima continues explaining that she lives alone and is not visited frequently, she does not have children, just siblings and nephews, “-they are too busy with their own stuff, they work all the time and I do not manage to see them often and since I am retired, I do not have many opportunities to talk to people. I have volunteered for the Red Cross, then for the foundation *Döva föreningen*<sup>2</sup> but there was a problem with the management and the section I volunteer for does not exist anymore. -Was it then when you come here? –Yes, I needed it. I felt lonely and took many medications to feel better; I was so much stressed! Coming here relieves me; it helps me reduce my drug dosage and meet other people”.

When talking about the importance of the market for the city, Razima points out the need of creating more meeting places like Kviberg but at the same time, is not able to separate the market from the topic of immigration. She claims that since many immigrants work and consume in this market, it tends to be discriminated and misunderstood. Then she takes the conversation to a different level and introduces the topic of crime, claiming that there are stereotypes against foreigners, being perceived as criminals; in her opinion, these perceptions must not be generalized but there has

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<sup>2</sup> The interviewee refers to Sveriges Dövas Riskförbund (Swedish Deaf Association).

also been a worrying tolerance by the authorities, which, she says are too flexible... “-It is true that some immigrants commit crimes and I get very sad about this, but on the other hand, the controls are not enough. I, for example, do not dare to walk out home when it gets dark. In this market, controls are also necessary, if there has been bad comments about this place it is because a lack of efficiency by the public authorities”.

The next interviewee also brings up these same topics, especially when it comes to similar generalized perceptions.

**Rasinder.** In order to sell clothes at one of the parking lots, this man in his ‘40s, originally from India, has installed a tend on a 3x6 m (approx.) surface and organized a series of displayers, counters and hangers to exhibit his merchandise. He seems to be in the usual rush of a busy day but accepts to be interviewed while our conversation takes place in the middle of customers who show up asking for prices.

He started his own business in the market with help from friends, who already had been working in the market too. He comes to sell there quite often, though not every weekend: “-It is difficult to come and stay here all the weekends, sometimes the weather is too bad or I am busy with the children, but I always help to mount the tend and exhibit the merchandise; anyways, after more than one year doing this I have been able to feel part of a community, we are a group of 12 friends from India and Pakistan, farther, most of the clothes sellers are from these countries”. But despite he feels integrated in a group; he has not been able to meet more people in a deeper way. “-Most of them passes by because they know that there are cheaper clothes than in the city center and it is hard to deal with the time while helping all the costumers, but at the same time, all this movement makes the market a meeting place”.

The interviewee continues serving a mother and her daughter who come to take a blouse back and explains that people do this very often because many times they just check the price and maybe buy garments of wrong sizes. He makes a special emphasis on the prices as a hook to attract people, but in this moment he complains that these people are only of a certain kind, thereupon, he remembers their struggle against the market’s foreclosure... “Check on the price tags, everything is cheap and people know that. It is important for the city to have a place where people can get the products they look for at an affordable cost, but on the other side, it is only immigrants who come

here”. –Why is that so? –Well, because of the prices and the location but also... you know... this market has got a bad reputation because a long time ago they discovered some people selling fake items; the truth is that it was an isolated case. There are almost 300 workers who honestly pay their expenses and taxes. If they would have closed the market, they just had 300 more families living out of the social office”.

Rasinder also explains that at the same time there have been groups organizing meetings in order to defend their place in the market and avoid any attempt to close it down. He finishes his statements saying that the market is a meeting point for many people and therefore, it must be kept and bolded, its existence has been positive for both workers and visitors and it has become a must-have for the city.

**Sam.** Like Rasinder, Sam also sells clothes but he focuses on sports themes. When approaching to his stall located in the first pavilion, it is possible to see clothes hanging all around, including some t-shirts and jackets of different international sport clubs like Manchester, Chelsea, Inter, Real Madrid, etc. In the middle of this space there is a table with shoes of all kinds. He seems to be very busy with costumers, to the point that the interview is set up at the end of his working day. Born in Iran and already at the age of 36 (at the publication date), he is a full time gymnasium student with plans to make it into the university; the market is an extra activity for him but he attends there every weekend.

“-How did I start? Well, it was like this: I had a friend who worked here and one day I came to helped him, suddenly I found my self selling, that was one year ago. –And after all this time, how much do you enjoy working here? -I am happy, well, I might not sell too much but I meet many people, every kind of people here. I feel that it is positive for me to have them around. -But how do you manage to meet all these people? Just by selling shoes to them? –Well, I just start talking to them and suddenly we find our selves in the middle of a discussion, especially if it is about football! Yes, football, because they see that I hang sport clothes here (he points out at some t-shirts and jackets) and this makes it easier to start conversations”.

Sam says that it is very easy to start talking with his costumers, even though few of them have turn into closer friends. “-Oh that’s a bit difficult here because I am very

busy with many people making questions all the time. And despite they come often, they just come here because they know that it is cheap, it is so cheap that they come frequently but then move fast to other stall because all over the market there is much to see... -For example, how much is that pair of shoes over there? (I point at some *All Star* sneakers) -It's 200! -And that jacket, how much does it cost? -Just 300". Then he turns to a woman in her 20s holding a pair of leader high heel shoes: "-it is 250 crowns. -Do you have number 44? -which number? -44 -No, I'm sorry".

He continuously claiming that all the visitors in this market know that they will find something cheap. Some times they are the same individuals, some times they are other ones, it varies. He also has costumers who come every single week, if they know they want something, as he points out, they go to town first and see how expensive it is, then they come back and try to find a similar item but cheaper, they prefer him because he sells prestigious labels items.

He thinks that the prices are one of the reasons why the market is important for Gothenburg: -"people come and compare prices between here and the shops in the city center, it is only in case I don't have what they need, they might go to town again, but first they try as much as possible to find it here". I try to find out more of his perceptions about the market, so I introduce a controversial memory: "-did you realize that this market was supposed to close down last year? -Yes, it is very good that it stays because, look at all these people..! They can have some job here, be busy with something, get entertained, there are also old people who like to come and sit around to occupy them selves with something".

Sam is an example of why the market is meaningful for people. As a student, the market allows him to make some extra money and improve his quality of life but also to have contact with others and share his hobbies.

**Senad.** The first parking lot has an area occupied by a caravan and clothes retailers around, many people walk around since the caravan is a snack bar, next to it there is a 3x3 m area functioning as a shoe store attended by three men, one of them is Senad, who is still in his '20s and has already worked seven years selling shoes in Kviberg, he was born in Kosovo but come to Sweden when he was only 2.

Unlike Sam, Senad was not introduced by a contact to come into the market; this was his own initiative. And unlike other interviewees he was not initially motivated by emotional reasons but for a business idea...

“-So you ask me how did I start? It was the power of attraction. –The power of attraction? –Yes, one comes here and walks around and sees that people may have something missing, then one is likely to start with something people need, something they want and I have got to the conclusion that it was a good idea to give it a try selling socks and shoes. -And how is it going with this shop? It goes well even sales are not so high, but there is another motivation: one can meet other people here; it is just a matter of sticking around and hanging with my friends. –Have you made friends here? Yes, many, do you see all of them who stand and sell over there? (He points at his coworker and other merchants from the stalls around), most of them are my friends. –But how did it happen, how have they become your friends? -Exactly like you and me! Doing what we are doing now, it is just to start talking. At the beginning we say hello and chat about our products, jobs and things like that. After some time we find our selves talking about more personal themes and even meeting out of the market as well”.

Senad continuously saying that he dedicates to the market eight hours per day, 16 per weekend, and that every working day gives him the chance to interact with approximately 1000 persons between friends, colleagues and costumers.

Nevertheless, Senad makes it clear that he has a different job in a boutique during weekdays, which makes me ask him why does he sell in the market: “-So this is an extra job? –I do not see it like that. I come here because I do not want to sit home alone and waste my time; I come here to entertain my self”.

Senad’s example differ in the way that his initial motivation was commercial but then it turned to be emotional. He recognizes that the most important reason to have a market like Kviberg in Gothenburg is its attraction force, for him, it is capable to attract people of any kind and backgrounds. He even gives suggestions of improvement, saying that it should be renovated and build like a “real market, with a roof, so it becomes easier to exhibit and sell”.