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WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN ST. LOUIS

Division of Arts & Sciences
Anthropology

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Consuming Local, Thinking Global: Building a Halal Industry in a World of Made in Italy
by
Lauren Crossland-Marr

A dissertation presented to
The Graduate School
of Washington University in
partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy

May 2020
St. Louis, Missouri

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Lauren Crossland-Marr

Washington University in St. Louis

May 2020

Dedicated to Aaron Crossland.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Consuming Local, Thinking Global: Building a Halal Industry in a World of Made in Italy

for The Department of Anthropology

by

Lauren Crossland-Marr

Doctor of Philosophy in Arts & Sciences

Cultural Anthropology

Washington University in St. Louis, 2020

Professor John Bowen, Chair

Consumers today seek guidance on how to decipher where their food comes from. As a result of this demand, food certifications have materialized in stores across the globe. Walking through one's local grocery store, one is bombarded with certifications that range from "made in" to organic to kosher. Research on forms of food certifications have emphasized the process of making these certifications legible to consumers in markets abroad, overlooking the impact of local concerns in building certifications. This study aims to determine the impact of local cultural foodways on certification schemes meant for global markets. Building on existing work in the anthropology of foodways it asks: how do certifiers, through their daily work, create a project that combines local commitments with the global circulation of foods?

This ethnographic study concerns the cultural formations that result from daily work life. The research is based on fieldwork in Milan, Italy, where there is a nascent halal certification industry, which is greatly influenced by the made in Italy certification milieu. Participant-observation in two food certifications: Halal Italia and Food Italy, reveal that forms of

institutional oversight of food production systems are the result of a particular knowledge, which is erased in the label itself, yet it is a fundamental part of the process. It is in this tension between a food material as packageable and culturally particular that certifiers not only implement a suite of tools, or devices, but they also create systems that are capable of being checked.

Chapter 1: The Italian World of Certifying

1.1 Introduction

During a halal training I attended in 2018, the Lead Auditor, Dr. Mohammed,¹ began answering a question from the audience about the process of aging Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese (parmesan) and how this might affect halal certification. The audience was comprised of 9 non-Muslim Italian company representatives interested in obtaining halal certification in order to more easily send their products to Muslim majority countries. In response to the audience question, Dr. Mohammed said that it “takes 12 months for grana padano to...” I couldn’t hear the rest of his response because the room erupted as everyone in attendance huffed. I leaned over to ask one of the company representatives why everyone was so upset. She replied as if it were obvious: we were talking about parmigiano-reggiano *not* grana padano. While I was gleaning more information from my neighbor, Dr. Mohammed corrected himself. The two cheeses at issue are both hard, aged, cow’s milk cheeses that come from the north of Italy. Although the training was meant to educate producers about halal, the reaction to Dr. Mohammed’s mistake also illustrates a particular demand prevalent in Italy: experts should know their cheese, even while training non-Muslims on halal procedure.

The ethnographic vignette shows that local values are doing something in the process of certifying foods for an audience abroad. How can we understand the ways in which ideas about global processes influence local values and empirical practice? I attempt to explore this question through the comparison of two institutions dealing with overseeing foodways in Milan, Italy. I

¹ All personal names are pseudonyms; while the names of the companies are true.

compare a made in Italy food certification label called Food Italy with a halal certification called Halal Italia. In 2015, I began working and conducting ethnographic field research on the aforementioned food certifications in Milan. In 2017, I returned for a full year of research, collecting the data that comprise this dissertation. During this time, I attended trainings, talks, audits, and religious events. I also carried out semi-structured interviews, and I held a focus group with young Muslim-Italian consumers. In addition to collecting data through these discussions, I spent 10 months as an unpaid intern in Halal Italia and Food Italy.

As a native English speaker with experience translating Italian language materials, I gained fairly uninhibited access to each institution's daily workings. At the same time, I conducted interviews and spent time with others involved in both sectors. In the case of the Italian halal realm, I conducted a focus group with young Italian Muslim consumers at the University of Milan to further understand how they conceptualize halal and their access to halal products. I was told by many halal certifiers that there are almost no products that have halal certification available for purchase within Italy, and this was something I wanted to, and did, confirm with consumers.

Two of the students who participated in the focus group had ties to another halal food certification: World Halal Authority (WHA), which is also Halal Italia's main competitor. Based on my connection with the students, I was able gain access to a training for Italian producers run by WHA. I also had the opportunity to perform a group interview with WHA staff.

My methods for the made in Italy sector were much more informal, though I attempted many times to interview others running similar organizations to Food Italy including a certification called 100% Made in Italy, which was also based in Milan. After I tried many times to get in touch with them, I went to their offices but found their headquarters to be closed. I also reached

out to and stopped by Amazon Italy's office, also based in Milan, because they were launching a "Made in Italy" portal. Despite my many attempts, I was unable to reach anyone for an interview. I did, however, have better luck reaching out to government officials who worked on promoting and overseeing the made in Italy sector. I was able to interview representatives from the Italian Trade Agency which is an arm of the Italian Ministry of Economic Development. Their work is to promote made in Italy products across the globe. I was also able to interview a quality manager at Accredia, which is the accreditation body set up by the Italian government. At the time, Accredia was interested in more regulation of both the made in Italy and the halal sector in Italy. I also often spoke informally with friends and coworkers about my project.

I worked approximately 40 hours a week in Food Italy and Halal Italia, which translated to about two to three days a week at each site. My hours increased if there was a need, such as a deadline, an event, or an important meeting. In addition to translation, I also helped with marketing campaigns and office organization. Despite my urging that I was a researcher, my free labor became an issue for the Halal Italia group. I refused compensation from Halal Italia on many occasions. When I finally felt they had received the message, the community gave me a wallet for Christmas. To my surprise and dismay, when I took the wallet home, I found the community had snuck in a few hundred euros as payment for my time working in their offices. They felt that engaging a professional translator would have cost much more. This was a difficult moment for me. I tried very hard to refuse the gift because, as I explained many times, I was a researcher. Yet, the community felt differently, and I ended up accepting the gift so as not to offend them by refusing the gesture. In contrast, Food Italy never attempted to pay me. Through this experience, I learned that even though both institutions work in the same milieu there are important

differences. As a contributor like the rest of the community working in Halal Italia, I was entitled to monetary compensation. This did not apply the same way to working in Food Italy.

Through my entanglement in daily work life, I found that the established culture of made in Italy products was a powerful force in shaping the Italian halal industry today. The cases explored in this dissertation lead us to understandings about how particular contexts can shape universal value schemes. During my time at Food Italy and Halal Italia, I quickly found that they followed similar certification procedures, even though their values differed; Food Italy deals in place-making rhetoric while Halal Italia promotes Islamic values. Yet, institutionally, they are organized the same way: both entities work on a 3-year timeline, at which point certifications can expire, and they both implement annual audits. I provide more background on the two comparative cases in the next section.

1.2 How Food Italy and Halal Italia work

It is important to understand how Food Italy and Halal Italia are structured to highlight the day-to-day elements of each business. I begin first with Food Italy. Founded in 2015, Food Italy certifies food producers for 3 years, with annual audits. During my study, Food Italy included one full-time employee (my direct supervisor), the owner of all the businesses, and me, the intern. I was also aware of three auditors who worked on a part-time basis for Food Italy. Food Italy's umbrella company is called KHC Group, and it primarily deals in certifying products and professionals. The largest entity within the group is called KHC (Know-How certification) which certifies professionals in 22 different areas including anti-bribery/corruption auditors, quality

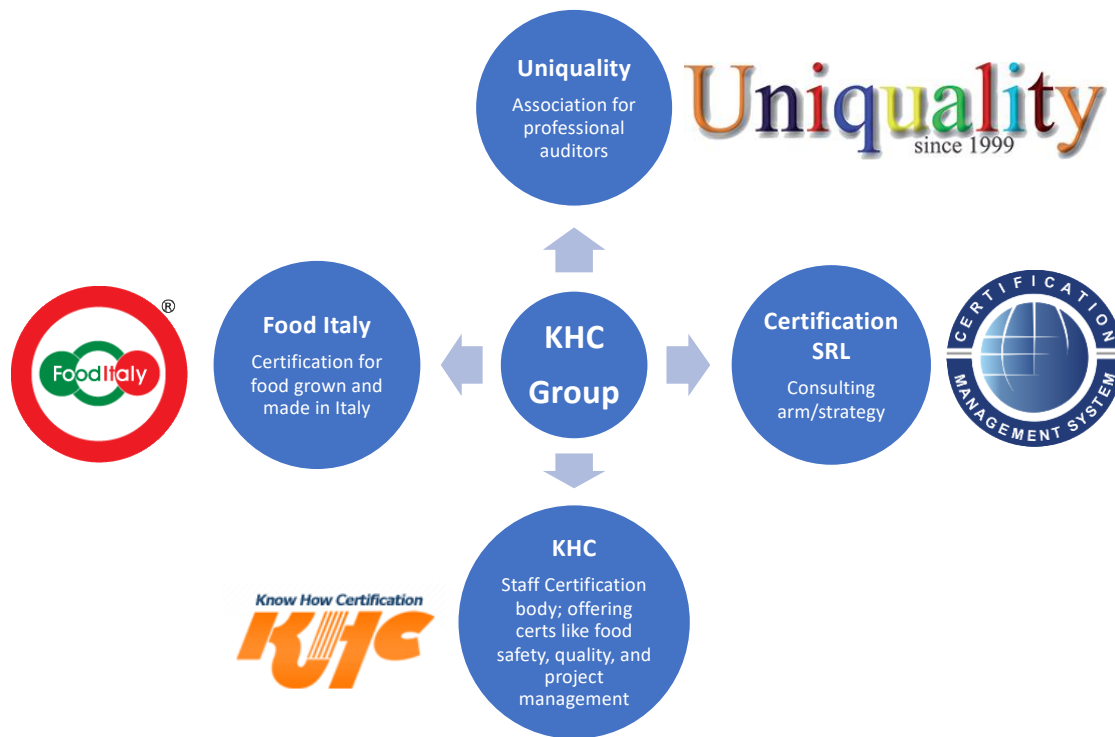


Figure 1.1 KHC Group Organizational Chart. Created by author.

auditors, and food safety auditors. Auditors can be internal or external to the production process and are responsible for documenting production in terms of customers' requirements and satisfaction. They may simply ensure processes are in place so, for example, their company fills enough vats to send the correct amount of ice cream to buyers who sell to consumers.

KHC group also manages the professional association of auditors called "Uniquality." Uniquality is a non-profit organization that represents and protects professionals in the auditing industry. Lastly, KHC group also runs Certification SRL, which is essentially a consulting group to help businesses run their processes more smoothly. On the organizational charts, these entities are distinct; however, this is not the case in practice. In fact, while many colleagues working in the company's other businesses would complain that Food Italy was not their job, they frequently pitched in to help with marketing, brochure designs, and internet campaigns.

At the time of my internship, Food Italy certified about 257 products made by 23 producers with the majority of producers (90%) operating from the southern part of the country. Food Italy certifies small producers (10 employees or less). They primarily certify alcoholic beverages including wine and beer, as well as jams, pasta, rice, flour, and olive oils. About halfway through the research period, Food Italy also began certifying restaurants.

The overall certification process for Food Italy begins with a document phase in which a producer fills out a questionnaire that gives information about company contacts, the product/s intended to be certified, a list of other certifications in possession, and confirmation that the company is registered with the Chamber of Commerce. Following the initial document phase, Food Italy staff perform a walkthrough audit. The audit begins with a meeting with management to explain what Food Italy plans to do. The audit is performed where manufacturing takes place to ensure that the Food Italy regulations are followed.

Food Italy has three rules all producers must follow to qualify for certification. The three rules are that producers cannot use genetically modified organisms (GMOs), all raw materials are grown in Italy, and all production takes place in Italy. However, these rules can be relaxed depending on the industry, especially the rule that all raw materials must be grown in Italy. For example, Food Italy certifies chocolate makers in Sicily who use cocoa beans grown outside of Italy because as I was told, there is a long history of making chocolate in Sicily.

After the audit, the auditor prepares a report. The report specifies: non-conformities, observations, and comments. The non-compliance elements are included with recommendations to fix the issue. A supplemental audit may be required if there is a major non-compliance issue.

An example of a major non-compliance issue for Food Italy might be that a producer of tomato sauce sources its tomatoes from Turkey.

Following the audit report, the Certification Committee of Food Italy deliberates and decides whether to grant certification. Typically, if there are no major issues, a certification is granted. The duration of the certification is 3 years with an annual audit. The cost of the audit varies depending on how many employees the company has and how many products the company wishes to certify.

Like Food Italy, Halal Italia is one arm of a parent association. Founded in 2009, Halal Italia is part of a number of entities run by the Italian Islamic community, Coreis. Coreis manages two religious circles (IHEI and ISA) in addition to the community's two businesses: a marketing firm called Genesi Communications and Halal Italia. The marketing firm includes a graphic designer and two account managers, who are also members of the Muslim community. There is also a part-time programmer, who is not a part of the community. During the course of my fieldwork, I was asked to help with the marketing firm in addition to my work at Halal Italia. Data collected from Genesi Communications helped me to understand the larger world in which Halal Italia operates. This is relevant in the structural elements of working in the businesses, which I explore more fully later. At a very broad level, halal refers to an Islamic dietary standard that excludes pork, blood, and alcohol.

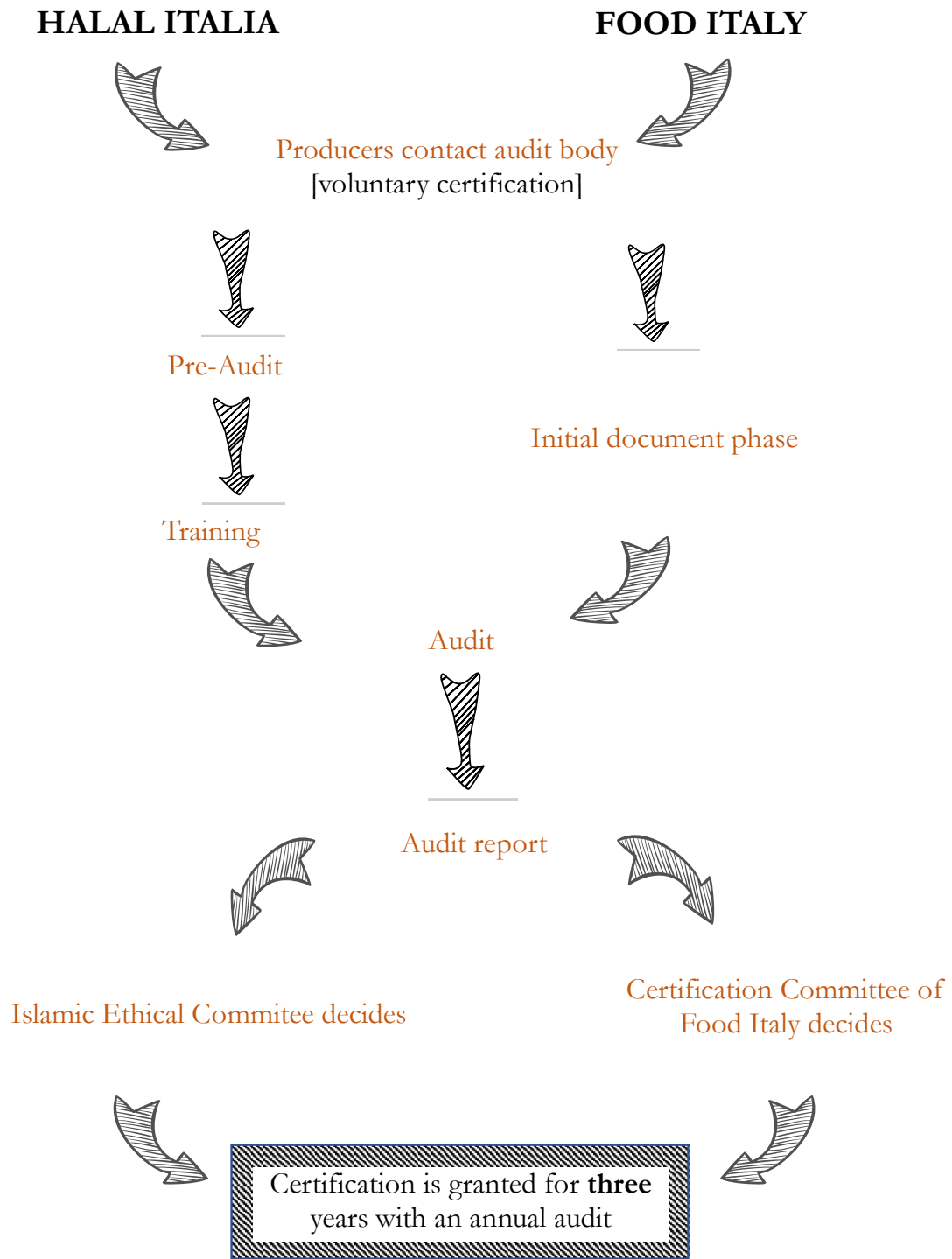


Figure 1.2 KHC Group Organizational Chart. Created by author.

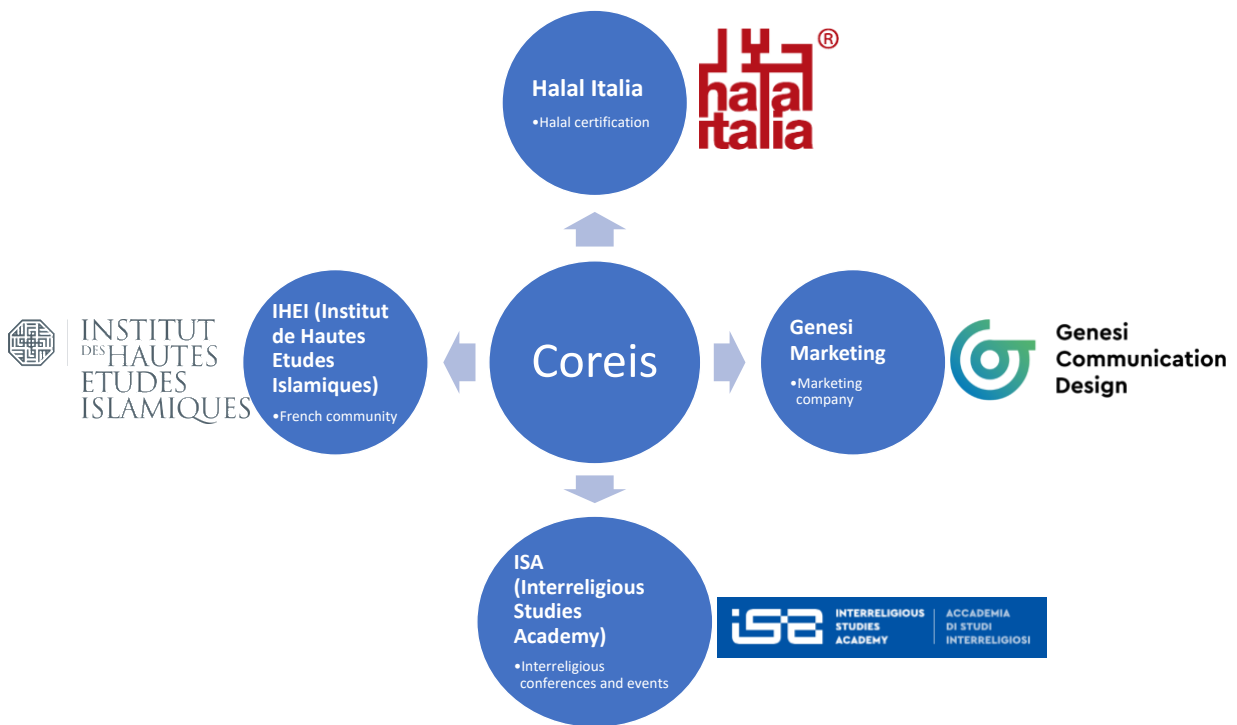


Figure 1.3 Coreis Organizational Chart. Created by author.

Ideas about what is halal are very much embedded in an Italian context. Briefly, the development of halal in Italy was spearheaded by a well-connected group of Sufi converts through their association, Coreis, in the last decade. Coreis started Halal Italia at the urging of the Italian Ministry of the Interior. In 2009, the Ministry felt it was important to create an avenue to export made in Italy products to Muslim-majority countries. They created a pilot project providing advice and funding for the community of converts to start Halal Italia. The development of halal in this context is inseparable from the made in Italy domain. Halal Italia, though a small, religious community, remains one of the most important players of halal in Europe.

By the time of my study in 2018, Halal Italia certified approximately 150 products across a number of sectors including baked goods, flavorings and food ingredients, coffee products, ice creams, and meat products. This parallels a recent article that showed that in 2019 the most

popular Italian exports to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) were Italian baked goods and dairy products (“Gulfood: Why Made in Italy Matters” 2020). What is important to highlight is that the products exported to markets abroad are very much a result of local foodways. For example, Italy is well-known as a producer of coffee and gelato (or ice cream) and so it is little surprise that the halal industry would also certify products in these sectors.

The process for the Halal Italia certification mirrors Food Italy’s process, as illustrated in Figure 1.3. Halal Italia first receives a document that catalogs every ingredient and its source used in the manufacturing plant. This can be a long list for a producer of highly processed foods such as pastries, or relatively short for, say, a chicken slaughterhouse. All the ingredients are then checked against Halal Italia’s list of illicit substances. An example of illicit substance may include red dye 40, which is made of beetle shells as halal rules proscribe Muslims from consuming insects. It is important to note that the list includes substances that may not be used in the product itself. However, halal certifiers are also aware of possible contamination issues. Contamination can happen if substances come into contact with illicit foods such as pork, during, say, transport.

Once all the substances have been verified by the document team, Halal Italia creates an audit preparation document which has three sections: halal (which checks that raw materials sourced are also halal-certified), reliability/trust (which shows that proper systems are in place), and documentation (which provides documented evidence of the first two sections). This document is circulated internally to help auditors know what to look for during the walkthrough audit. The walkthrough audit is then performed, and shortly after, an audit report is prepared. The report, which I will expand on in Chapter 2, includes elements that are not compliant, which can be

minor or major. The report also specifies recommendations to address the halal quality system—a point I will discuss further in Chapter 2. Following the report, the Ethical Committee makes the decision on whether to certify. If the certification is granted, it lasts three years with an annual audit. After three years, the whole process is repeated. Now that we know the organization of each entity, I turn to how Food Italy and Halal Italia are embedded in Italian, cultural foodways.

1.3 Global Legibility and the Particularity of Knowledge

During a simple stroll through the grocery store we, as consumers, are met with many labels on packaging present in the stores we frequent. Forms of labeling are meant to increase transparency about where a food comes from. As such, labels are meant to help the consumer make informed choices about what they consume. However, despite a desire to buy the “right” foods, many consumers remain confused by labels like “free-trade” and “non-GMO Project” that they encounter in grocery stores (Grunert, Hieke, and Wills 2014). Labels have fundamentally changed how consumers understand their position in foodways; however, I argue, more must be done to explore certification entities themselves.

I am interested in how people negotiate a fundamental tension between the global legibility of labels and the particularities of knowledge in the certifying process. The price and convenience of food labels has propelled an industry forward. At the same time, it is well documented by anthropologists and sociologists alike, that food is embedded in cultural systems (Anderson 2005; Neresini and Rettore 2008; Montanari 2002; Counihan and Esterik 2012). Throughout this dissertation, I show that the forms of institutional oversight of food production systems are the result of a particular knowledge, which is erased in the label itself, yet, is a fundamental part of the process. It is in this tension between a food material as packageable and as particular that I



Figure 1.4 Placemat from a local kebab restaurant in Milan. The mat reads “The true taste of Kebab, the freshness of made in Italy.” Photo taken by author.

show how certifiers not only implement a suite of tools, or devices, but they also create systems that are capable of being checked.

The case of certifiers in Italy captures broader concerns about the meaning of material objects as they circulate in different places and to diverse audiences. I extend the work on religious certifications to make the case that labels such as halal are not simply detached and made legible to consumers across the globe but are very much influenced by the world of foodways in which they are produced. Drawing on economic sociology, I am interested in the ways in which certifiers both order their world and create a frame that can be ordered through their work (Boltanski and Thevenot 2006). Put simply, through material and social aspects of the labeling industry, certifiers fashion a framework while also checking it. In order to produce new frames successfully, one must also have a particular knowledge about products circulating in work life. Dr. Mohammed, for example, momentarily failed in this endeavor when he confused one cheese for another.

At the turn of the 21st century, many anthropologists such as Theodore Bestor (2004) and James Watson (2006) agreed that the circulation of different foods outside of a given context morphed

that food into something new. In James Watson's classic *Golden Arches East* (2006), he argues that McDonald's is no longer foreign to consumers in Asia, but instead has morphed to accommodate tastes in countries with franchises. Watson's study countered previous attempts to understand globalization as an influencer that would undermine the local and the nation-state, believing that the nation would eventually diminish in importance due to increased global connections (see Kearney 1995; Sassen 2001; Appadurai 1996). Following on Watson's insight, I argue that certifying an object is an avenue by which certifiers apply certain values of "good" and "consumable" food. The varying values that emerge also constitute something new.

The circulation of objects does not happen in a vacuum, but rather speaks to particular cultural values. Anthropologist Daniel Miller (2009) shows that Londoners deal with change through their attachment to objects. He argues that objects are social because the material 'thing' connects us to others and, therefore, are inseparable from our social relationships. Other scholars, such as Nicky Gregson (2011) and Sam Gosling (2009), similarly show that things are crucial to our sense of being. The turn to material culture studies² in anthropology focused on how we consume and live with and through material things.

However, in a consumerist, capitalist market, things are also considered valuable based on their economic worth. Yet, worth is subjective and, as such, there is no true, natural worth of a thing (Stark 2011). What I want to emphasize is that for almost 20 years anthropologists have shown that objects are not detached from the people that own, produce, and, in my case, certify them. This is an important point because current anthropological studies rarely compare religious

² Material culture studies differs greatly from Marvin Harris' cultural materialism which based on Marx, sought to analyze cultures on three levels: infrastructure, superstructure and structure. According to Harris, material realities (infrastructure) shape superstructure (religious/symbolic life) and structure (kinship).

certifications with non-religious ones, even though the objects produced from both processes are embedded in local values. My aim is to speak back to social scientists who have argued that certifications flatten the certification world, making all products more or less consumable for consumers across the globe with little ethnographic regard of the local context in building certifications (Shirazi 2016; Lever and Fischer 2018; Bergeaud-Blackler 2017; Lever and Miele 2012).

Authors such as Florence Bergeaud-Blackler have importantly looked at the historical and social making of a global halal consumer. She argues that halal certification is an “invented tradition,” tracing the beginnings of a halal industry to the early 1980s. Drawing on Eric Hobsbawm’s invented tradition, she states that the “Muslim consumer” was invented through a combination of capitalist neoliberalism and Islamic neo-fundamentalism (Bergeaud-Blackler 2017). However, I am less interested in whether certifications—be they halal or made in Italy—are invented and more interested in what they do and how they shape and are shaped by a local food culture. In this way, I answer the call for “a need for further scholarship on the ways in which audits and inspections are understood and practised in locally specific contexts” (Bergeaud-Blackler, Fischer, and Lever 2015:9). In my study I pay close attention to the generative powers of capitalist exchange (Bear et al. 2015). Put simply, my study looks at how this form of global exchange also produces practices, sentiments, positionalities, and sociality that are embedded in a local food culture.

My work also follows on the development of an anthropology of food that engages with how commodities shape and are shaped by global markets, eschewing a unidirectional approach to globalization. Theodor Bestor, for example, shows how the Japanese fish market is embedded in

Japanese cultural values while simultaneously shaping global markets (Bestor 2004). Despite the importance of local context, many social scientists have studied modern society in terms of the spread of larger structures that devalue traditions and beliefs (see for example Cowen 2002). Max Weber was the first to seriously consider this through his concept of rationalization (Weber [1920] 1993). To Weber, economic globalization would eventually overtake religious faith. Following on Weber, many sociologists posited that as the influence of religion diminished, it would be another marketed commodity. Religious leaders would have to persuade consumers to buy into a religion (Berger 1999). While we have seen an increase in religious commodification—for example through the institutionalization of halal globally—it is difficult to assert that religions are detached forms of market structure. As I show in this dissertation, halal certification in Italy, though circulated outside of Italy, results from local beliefs and values about what constitutes “good” food.

In recent years, some anthropologists have located their studies in a different global phenomenon: neoliberalism, defined as a policy and economic model that moves social services from the public to the private sector. Anthropologists have, importantly, focused on the many local effects of neoliberal policies. For example, Andrea Muehlebach shows that in the wake of neoliberal reform in the northern region of Lombardy, volunteerism is an important value that organizes people to fill in where the state has retreated (Muehlebach 2012). Critics of neoliberalism argue that local categories become enveloped by the term “neoliberalism,” and therefore, the term cannot provide empirical insight (Gershon 2011; Nonini 2008; Ganti 2014). I agree with this critique in the case of food certifications in Italy. As I will continue to show, knowledge is particular, and although certifiers engage with other markets abroad, they are not

enveloped in practice nor in ideology, by them. Frameworks such as globalization and neoliberalism grapple with the spread of economic and policy models and how these affect local cultural norms. Instead, I show that the interaction between the two produces a framework capable of being checked. It is not that one influences the other, but that through the interaction, a certain symbolic order takes shape. My aim, then, is to focus on how larger global process are reframed as local concerns.

I expected that Food Italy and Halal Italia would diverge in what their projects were meant to accomplish. For Food Italy, workers valued a transparent relation between production and place because place is conceptualized as influencing the flavors of the foods they certify (also known as *terroir*). I expected this to be the opposite for halal certifications—the point of halal was to diminish place. However, this was not what I uncovered. For both certifications, local Italian foodways inflected the ways both businesses ran. As anthropologist Shadia Hussein de Araújo argues, halal meat production is created through the interconnectedness of sites—of production, of certification—and not only globally (Hussein de Araújo 2019). I follow on this claim, seeking instead to think about how the interaction between the global circulation of goods and the particularity of knowledge produce a frame that has value outside of Italy.

It quickly became clear to me that if I was going to investigate halal certifications, I needed to know something about the larger context of certifications in Italy because made in Italy labels are everywhere. Entering a grocery store, parmesan has a protected designation of origin, *salume* is made of Italian meat, olive oil is 100% made in Italy. The colors of the Italian flag are splashed across signs, stickers, and special offers. But it was not only my own experience in public places that pushed me to consider a comparison. My interlocutors who worked at the

Halal Italia also connected values of quality and made in Italy with halal. When speaking with my Halal Italia colleagues about the halal market in Italy they expressed their frustrations that halal is not considered the same caliber as made in Italy food products even though they are also produced in Italy.

In my first week interning with Halal Italia, I was discussing the halal market in Italy with a colleague who told me that there is not an internal, Italian halal market. This was surprising, as Muslims make up a sizable minority in Italy. There are about 2.8 million Muslims in Italy, which makes up about 4.8% of the Italian population according to a Pew Research Study (Hackett 2017). When I asked a colleague why she thought there wasn't an internal market, she said:

“there aren't any halal producers. Halal is seen as their stuff or ethnic products and not associated with quality like Made in Italy. When in fact it is healthier than bio or any other label associated with quality. It should cost more but instead it is often sold in ugly packaging.” (“WHA - World Halal Authority” n.d.)

Halal certifiers placed halal within a larger certification landscape at other times, too. They often spoke about Italian halal as certifying the best of made in Italy products. World Halal Authority (WHA), Halal Italia's main competitor, references “made in Italy” on their website:

“Our objectives are varied, including... to ensure that ‘made in Italy’ products reach consumer markets all over the world, keeping all the qualities that characterize ‘Made in Italy’ and, at the same time, conform to the Islamic rules that Muslim believers are required to observe.”

Even though the connection to made in Italy food was clear to my coworkers, I was surprised to find little empirical research on halal certification that grappled with cultural attitudes of and embeddness in the local food system. This is not to say that many active in the halal industry outside of Italy have never before noticed parallels between it and other non-religious third-party certifications. Maryam Attar et al. write, “halal food should be produced—much like organic

food—in ways that are good for human, animal, and environmental health” (Attar, Lohi, and Lever 2015: 56). Florence Bergeaud-Blackler et al. (2015) have argued that from a technical point of view, the standardization of halal is similar to that of organic foods. The two diverge, however, because organic foods are enforced by international agreements and governmental departments (Bergeaud-Blackler, Fischer, and Lever 2015: 122). Despite this acknowledgement in the literature, we have surprisingly little knowledge about how secular and religious certifications compare in the same context. Without a substantial ethnographic comparison, questions about how halal operates in specific contexts remains unclear. By thinking through how the local context inflects halal certification, I theorize that global foodways are not merely detached from production but also create a new frame through this interaction.

I chose to focus on the made in Italy sector instead of organic certification (known as *bio* in Italy) because the made in Italy sector is left fairly unregulated by government oversight, which is similar to halal. In an interview with the Italian governmental accreditation agency (similar to the FDA), Accredia, I was told they have no direct control over the use of the made in Italy and halal designations, though attempts to regulate both sectors are in process. Politically, there have been attempts to regulate the made in Italy sector. In 2003, 2009, and 2010, Italian legislators attempted to outline the parameters of made in Italy.³ Despite legislative efforts, the sector has been left relatively unchecked, and the enforcement of the fraudulent use of made in Italy remains rare.

³ For the purposes of this dissertation, made in Italy refers to the sector that includes a number of privately-run certifications such as 100% Made in Italy and Food Italy. All of these certifications claim to guarantee that artisanal products are Italian-made to varying degrees.

The made in Italy sector has been left unregulated for two main reasons. First, large producers like Bertolli source raw materials from outside of Italy. The lobbying arm of these large manufacturers oppose regulation, which might make them buy higher priced items from within Italy, like tomatoes, for example. Second, small producers often use the flag or the phrase “Made in Italy” informally. That is, producers, especially small ones, do not always go through certification schemes to claim their products are made in Italy because going through a certification scheme can be expensive. Another reason I chose to focus on the made in Italy sector is that Italian halal certifiers were often invoking the value-add of made in Italy in their marketing campaigns and discussions with non-Muslim Italian producers. I quickly learned that the halal industry in Italy was shaped by the value of made in Italy food products.

I argue that a major form of work for Food Italy and Halal Italia is to build a framework that can be checked in order to deem a product halal or made in Italy. Following on Elizabeth Krause (2018) I take seriously that “[q]uests for money undergird globalization... People bring different experiences to that quest and from that new histories emerge” (93). Through their daily work, the certifier creates a framework that is capable of being surveilled. But it is not just creating a system that is capable of being checked, I show that their work in both sectors also legitimizes their positions and projects. Throughout this dissertation, I am interested in the ways in which people both engage in the world and build discourse about the world.

1.4 Dissertation Structure

To further untangle how frames are produced and to what end, I begin by situating my study within previous studies of audits in Chapter 2. I show that checking organizes much of modern life. However, instead of thinking about the process as top-down, I think about how

commitments to this process also create a site that can be an object of checking. I use concepts of procedure (or process) and device (or tool) to think about what steps certifiers consider valuable. For example, lab results are often used to decide what elements are in a given sample from a production line. What samples, how many, and for what purpose, however, speak to the process of daily checking influenced by cultural norms. I also focus on the emerging values at play that come out of these checking practices. I show that the procedure itself clarifies commitments and values important to certifiers operating in the context of Italy.

In Chapter 3, I trace the historical development of “good” food as situated within the national boundaries of Italy. I focus on the symbolic order that comes to the fore through values that are associated with made in Italy foods. The way consumers think about Italy creates a world capable of being consumed: one of rolling hills, Tuscan grandmothers, and delicious foods waiting to be discovered. I show that this image, while valuable as it circulates globally, is created as much outside of Italy as within it.

In Chapter 4, I examine Coreis, the Islamic community that owns Halal Italia. Many Muslims in Italy, who are themselves or their families from Muslim majority countries, see Coreis’ practices as aberrant to the wider Islamic community (or the *ummah*). I show that this lack of legitimacy of Coreis’ beliefs and practices has actually allowed them to be successful in the Italian halal realm. The particularities of the local context mean that Italian halal developed in a manner unlike any other halal certification entity studied to date. I also show that it is through their daily work that they legitimize their form of Islam.

Chapter 5 considers how the world of work is shaped by space, contributing to my overall project to show that the frames created by checking are influenced by the local context. This

project also extends to work culture. In this chapter, I ask: how do spatial arrangements shape gendered forms of labor and kinship? In both institutions, workspaces are nearly indistinguishable from home spaces. I demonstrate that these spatial arrangements meaningfully structure sociality and influence decision-making. Furthermore, a detailed comparison of the two spaces reveals that unique features shape gendered relations and modes of labor in specific ways. For those at Halal Italia, space is treated as community property, and children fluidly cross material and symbolic thresholds between home and work. In contrast, women at Food Italy are caretakers of the owner's domestic space as well as their office space, and the children who live in the space are rarely seen. I find that spatial arrangements are made meaningful in relation to labor hierarchies and that gender roles are realized, at least in part, vis-à-vis movements in and through these work-home spaces.

In Chapter 6, I explore the use of the term “alta qualità” (high quality) in both the context of work and outside of work. I show that the use of alta qualità points to various ways of knowing encountered through food. The term is also an exercise in qualification—it both categorizes a material as a food and evaluates it as something good, though not always consumable. Through the historical development of the term juxtaposed with how it is used today, I show that the term both has value and produces certain value in and outside of institutions. Overall, I demonstrate that it is in the encounter between varying uses of alta qualità and the possibility for consensus that the term is translated into value.

In my conclusion, I call on social scientists to compare across ethical projects in food within the same context to engage with national qualities. I discuss two important findings that come from this comparative approach. First, that the certifying process has many audiences not just

consumers in foreign markets and this is likely not unique to Italy. Second, the culture of food in Italy continues to be a powerful force in the creation of the halal industry today. We can call this uniqueness the “Italian-ness of halal.” Italian-ness plays out both individually and institutionally and guides both certifiers and consumers in how to elect foods as halal.

Chapter 2: Building a Framework

“...the refrigerator stood out among appliances. It was part of a larger system that connected people and places in new ways and by doing so it transformed what it meant to be a food consumer”
(Freidberg 2010:45)

2.1 Representations of Procedure

Expanded global trade networks and new technological advancements mean that foods can now travel vast distances. As the above Susanne Friedberg quote shows, the ways in which these connections are made meaningful is through how people understand themselves as consumers or as certifiers.

The global expansion of food networks means that labels provide a form of legibility to the consumer. In this work of labeling, place is abstracted: what it means to be “local” becomes a marker of economic value-added and, in a sense, one “local” place becomes indistinguishable from the next. In light of this, local forms of oversight are greatly informed by cultural context. Values in the Italian realm strongly connect Italian-made products with quality.

Global trade networks are made possible by technologies that have ruptured direct knowledge of our food system. As a result, certifications were created to address the obscurity made by technological advancements. Ulrich Beck calls this need to solve problems with new technology, which were created by technological advancements in the first place, reflexive modernization (Beck 1992). Thus, food certifications are modern solutions to problems of increased global trade made possible by modern advancements like refrigeration and transportation.

In the context of global movements of people, ideas, and goods, how is it that certifiers can make these diverse commitments, experiences, products, and producers cohesive and legible? In order

to unpack this question, I begin with an informal survey of business representative participating in a halal training in July 2018 (see Figure 2.1). I informally asked producers seeking halal certification about the challenges they faced in implementing halal. Eight out of nine producers were in the food sector while the other was a cosmetics manufacturer.

What is most astonishing about these data is that the business representatives seeking certification make a diverse range of products. The representatives' knowledge of halal also varies widely. How is it that the halal process can still be applied despite the fact that producers and their products are themselves diverse? For example, as the data show, the tea producer explained that the halal procedure for them is not difficult because they have very few raw materials. Tea is comprised of the dried, cured leaves of a plant. This did not raise many concerns because there are no doubtful or illicit materials in dried leaves. Questions about tea production may align with questions also asked by those in Food Italy including were the materials sourced ethically? Other questions such as what the tea bag is made out of may come up, but rarely, since the tea bag is not ingested.

This contrasts with a product like powdered gelato for which raw materials can be sourced from many different places. An ice cream base may include milk, oils, syrups, emulsifiers, stabilizers, flavorings, and colorings. There can be doubtful elements in all of these parts. For example, an emulsifier, which coagulates the product and gives it a creamy texture, can be made from plant

Company type	Challenges faced with implementing halal	Halal Market
Gelato (3 companies)	"having raw materials certified is difficult because we have to manage them being certified or redoing the declaration of adhering to standards."	External
	"Too many raw materials which cannot be changed to halal producers because we have worked with them for 30 years."	External
	"We use trace amounts of alcohol and [those products] cannot be certified. If we change the flavorings it can be detected by consumers who notice when the recipe changes."	External
Tea manufacturer	"We were first asked to get certified by Japanese company. We don't have many problems because there aren't many raw materials."	External
Baby food (2 attendees)	"We have difficulty tracking raw materials similar to gelato"	External
Milk products	"One of our raw materials producers did not want to fill out the declaration, so we have to decide what to do... [Another] major issue we have is with transportation alongside non-halal materials...we have a big problem with rennet which is not halal and sending this with halal products [is] not possible.	Internal
Parmesan Cheese	"We have tourism [to our production site] and it is difficult because there is a lot of prejudices... it is difficult to get country folks (<i>contadini</i>) to sign off because they have prejudices. We do not want to halal to our packaging [for this reason.]"	External
Cosmetics	"I don't know yet"	External
Chocolate Spread	"Here to learn more"	External

Figure 2.1 Data collected about producers undergoing the halal certification process.

(soy) fat or pork fat. The halal certifier must look at documents that specify the form of fat used to create the emulsifier. A stabilizer keeps the product from separating. Stabilizers can be made from gelatin which is derived from animal parts usually from cows and pigs. Pork gelatin is illicit (*haram*) but beef gelatin is allowed if the cow is ritually slaughtered. The certifier must ensure that no non-halal stabilizers make up the final product. Flavorings and colorings can also have alcohol in them, and, depending on the certifier this may not be allowed. Due to the diversity of the material objects at issue, the steps in the procedure must change as a result of the individual product (its ingredient and manufacture).

I noticed very quickly that most producers (8 of the 9 surveyed) were sending their products abroad. I also found out that the milk producer who said they sell to an internal audience,

actually sell their products to a processing company in Italy that exports their final product to Muslim-majority countries. These external markets also vary widely. For example, the Malaysian market is different than that of the Gulf states, not only in terms of consumers but also in terms of halal regulations.

The diversity of markets is not always the issue and many concerns come from the local context. For example, the parmesan cheese manufacturer has a very specific worry: they do not want halal certification on their products because they think it will scare away non-Muslim Italians. This was a common refrain in Italian context, producers refused to include halal certification on their packaging because they did not want to be seen as privileging Islam. Others, like the chocolate spread producer, had no idea what to expect and mentioned they were at the training to “learn more.” Despite the wide range of expertise, diversity of products, and variety in export markets, the technical instruments or market devices make manufacture processes legible across sectors and material things.

2.2 Ordering Frames Through Work

To anyone traveling abroad, the signs that occupy grocery stores are somewhat legible across contexts: Kosher is Kosher whether in Rome or Tel Aviv, at least in theory. In practice cultural norms can take over, for example, in the case of the Roman dish, Jewish-style fried artichokes (*carciofi alla giudia*); a staple for the Jewish community in Rome that goes back for hundreds of years. In 2018, The Israeli Rabbinate deemed the food forbidden (*trefah*) because the artichoke is deep fried whole. Without properly cleaning the vegetable, it could host bugs which are illicit according to Kashrut laws (Horowitz 2018). Roman Jews disagreed with the ruling, staging protests. In the end, one can still find fried artichokes in Rome designated as “kosher.”

Despite controversies, as exemplified by the Roman artichoke, the certification procedure or process moves the material, oftentimes successfully, outside of the local context. It is through certain tools or devices that are considered valuable that production processes are conceptualized as simple. For example, an audit is one device that has value as an accepted way to make claims of kosher, halal, or even made in Italy despite the diversity implicit in certification commitments.

These devices make the manufacture of material things equally accountable. Being accountable, or the obligation to report or justify an action, is “part of the general fabric of human interchange” (Strathern 2000, 4). Beginning in the financial audit world, researchers have shown that institutional forms of checking are becoming more ubiquitous, demonstrating a cultural shift away from a sole emphasis on interpersonal trust systems. This shift has been termed, “audit society” (Power 1999). Michael Power, who coined the term, shows that audits are institutional forms used to reduce risk. He is careful to assert that an “audit society” does not mean constant surveillance. Constant checking, he argues, would actually break down social relations. Rather, checking is a balance between too much surveillance and a lack of oversight. To prove this point, Power uses the example of a dinner party guest who asks for explanations for how the food is prepared and served, pointing out that they “will probably not be invited again” because of their intrusion into the host’s ability to take account (Power 1999, 1)⁴. I follow on this insight, asserting that forms of checking are not only social but exist on many scales, ranging from the private to public, from the small-scale business to the large institutional spaces.

⁴ Tone may also play a role. If a guest asked all of these steps with admiration perhaps the host might be less weary of the questions. However, it is important to note that constant checking even with admiration often does cause friction in relationships.

Checking is a “modern” form of reassurance for consumers that has value through its implementation. In this dissertation, checking refers to the cultural-scientific tools, devices, and procedures used to marshal a cohesive world capable of being surveilled. I move away from what theorists have called audit society or audit cultures (Power 1999; Strathern 2000) because, as I show, there is also much work done outside of the audit device. Put another way, audits are only one tool in the toolkit. Instead, I use the term checking to expand this process beyond the audit. Checking, which is made legible through the certification label, also speaks to local forms of trust, standardization, and concerns, all of which are worked out in daily life.

In the context of this dissertation, anthropological understandings of checking are not unlike those of money. Money has value as a ‘thing’ through a shared system of exchange, but currency is also embedded in local cultural beliefs and norms. For example, Julie Chu (2011) shows that Chinese connect understandings of capital with religious philosophy. The movement of migrants from Longyan, China brings in capital to support temples and family life. Chu also discusses spirit money, which is used in the afterlife. The currency is an amalgamation of U.S. currency forms with Confucian symbols. Because U.S. dollars are ubiquitous in the local economy, the market and spirituality interconnect to create new combinations of a spiritual economy. Like money, checking in the case of food certifications is legible to a wider audience, while remaining culturally specific. However, unlike money, checking is a process rather than a tangible material, though I argue that elements of the process can become material through various tools or devices, like an audit report, which I discuss later in this chapter.

Halal certification is embedded in the values produced by the made in Italy certification milieu. This is unlike any other halal certification context investigated by other scholars (e.g. Allam

2008; F. Bergeaud-Blackler 2004; Florence Bergeaud-Blackler, Fischer, and Lever 2015). For example, one of the auditors in Halal Italia decided to leave and start an e-commerce site called “Halal Made in Italy.” The auditor is a second-generation Muslim; his parents converted to Islam. In my interview with him, he spoke about the potential for halal to promote a greater understanding of Islam, saying, “For example, an audit lasts a whole day and we always eat lunch together with Italian workers which encourages more questions. *It is a beautiful work to help people understand me.*” He valued his work in the food certification industry as a powerful tool to promote the understanding of his religious beliefs. Through halal certification practices, Muslims also make claims about the relevance of their religion.

I begin the next section by placing my study within broader economic anthropological literature to think about how specific devices or tools are used, often successfully, to abstract materials. Next, I focus on the audit procedure to demonstrate that, although the comparative cases mirror each other, each entity produces different frameworks. I then turn to the process in which checking becomes standardized to further untangle how, and to what end, values are circulated outside of these institutions. Finally, I turn to the process of rendering procedures legible in the Italian context. I focus on the procedures at play in checking, which certifiers use as a way to minimize the everyday diversity of knowledge, materials, and markets in order to make certified products legible to consumers across the globe.

2.3 Tools and Material

I begin with thinking through the development of material and economy to further unpack my use of ‘device’ and ‘procedure’ and the relationship between these two concepts in my broader concept of checking. I argue that checking is embedded in cultural norms despite the fact that the

product often becomes detached from the local context, producing new form of value. Questions about the embeddedness and disembeddedness of economic exchange have preoccupied anthropologists since the discipline's beginnings hitting a peak from the 1950s to the 1970s.

In 1944, economic theorists largely upheld a neoclassical definition of economic action: that humans, first and foremost, are rational. Karl Polanyi in *The Great Transformation* ([1944] 2001) went against this rational paradigm. Based on anthropological findings from across the world, Polanyi argued that the logic of rational action does not always apply, most notably in “primitive” societies, which were, according to Polanyi, markedly different from western capitalist societies. In these places, the economy was theorized as embedded in other social structures, like politics and kinship.

Polanyi's theory merged well with previous anthropological studies of exchange. At the turn of the 20th century, anthropologists examined exchange as embedded in culture, a focus that distinguished economic systems present in western society. For example, Bronislaw Malinowski found that exchange in the Trobriand Islands was a way of supporting political structure (Malinowski 1960). Similarly, Marcel Mauss ([1925] 2000) explored reciprocity in gift exchange showing that the system supported community cohesion. This cohesion was a hallmark of “archaic societies” which differed from western society. For many anthropologists at the time, the question was not *if* the economy was embedded in cultural systems but *how* and to *what effect*.

After Polanyi, the anthropological study of the economy became divided. Drawing on neoclassical economics, the formalists (e.g. Firth [1970] 2013) posited that the goal of the economic actor was to maximize utility (or satisfaction). In this view, value and wealth are

created by competition, as individuals' broker between buyers and sellers to maximize their satisfaction. Formalists believed that the study of the economy could be applied to all human cultures as an avenue to explain human behavior. The formalist universality of scarcity and utility maximization did not distinguish between a "primitive economy" and a "western economy." According to the formalists, scarcity was universal, and therefore, non-Western economies were comparable to Western ones.

In his classic ethnology *Stone Age Economics* (2017) [1972]), Marshall Sahlins critiqued the theory of "rational" economic behavior and became a proponent of the substantivist approach. His approach critiqued the idea that scarcity is a state of being. Scarcity to Sahlins was, at its core, culturally motivated explaining that "It is not that hunters and gatherers have curbed their materialistic 'impulses'; they simply never made an institution of them" (2017 [1972]: 13).

The substantivists found the formalist universal to be problematic for many reasons, not least of which because it was theorized vis a vis the western capitalist system. In a critique that is best illustrated by cross-cultural studies of money, George Dalton (1965) believed that money should be understood within the context of its own use. Unlike the formalists, this position meant forms of money existed within a larger sphere of social organization, while "our" money is abstract and functionally cohesive. Paul Bohannon (1955), working with the Tiv, showed that exchange could not always be reduced to currency. According to Bohannon, in pre-colonial times, there existed three separated spheres that entailed different forms of currency. When colonial legislation called for a general, unified form of currency, the spheres collapsed to some degree. Previously illicit exchange between spheres became more commonplace. Through Bohannon's work (and later

Jane Guyer's elaboration), the materiality of markets became central to economic anthropology (Bohannon 1955; Guyer 2008; Guyer 2012).

During the heyday of the formalist-substantivist debate the question was: to what degree does the social world determine the economy? After the debate fizzled, Michel Callon proposed a different question: how is it that economic materials become detached and circulate in spheres outside of the local context? Drawn to Michel Foucault's *dispositif* or device, Callon et al. (2007) posited that devices are tools that are made of knowledge and also produce knowledge(s). For Callon, devices are abstracted and are presented in new terms, like an algorithm, for example. The key here is that the 'thing' must undergo some form of abstraction. For example, in the case of food certifications and specifically halal, John Bowen has shown that devices, such as the certification itself, can stand in for direct knowledge of the manufacturing process (Bowen 2018). Through the material label we can see how the procedure is both a form of (abstracted) knowledge *and* a producer of a certain kind of knowledge.

Devices also speak to the increasing forms of *anonymous exchange* that the procedure attempts to clarify. Take for example, the brand on a piece of clothing. By consuming certain brands, subjectivities are also constructed. For example, Dick Hebdige showed that certain clothing styles can be read as challenging the status quo (Hebdige 1979). Callon's project centers on the process of disembedding markets during a time when questions about how to theorize global exchange dominated both academic and public circles (Callon, Méadel, and Rabearisoa 2002).

Through the devices used in procedure, we can see how production becomes legible to global audiences, an element of this is the sequential nature of procedure (Velthuis: In Press). In other words, the institutional pattern that abstracts the material and disembeds it goes through a

Initial Certification Verification (*)	
Upon Signing of the Proposal Contract	€1,000
After evaluation in field	€1,250
Total Cost	€2,250

Surveillance Verification / Renewal of Certification (**)	
Total Annual surveillance cost / renewal	€1,850

Figure 2.2 Food Italy pricing contract

specific process that can be repeated. Work on material as both performative and procedural has demonstrated that this is a context-driven process (Bowen 2018; Velthuis 2003).

Much of this recent work would suggest that the Halal Italia procedure is markedly different from the Food Italy procedure. While their structures may be similar, their commitments are completely different. However, this does not mean the two commitments are incomparable. The procedural abstraction operates in similar ways across both certifications. Take for example pricing, which is a both a form of abstraction as well as an avenue to produce certain values.

The pricing for Food Italy draws on values that support their pricing structures. When I asked how much the certification cost, I was told simply, “It depends.” For a tomato producer seeking to certify two products, the pricing contract as illustrated by Figure 2.2.⁵

The elements highlighted on the spreadsheet speak to the standardized structure, which is priced based on the sequential nature of the procedure. Similarly, for halal certifiers, specific steps in the procedure including time allotted for the audit is used as the basis of pricing. Algorithms were used to show that there is a structure and order to the procedure that can be accurately

⁵ Translated by author

converted into pricing. During a halal training, the Lead Auditor shared the following equation to calculate audit time:

$T_a = B + H + (PV + FTE) * CC$ where:

- B = basis of an on-site audit time
- PV = audit days for product variety
- H = Audit days for additional products/service upstream
- FTE = audit days per number of employees
- CC = multiplier for complexity class

The business representatives in attendance copied down the equation and asked for more clarification. “What is the average length of an audit?” one asked. Each time, the lead auditor would respond with, “It depends.”

To some extent, the device assuages worries about how experiences are calculated. In other words, the algorithm and spreadsheet are doing similar things, they are easing anxieties that the procedure itself may be valued arbitrarily. In effect the equation and the spreadsheet say, “Don’t worry. The procedure is easily converted into monetary terms. We are not trying to pull one on you.” While the auditor replies equivocally, the device makes legible the audit, which is, at the beginning stages of checking, unknowable.

But people do not simply take the pricing abstractions at face value in Italy. Companies seeking certification would often begin the process by asking for a discount, which is a common practice throughout Italy, not just in the certification sector. For example, after I ate lunch a number of times with my Food Italy colleagues at a nearby restaurant, I was told to ask for a discount. The discount continued to be applied anytime I ate at the restaurant even without my colleagues.

For Halal Italia staff, discounts were a major area of concern because all companies ask for one. At an all-hands meeting, we discussed how we might standardize discounts while remaining fair.

We decided it was best to set a higher price and include an automatic 10% discount to all invoices. Before this change, every company who asked for a discount was sent to the director of Halal Italia. He would then evaluate if and how much a discount would be granted on a case by case basis. This was also the process for Food Italy.

The expectation motivates the use of certain devices to minimize uncertainty. Halal certifiers use an algorithm, an established convention, to produce values of standard practices to demonstrate they are fair in pricing, while Food Italy uses a spreadsheet. But price is also the result of shared norms heavily influenced by social expectations. These shared norms at play mean discounts are a normal part for both parties engaged in negotiations.

Although the future is unknowable—a gelato producer may accidentally mix alcohol-based flavorings in with its halal products a month after the certification is granted—certifiers and consumers alike trust in the expectation that checking makes the daily manufacture legible, sequential, and predictable.

2.4 Abstracting Narratives Through Checking

As I have shown, checking uses tools to check sites and, at the same time, it produces a certain frame. It is in the interaction between local practice and global concerns that sites are checked and produced. For example, when speaking with Halal Italia colleagues about a pastry they certified, I was told that the last step in the process was to spray alcohol on the pastry to preserve it before packaging. The use of alcohol in this way would, generally speaking, be considered halal as it is so diluted there is no potential for inebriation (*istahlak*). But, what does this narrative about the process do? I was told that this practice did not look good. The practice was deemed *haram* by Halal Italia's Islamic Ethical Committee and the producer stopped using the

technique and instead shortened the “best by” date. Through standardization, practices are manipulated to better abide by what looks right in the narrative about their checking.

Practices are standardized through other avenues such as the quality manual, which is the documented system of quality for the producer. For Food Italy this document is called the Quality Management System and for halal certifiers the document is called the Halal Quality System. All companies seeking certification with food certifiers, be it Food Italy or Halal Italia, must have a quality system manual in place. The quality system document has company specific rules for things like the intake of raw materials, cleaning, testing, and transport. For halal certifiers, companies must find a way to incorporate the Halal Quality System (HQS) which can be a separate document or situated in the current manual.

One interlocutor who worked in the halal sector explained: “The Halal Quality System is the foundation of this trust and it makes the audit much easier.” I found similar attitudes at Food Italy. Interestingly, when spending time with producers at a halal training, I asked a company representative if they had an HQS, and they replied “finta,” or “fake,” but it “exists” and can be shown during an audit. Despite the lack of commitment by some producers, certifiers believed the Quality System manual to be the basis of ‘good’ procedure. That is, the document itself provided a form of reassurance to certifiers even if it was not taken seriously by producer representatives at the site being certified. This shows that in the attempt to order producer settings, certifiers and producers vary in their commitments to documentation and materials. As a result, certifiers also employ trust to mitigate these differing levels of commitment.

Trust is paramount to deeming a procedure certifiable and often comes in the form of material documents. I was told that the ability to produce documents quickly meant that the company

could be expected to continue into the future without issue. For example, while on an audit with Halal Italia, the auditor, Asma, told me that “documents were produced quickly, which makes them good.” This quick turnaround made her feel that the company has a good system in place “because they are self-controlling 364 days a year.” As a result, she told them that she would recommend that the committee grant them halal certification. She juxtaposed this case with her experience with another company that was slow to produce documents. She explained that this slow document producing company repeatedly said that they did not have any flavorings on the production site. When Asma went through an on-site audit, she saw that they had pistachio aromas, which are not in themselves *haram* or forbidden in Islam. However, her discovery of the flavorings diverged from what the company had said about their products. Halal Italia did not end up certifying this company because, as Asma explained, “once they tell a lie we can't trust them to implement our rules.”

Similarly, for Food Italy, tracing the line through documents tells a standard narrative about who, and therefore what process can be trusted. As the owner of Food Italy remarked: “Even with [other food certifications] there isn't a production line, no traceability.” This lack of traceability, I was told, often means there are no documents to trace products. Without documentation, a producer cannot be certified by either entity.

2.5 No Need to Justify Food Italy

Unlike the halal entities, Food Italy does not run formal trainings. Food Italy certifiers were informal in their trainings, which usually took the form of a phone conversation. Unfortunately, I was unable to listen in on any of these conversations, but what I understood from working in the

office is that the call was used to familiarize producers with the three rules that must be met to gain certification. The three rules of Food Italy are:

1. Italian Raw Materials (Produced by breeding/Caught/Grown in Italy according to rules/standards applied in Italy). [Note: with the exception of those Italian products (such as chocolate and coffee) whose raw material cannot be Made/Grown in Italy.]
2. Processing Carried Out in Italy (factory situated in Italy according to rules/standards applied in Italy).
3. GMO-FREE (No Genetically Modified Organisms).

Producers seeking Food Italy certification did not need convincing about the value of Italian products. The brand was also heavily involved in promoting the Mediterranean diet, which many workers at Food Italy coded as a healthy way to live and enjoy food.

The three rules above are not static and are applied to varying degrees. For example, when I asked about the first rule, Italian raw materials, the owner of Food Italy, Michele⁶ explained, “There are of course exceptions to everything made in Italy for example coffee, chocolate, and we should say beer [all have raw materials that are not made in Italy].” I followed up and asked, “what about dry pasta, since much of it has durum?” Durum is increasingly grown outside of Italy and Europe. Michele responded: “Yes, that too. We do a quality check every year and if they go against our agreement, we drop them. We emphasize traceability.” Traceability for this certification is done by tracing raw materials to their sources through documentation, for example, a tomato is traced to a farm in southern Italy.

The emphasis on tracing every raw material and showing that they are grown in Italy,⁷ can sometimes lead to difficulty scaling up production. In order to motivate a producer to sign on,

⁶ pseudonym

⁷ With some exceptions such as chocolate

Michele must make limited quantity a value-add. For example, he told me this story about an olive oil producer they certify:

A month ago, a producer called me because a Canadian buyer wanted to buy 2 large containers of his olive oil. He asked me how can I do this without mixing in ingredients from abroad? I told him he couldn't do this. The Canadian buyer wanted the Food Italy certification. Instead I called five other producers of olive oil and had them work together to make the shipment (putting in different olive oils). Of course, they all look different. Bertolli, the 'Italian' producer gets olive oil from abroad and mixes it, that's why they are all the same color.

The producer's non-standard olive oil is no longer a limitation but a value-add and Michele sees this as a way to alter the food system. He explained that the "label is just the iceberg," by this he meant that they were trying to change a broken system. To him, the worst offenders were those outside of Italy. This worldview conveniently forgets the problematic practices within the Italian agricultural realm (See Chapter 7; Krause 2018; Pai 2019). The brand's mission was to give small producers (3-40 person enterprises) a chance to enter their products into new markets, primarily abroad. Michele explained that "we hope to combat the misuse of the Italian flag and label. For small producers it is a way for them to get their products into new markets." What is important to note is that to Food Italy and to many audiences abroad, Food Italy products have intrinsic value that does not need to be made explicit through a training. This diverges from the halal industry in Italy.

2.6 Justifying Halal Certifications

Diverging from the Food Italy model, halal entities host trainings for producers as part of their halal procedure. I was able to attend two trainings: one with Halal Italia and one with World Halal Authority (WHA). Halal Italia goes to each producer site and provides a training which lasts no more than a day. During the Halal Italia training the team educates quality management



Figure 2.3 Northern League poster that reads "Yes to polenta, no to couscous. Pride in our traditions."

staff on what instituting halal entails. The training expanded on here was attended by three representatives, me, and the Halal Italia trainer, Haroun. The 50 slides presented took the better part of a morning to get through. The slides were broken up into the following topics: halal and haram, faith and nutrients in Islam, the halal certification, technical requirements and process, the Islamic market, and communicating with Muslim clients.

In contrast, World Halal Authority (WHA) holds a few trainings a year where business representatives converge from many sectors. The WHA training lasted two days and was held at a hotel in downtown Milan. When I attended, there were nine participants from different businesses and 6 representatives from WHA, who ran the training.

It is during formal trainings that Italian halal certifiers make explicit what is left unsaid for certifiers like Food Italy. The elements of Italian food that must be made explicit are meant to justify halal in two ways, which I expand on below. First, the trainings attempt to make a parallel between an Islamic lifestyle and a Catholic lifestyle. And second, that halal is part of a healthy lifestyle.

2.6.1 The Validity of an Italian Islamic Lifestyle

After the March 2018 elections, the League and the Five-Star movement, politically right-wing populist parties, formed a government. In their Summary of the Contract for the Government of Change, the two parties vowed to protect made in Italy products, making it the third issue on their agenda of fifteen that ranged from defense, immigration, and judicial proceedings (MoVimento Cinque Stelle and Federale della Lega 2018). These same right-wing parties have used notions of food to distinguish Italians from invading others in the past, as illustrated by Figure 2.4, which states “Yes to Polenta, no to Couscous” as couscous is attributed to the south of Italy and North Africa.⁸ In addition to political rhetoric, beginning in 2009, many Italian cities instituted anti-kebab laws cloaked in a desire to “protect” local cuisine. The laws banned kebab stands from city centers (Nowak 2012). As a result of negative attitudes surrounding diverse foodways, halal certifiers draw on craft narratives that equate Italian food as the best in the world. In this formation, halal is an avenue to spread Italian quality food across the globe.

The Halal Italia trainer, Haroun,⁹ began with the basic principles of Islam and the definitions of halal and haram. He explained that halal and haram come from God and are like the 10 commandments in the Christian religion. Laws promote “internal health, spiritual health” (*saluto interiore, saluto spirituale*). It is not only about a state law but also about religious law. He then explained that “all religions are valid, they just differ.”

Haroun explained that Christians believe God spoke through Jesus, which makes him a prophet in Islam. Unlike the Bible, however, the Qur’an is the unmediated, divine word of God. To

⁸ In the past, couscous has also been associated with the Italian south. I will think through this redrawing of enemy lines in Chapter 7.

⁹ Pseudonym



Figure 2.4 Selected slides from Halal Italia training (2018).

further expand on what halal is, he quoted the Qur'an: "O men, eat the lawful, and good things from what is on the earth" (The Qur'an 2:168). This quote was used to begin his discussion into what is considered "good" in Islam.

During another halal training that I attended with WHA, the session was led by a professional trainer: Dottoressa Palella who was a non-Muslim, middle-aged woman. This is unusual in the context of halal in other parts of the world, but not in the case of Italy because halal certification is a state-sponsored endeavor. Palella mentioned that there are three reasons for seeking certifications: religious, ethical, and technical. After Palella finished, Dr. Mohammed Elkafrawy, the chairman of WHA welcomed us. He said that halal is above all a religious certification. Following this, he went through the basics of halal, showing a slide with halal and haram while discussing at length the concept of doubtful foods (*mashbooh*). To mitigate doubt, he said that halal is also a "certification of quality," especially because definitions of halal vary across the world and to different governmental and non-governmental institutions.

Attendees were curious about Islam more broadly, and so the managing director of the religious committee of WHA, Sheikh Sylla happily answered questions about Islam. One participant asked why there are 5 prayers a day. Sheikh Sylla spent the time explaining that many religions specify prayer times and that they do it because “it is commanded by God” (used *Dio* not *Allah* here). The use of *Dio* (or God in Italian) and not the Arabic *Allah* is an indicator of the work at play here. He then used this opening to talk about modest dress, which is commanded for both men and women. Dottressa Palella explained that people who complain about women wearing the veil conveniently forget that just 20 years ago, and even still today, women are completely covered in black in the Italian south.

The work of halal in Italy also makes connections to the local religious context. This is done through parallels between the Islamic head coverings with Catholic religious norms. This can also be made explicit through the use the Italian word *Dio* instead of *Allah*. All of these small practices do something: they position Islam as a similar form of religiosity to Catholicism, and, therefore, valid.

2.6.2 Halal is part of a healthy lifestyle

Haroun explained that “what is licit is good” expanding that “it's about living well for Muslim believers not just about eating halal for its own sake.” According to the training, halal should be incorporated into a larger nutritionally healthy lifestyle.

Haroun spent a significant amount of time discussing the two slides in Figure 2.5. While there were elements he skimmed over quickly, such as questions about meat slaughter which did not apply to this particular company, he took his time with these slides. They list reasons why Halal is synonymous with quality, which were as follows:

- Halal is synonymous with quality and food security
- Halal products are also enjoyed by non-Muslims, as kosher products have been consumed by non-Jews
- In Germany, the UK and France, 36% of consumers who buy halal are not Muslim
- Halal certification recovers ethical values of integration as a conscious exchange and cultural bridge between the West and East.
- Commercial placement of products (for example in Italy or the UAE)
- MiPAFF (Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policies) and Expo 2015

This last bullet refers to Halal Italia's close work with Italian government officials. The MiPAFF controls the Denominazione di Origine Protetta label in Italy (DOP, or Protected Designation of Origin). The DOP label guarantees that a food comes from a clearly defined geographic area. For example, a bottle of balsamic vinegar that has the DOP label is made in a specific area of Italy, namely Modena. I expand on this designation further in the next chapter. Suffice it to say, products can carry both the prestigious distinction from the MiPAFF and a Halal Italia certification.

The second half of the line reads "and Expo 2015." I attended events with Halal Italia at the Expo, or World's Fair in 2015 held in Milan. Halal Italia was featured prominently, participating in cultural events (such as a public breaking of the fast (*iftar*) during Ramadan) and sessions about ethics and halal. The reason these two are collapsed on the same line is because the Expo's theme was "Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life!" Different countries showcased their cuisine including a pavilion run by the United States, which featured hamburgers and hotdogs. The aim of the expo was to promote quality and sustainability in food. Italians would know about this event and its aim. Through these examples, Haroun uses local values to support his claim that halal is also part of a broader healthy and sustainable lifestyle.

In a plea to get producers to leave “halal” on their packaging for an internal Italian market, the WHA trainer explained the halal market is expanding in Italy. In 2015, WHA certified 120 products and in 2018 that number jumped to 950 products. The WHA trainer explained that halal should not just be for export, encouraging the business representatives to leave the halal label on products because there “is a market here” and halal products are also “appreciated by non-Muslims” which is similar to an increasing interest in products that are organic, vegan, and natural.

The WHA trainer explained that halal provides a “double guarantee” because it is also based on a global standard of food safety and production, such as the International Standards Organization Food Safety Standards. She then showed a video about halal mozzarella cheese. She explained that a quarter of mozzarella cheese is certified halal. “Halal is easy to incorporate because if you already have organic, halal is an easy integration.” While discussing this, her slide had “MADE IN ITALY” written in large letters with the Italian flag.

What is striking in all of these examples is the emphasis on halal food as a way to justify Islam and its place in Italy. The trainings express a marker of the Italian halal context, namely that much of this work is also to make familiar halal. This happens through narratives such as the use of the Italian word for God (*Dio*) and by equating halal with other non-religious certifications.

2.7 Conclusion

Food certifications are globally recognized *but also* situated in local patterns of checking. This tension is at the heart of this dissertation. In this chapter, I investigated how commitments in the local context are rendered legible and legitimate to diverse audiences. To make procedure legible to different audiences the material is interpreted at a smaller scale. For example, producers use

pricing to begin negotiations and so, as much as certifiers would like it to be, the pricing is not a firm number. This means that many certifications increase their pricing to accommodate the “discount ask.” It becomes clear, very quickly, that procedural aspects are not disembedded, but shaped by local logics within a specific economy.

Devices are not only tools that disembed the material, but they also produce standardized narratives. These values privilege written forms, like the quality manual, as trustworthy devices. However, to some producers, this written manual does not organize daily work lives. The ways in which this varies is significant: certain devices are not wholly adopted by everyone.

The local Italian context also brings to the fore elements that diverge from previously studied halal entities across the globe. As I showed, values circulating in Italian halal make parallels with Catholic religious forms and as one of many healthy lifestyles, primarily because the halal certification is for export. In contrast, Food Italy’s value is taken for granted. Through all of these examples, I show that checking is social and locally shaped. Checking takes into account these varying values and how certifiers produce narratives about the material world they oversee. In the next chapter, I continue thinking about what is created through work by looking at the development of a made in Italy industry. I untangle the historical development of the association between Italian food and “good” food. This association plays a major role for all food certifications operating in Italy.

Chapter 3: Italian Food: Historical Legacies and Continuity

3.1 Introduction

In March of 2019, the Mayor of Bologna went to Twitter to ask Italian citizens living abroad a favor. “Dear citizens, I’m collecting photos of spaghetti alla bolognese in circulation across the globe as a type of fake news... Send me yours” (Castrodale and Pollack 2019). You see, spaghetti bolognese does not exist in Italy. The presence of the dish outside of Italy angered the mayor of the city where the dish derives its name. This, despite the fact that writers such as Bologna native Piero Valdiserra, have spoken against the mayor’s insistence that the dish is fake news.

Valdiserra argues that the people of Bologna have consumed dried pasta for hundreds of years, and probably even put ragù on it (Kirchgaessner 2016).

No matter which side you fall on, one thing is clear: food is particularly amenable to becoming politicized, especially in Italy where there is an institutional effort to package local and cultural knowledge of food for a global audience. In this chapter, I explore the historical foundations of Italian-made foods, paying special attention to the history of a connection between place and production and how this has transformed into economic and social value. I am interested in how this connection is used today, by whom, and to what end.

Today, Italian food is a ‘thing’ beloved by many around the world. How did this come to be? How does this connection continue to have value? And, what values does this commitment produce? To investigate this, I center on modes of standardization, a particular device or tool produced in daily work through narratives about people, places, and things used to market foods

as made in Italy. I argue that the tension between external markets and local production is ameliorated by a standardizing device which circulates and produces shared values about imagined places, people, and things.

All checking schemes “[make] the world of action visible therefore valuable in economic terms” (Power 1999: 94). I explore what this means, and specifically, how context inflects the ways in which checking is taken up. I focus on the question: how do certifiers make the procedure legible? I uncover the context of food in Italy to think about what Elizabeth Krause has called a “myth of continuity.”

In *Tight Knit*, Elizabeth Krause (2018) investigates the invention of a historical link between luxury and made in Italy fashion. Drawing on Carlo Marco Belfanti’s writings (Belfanti 2015), Elizabeth Krause develops the idea of a “myth of continuity.” This myth equates Italian good taste in fashion as a continuous historical line from the renaissance, which conveniently forgets a diverse cultural and political history. According to Krause, the birth of the fashion industry in Italy actually began in February 1951 with the first fashion show in the grand Palazzo Pitti, an architectural symbol of the renaissance in Florence. At the time, American buyers for department stores were looking for cheaper alternatives to the Parisian fashion scene. Krause also argues that the 1966 flood of Florence brought an incredible amount of aid from and publicity in America. Because the flood took place in Florence, the birthplace of the renaissance, media outlets circulated images of the art and buildings from the time period. The circulation of these images also created certain sentiments about Florence and Italian history, a value that cannot be collapsed into the capitalist exchange of clothing.

Similarly, my aim is to historically contextualize Italian food because local cultural patterns are embedded in specific histories and patterns surrounding values in and through foodways. The “myth of continuity” mirrors the myth of good Italian food. Similar to what Krause and others argue, the myth of Italian good food perpetuates the idea that Italian food has always existed since time immemorial and that “Italians” have always eaten well. Halal entities exporting Italian products are also greatly influenced by imagining of Italian food. But why exactly do made in Italy food products have value in many parts of the world? So much so, that a religious certification also draws on this mystique?

I take a look at the history of Italian food as an object in order to further theorize how checking is also influenced by particular histories. Checking for Food Italy and Halal Italia is inflected by local commitments born from a narrative of what Italian food symbolizes and the world it invokes. The focus of this chapter is how Italy developed as an imagined place of “good food,” which continues to affect the ways both entities implement their forms of checking.

In this chapter, I begin by thinking about the co-constitution of made in Italy as a myth that took much time and work to develop. Following a history of the development of made in Italy as “good” production, I show that in daily work life, marketing materials and stereotypes about Italian passion are particularly relevant ways to sell Italian-made products. I end by thinking about what value being Italian has in this narrative through the use of names, which, in certain situations grants one an insider status. This insider status simplifies family histories and dynamics and sets certain expectations for engagement.

3.2 The Absence of Authenticity

Before I delve into the historical framing of made in Italy foods, I must first stake my position on the term “authenticity.” Much of the marketing of Italian food has been coded as authentic, however, I intentionally do not use the term in my analysis. Today, the colloquial use of the term by chefs, foodies, and even certifiers links uncomplicated notions of place with specific foods. As I will uncover, this is a recent phenomenon which is embedded in larger structures of power.

For anthropologists of food, authenticity speaks to notions of time and place, which are modern inventions. Cristina Grasseni shows through ethnographic data from food tradeshow that authentic foods are conceptualized as “slow” while genetically modified crops are “fast,” and, “fast” foods are unequally valued in food production (Grasseni 2005). Certainly, this is an important insight, for the certifiers I worked with, authenticity was not problematic; it had real, tangible value.

Other authors such as Jillian Cavanaugh and Shalini Shankar (2014) have expanded authenticity to include not just shared notions of time but also of space. Drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin’s chronotopes, Cavanaugh and Shankar show that actors must employ specific notions of time and place, which point to specific worldviews (Shankar and Cavanaugh 2012). Chronotopes in global capitalism center on authenticity which is the cultural heritage of a particular town (place) with an unbroken link to the past (time). Yet, just invoking authenticity is not enough to make money. Those engaging in exchange must use group specific notions of time and place to profit in capitalist arenas, and these notions can be contested. For Jillian Cavanaugh and Shalini Shankar authenticity invokes diverse worldviews through these shared notions of time and place.

Anthropologist Brad Weiss brings materiality into the use of authenticity in food studies. Weiss explains that “authenticity is an underlying preoccupation that...places these diverse practices within a common framework, but it is also an overt ideological commitment” (2016: 244). For many in the food sector, authenticity does have to do with a connection between place and history. Yet, authenticity is also *practice*: the ways pigs are treated, for example. Weiss explains that “to be authentic requires connection” (2016: 248). Connection for Weiss is less about connections to time and space and more about “an unmediated transparency, a direct intersubjective encounter that is not subject to denomination precisely because it is unmarked. It is apparently unmediated and unadulterated” (2016: 249). This connection is both valuable and material. According to Weiss there is a real thing at the center of this connection that is made through encounters with that “thing.” While I agree that authenticity is an ideological commitment and practice, I find the use of the term too disparate to be a helpful analytic as I argued earlier with respect to globalization and neoliberalism. Instead, I center on the material at issue and the devices used to transform it.

I argue that authenticity says little about daily empirical practice and as such, I believe that authenticity is more intellectually valuable as a possibility rather than a certainty. Authenticity is one avenue for producers, consumers, and certifiers to evaluate something as “good,” and I am more interested in the process of evaluation rather than beginning from the opposite end. I’m more interested in “historical sentiment as value” and the “transform[ation of] noncapitalist histories and social relations” (Krause 2018:66). I expand this to not only focus on historical framings used to create value but also notions of place that allow one to navigate and apply ideas such as “authenticity.”

3.3 History and the Global Constitution of Made in Italy

For much of its history, Italy has been a place of insecure food consumption for the majority of the population. The ability to meet basic food needs was long reserved for the Italian upper-classes (Moyer-Nocchi 2015). Shortly after the country's unification in 1861, malnutritional diseases like pellagra were common and widespread (Ginnaio and Jacobs 2011). Although most people did not have access to food, ironically, food was a powerful symbol brandished to unite the country.

The first cookbook of Italian cuisine was published 30 years after unification and was called *Science in the Kitchen and the Art of Eating Well*¹⁰ (Dickie 2008; Parasecoli 2004). The author, Pellegrino Artusi, pulled recipes from across the peninsula for a middle-class audience. Today, Artusi is held up as a national hero and Casa Artusi—a center dedicated wholly to Italian home cooking—was founded to honor him and extend his legacy (“Chi Siamo” n.d.). Artusi played a major role in emphasizing national cohesion through diversity in dishes across the peninsula. By emphasizing dishes from Naples and from Tuscany as Italian, he supported a new unified national identity through cooking.

In the 1880s, the lack of access to basic foodstuffs precipitated one of the largest migrations in modern history as millions of Italians immigrated to the United States, Brazil and Canada. These Italians helped spread their cuisine to populations outside of Italy. Food scholar Krishendu Ray convincingly shows that the arrival of immigrants drastically changes the arrival country's cuisine. He points out that prior to the mass immigration of southern Italian immigrants, most Americans ate a German-inspired cuisine (Ray 2016). At first, Italian food was associated with

¹⁰ In Italian the title is: *La scienza in cucina e l'arte di mangiar bene*

the urban poor, but it soon climbed the social ladder, and in the 1980s and 90s Italian food made an appearance on the fine dining scene.

The impact newly arrived immigrants have on cuisine is perhaps best illustrated by the “pizza effect.” Coined by Agehananda Bharati, the pizza effect describes the process in which a minor cultural product (in this case pizza) is disseminated outside of its origin. Following the product’s success abroad, it is then reevaluated in the origin country as a valued ancient tradition (Bharati 1970; Moyer-Nocchi 2015). This interplay between migration and culture is not unique to Italy; however, it is significant that Bharati used “pizza” to elucidate the exportation of an Indian cultural phenomenon: yoga.

Bharati is right to argue that pizza had little significance before it was exported to other places. For much of its history in Italy, pizza was seen as ‘filthy’ street food. Its status changed only after pizza made an appearance in America following the mass migration of rural southern Italians at the turn of the last century. Pizzerias in New York City thrust the dish onto the world stage and Naples morphed into a center of this “tradition” almost overnight; associations and schools popped up promoting the local-ness of pizza. The now prided birthplace of pizza was the only place one could find the elements crucial to making “true” pizza such as the water, humidity, and ingredient ratios.

Italy became known for pizza, a product that had never really enjoyed much success before. In fact, the author of *Pinocchio*, Carlo Collodi, said that pizza had “the appearance of complicated filth” (Dickie 2008, 189). For most of its history “the problem with pizza was Naples” (Dickie 2008: 189). Indeed, in the 19th century Naples was the largest city in Europe and home to an

enormous number of poor residents who lacked access to plumbing and proper housing. Water and food-borne illnesses were common; Naples was hardly seen as a culinary center.

Hoping to capitalize on pizza's newfound status, Neapolitans founded *L'Associazione Verace Pizza Napoletana* in 1984. The association hopes to “promote and protect, in Italy and worldwide, the ‘true Neapolitan pizza’, as a typical product made in accordance with the rules and guidelines described in the International Regulations Book” (“Associazione Verace Pizza Napoletana: Home” n.d.). By taking a class and passing a test, one can now be certified by the AVPN. As a result, restaurants that have an AVPN certification have opened across the globe, including in Australia, Japan, the United States, and China. Pizza, which gained success outside of Italy, had a major impact on how Italians themselves understand their food traditions.

Yet, it is important to note that in this creation of a myth of Italian food, parts of Italian history are conveniently forgotten. Fascism is one such forgotten moment in Italian history. Fascism played a major part in promoting Italian-made food products. The fascist policy of autarky or economic self-sufficiency held up the rural peasant as savior of the homeland. The fascist landscape mirrored this intentionality and performance, what Glenn Stone calls an “agricultural spectacle” (Stone 2018). To the Fascist government, the best products were made in Italy because made in Italy products diminished a reliance on other nations to feed Italy's population. The policy was meant to undermine dependency on foreign nations, but largely failed, as peasants attempted to grow crops like wheat in unsuitable areas.

(Parasecoli 2014, 12). The historical link drawn here conjures up an imagined place and time, one that never existed. The written form of this genre has its beginnings in E.M Forrester's classic, *A Room with a View* (Forster [1908] 2018) during a time when most upper-class youth from northern Europe undertook the grand tour: an educational rite of passage in the 18th century in which youth traveled to Italy to discover art and passion (Parasecoli 2014). In recent years, the grand tour has morphed into the food memoir in which an upper middle-class white woman from the United States finds herself through time spent in Italy. Tuscany is often featured as the ultimate place to discover something that is lost. Examples of this genre include *Under the Tuscan Sun* (Mayes 1997) and *Eat, Pray, Love* (Gilbert 2007). By tracing all of these elements it becomes clear that the connotation of Italian cuisine as good was co-constituted process occurring as much within Italy as without.

Geographic indications (GI) also played a role in valuing localness for a global audience. GIs link a product to a particular region, indicating qualities, attributes, and a certain reputation associated with geographic origin. Examples of GIs are most readily seen on wine bottles though they are also used to guarantee a food's origin. For example, an Italian Barolo carries DOP designation or a champagne bottle from France has an AOC mark. The fairly recent movement to regulate GIs also suggests a connection to a region's inherent characteristics (e.g., soil, climate), summed up in the term: *terroir*.¹¹ According to Rachel Laudan, *terroir* was developed during the time of European civilizing missions of the late 1800s. She argues that although provenance was not a new value it became important on the global scale during the 1855 World's Fair where French wines were featured prominently (Laudan 2004).

¹¹ *Terroir* does not have an Italian equivalent and is left in the French

Events associated with colonial showmanship still exist in some form today. For example, the World's Fair, now called the International Expo, was held in Milan in 2015, as I briefly touched on in Chapter 2, and Italian food culture was prominently featured. Each Italian region had a booth, showing off a local delicacy. Naples showed off pizza and Lazio sold spaghetti alla carbonara. The display demonstrated this uncomplicated connection between place and product. As previously discussed, the pizza effect complicates Naples as the birthplace of modern pizza. Similarly, dishes like spaghetti alla carbonara, in its current form, was likely invented shortly after World War II, when American soldiers who desired eggs and bacon, were served eggs and guanciale (similar to bacon), over a pasta dish (Cesari 2019).

Beginning in Europe before the last century, a number of treaties led to the global connection between place and quality of production in Europe. The earliest international discussion of protecting food and drink was the Paris Convention (1883, Article 10). Article 10 applied to industrial property in the widest sense, including patents, trademarks, industrial designs, geographical indications and prevention of unfair competition by way of copying marks. This was the first major step taken to ensure intellectual works were protected in other countries. The Madrid Agreement (1891) shortly followed, which prevented the false or deceptive indication of the source of goods.

After these two treaties, it was not until the post-World War II years that GIs, and intellectual property would be discussed on the international stage again. The Lisbon Agreement (1958) for the Protection of "Appellations of Origin" and their International Registration and a modified Madrid Agreement (1989) created an international registry for marks (Parasecoli 2017).

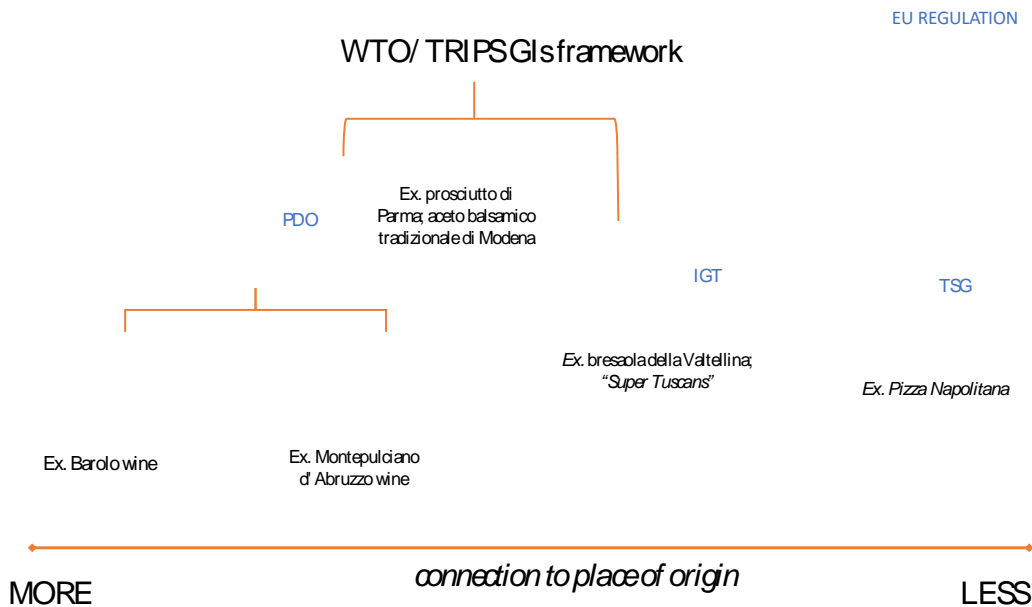


Figure 3.2 Geographic indications explained. Compiled by author, based on Parasecoli 2017.

By far the most influential treaty today regarding the protection of place and production is the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) proposed by the World Trade Organization (WTO). TRIPS went into effect on January 1st, 1995 and addressed the international protection of GIs within a WTO framework. It laid out two types of GIs—protected designations of origin (PDOs) and protected geographic indications (PGIs). PDOs are the most restrictive and only allow characteristics resulting solely from the terrain and abilities of producers in the region of production to qualify for this designation. For example, champagne can only come from a designated area of the champagne region of France. PGIs are less restrictive. To gain a PGI, there must be a characteristic or reputation associating the product with a given area, and at least one stage in the production process must be carried out in that area, while the raw materials used in production may come from another region. An example of this includes *bresaola della Valtellina*. Producers can source raw meat from outside the region to

make the cured meat product. In Italy, there is another distinction backed by the European Union called Traditional Specialty Guaranteed (TSG). The E.U. designation is the least restrictive and highlights the “traditional” ingredients used to make the food. An example of a TSG is Neapolitan pizza.

However, it is important to note that “terroir” developed differently across European countries and that this development correlated with ideas about the value of peasant labor. In France, the nationalizing project took at its center the integral work of peasants. As a result, peasants were seen as both protectors of heritage and holders of unwritten knowledge. It was not until recently that peasants were held in such high regard in Italy. The majority of the agriculture in Italy still, today, takes place in the south and southern Italians were for a long time thought of as backwards, often maligned by the term “terroni” or people of the land. In contrast, northern city dwellers are called “polenti” denoting polenta eaters.¹² The difference here may appear small but it is significant: southern Italians are workers and northerners are eaters.

The negative stereotypes of southerners—backwards and tied to the land—is important in thinking about how, in Italy, the development of terroir was vastly different than how it developed in France in two major ways. First, the glorification of farm work is a modern invention in Italy. Benito Mussolini was popular in part because he held up the Italian peasant as the symbol of the nation, a radical departure from Italian political rhetoric before him. Second, the link between place and knowledge is an even more recent phenomenon. In other words, areas had specialties, but it was not until recently that this link became fixed. Take for example, the

¹² It is important to note that polenta was traditionally associated with the north of the country. It was only recently that northerners began eating pizza and pasta consistently. The north is known for growing corn and, subsequently, polenta which is similar to grits from the American South.

comment made by the mayor of Bologna, whose Twitter post I began this chapter with. It is not just that spaghetti bolognese could not possibly exist in Bologna, but that Bologna's mayor takes it upon himself to correct this.

In an interview with a quality manager at Accredia, I was told that more stringent laws on what can be deemed made in Italy would be a positive thing, as it would ensure products are local and not made in other countries¹³. However, hyper-locality can also have economic drawbacks. The Accredia representative explained that, “because there was the earthquake last year in Emilia Romagna [in central Italy], parmigiano-reggiano must mature in a well-defined area [but] the earthquake destroyed [many factories] so we allowed parmesan to be aged elsewhere.” The practical connection between locale and production is somewhat flexible, especially when there are extenuating circumstances. This example shows that local production, in many cases, is also precarious. As such, the new turn towards a connection between place and product must include some allowances.

The creation of the myth of Italian good food has taken much work to create and sustain through time. Seemingly disparate phenomena including political interventions, literature, scientific studies, migrations, and international regulations all contributed to connect Italian place of production with quality. In the next section, I focus on ethnographic data gleaned from spending time with the entities in Italy to think about how these codes influence the daily running of business in a context in which being Italian has value.

¹³ Without regulation, any producer can market their product as made in Italy as long as one stage of production is completed in Italy.

Tre cose sul Tenuta dell'abate nel catalogo:

1. Manterrei la consistenza delle categorie (vedi le tabelle sotto)
2. Manterrei la consistenza con la capitalizzazione della descrizione dei vini. Qualche volta comincia con lettera maiuscola e altre volte con lettera minuscola.
3. Secondo me, l'ordine dei vini nel questo parte e un po' strano. C'è il vino "inzolia bianco" nei vini rossi. Non sono un'esperta, ma volevo dirvi nel caso era uno sbaglio.

Vino: Terre del Palco

Di: Tenuta dell'abate

CATALOGO DI FOOD ITALY (SBAGLIATO)	IL SITO DEL PRODOTTORE
La categoria "tipo di vino" non e' come i primi due. Per esempio Terre del palco nero d'avola che una riga per questo categoria invece non c'e' la riga/categoria, e' con il nome del vino. <u>Suggeresterei di mantenere la consistenza.</u>	Tipo di vino: Bianco I.G.P. Terre Siciliane

Figure 3.3 An example of the many documents I created to standardize the catalog.

3.4 Standardizing Practices

Most of my daily work as an intern at Food Italy revolved around standardizing marketing materials. It was through this work that I created a place in which the production itself could be made legible. One way I did this was by making sure categories across the catalog were standardized because producers would use different categories to describe their product. For example, an olive oil producer may not include the variety of olives used while another may include this information. Much of my time was spent creating documents for our graphic designer to standardize elements. In Figure 3.3, I made a document to ask the designer to "please maintain consistency of the categories" not just the actual categories but also capitalization and the order of the categories in the catalog.

The process of standardization was a daily task and was not only about standardizing categories such as "Type of Wine," but also about standardizing elements like capitalization. This form of

translation from disparate practices of production to a standard language was crucial, I was told, to looking professional. Professionalism had value on the global market and provided a standard for how products should be presented.

3.4.1 Standardizing Passion

When I interviewed for the internship at Food Italy, my supervisor told me that she would need help with translation from Italian to English. She stressed that I had to believe in the mission, because “there is no money in this, there is only the love of our food.” She continued, “the mission of Food Italy is to promote the Italian culture in the world, and you must love this work. It is about *amore per la nostra paese*¹⁴ (love for our country/region).” Value is expanded beyond merely economic terms. Sacrifice in remuneration is part of being a good citizen, which aligns with other workplace studies carried out in Italy (Muehlebach 2012). Through the mission to “promote culture,” producers are also positioned as doing their work for love of their region. For example, see below a description of a marmalade producer I translated:

[The Company] was born in 2001 as an artisanal production house and fruit and vegetable processing center. *Their identity is based on simplicity and traditional processes*, which in 2013 motivated the curiosity and attention of three young Sicilians: Saro, Giusi and Giuseppe. *The three of them were struck by passion and dedication and fell in love with the fruits found on Sicily*. It is to Sicily that they, with enthusiasm, dedicate this enterprise. *Commitment and caring* in enhancing their products are the basis of their decision to live and work in Sicily, but above all *WITH Sicily*. [The Company] chooses seasonal and only Sicilian raw materials, privileging fresh fruit just harvested and avoiding long preservation for an “*authentic*” taste. (from Food Italy catalog, emphasis by author).

This description connects a number of themes, which were common in the catalog. Most notably, like my boss, producers are also passionate about their work. For example, the description

¹⁴ *Paese* is difficult to translate. It can mean country, village, and even land. I chose to translate it as region because this was said in the context of producers in Sicily.

highlights the makers' passion, dedication, and love for Sicily. An emphasis on passion connects to stereotypes of Italians ubiquitous across the globe as presented in the previous historical section.

BBC contributor Breena Kerr, characterizes this admiration when she writes, "It happened again the other day. I was walking down the street in my home city in the US when I heard it; a couple speaking Italian... they were talking about remodeling their house. Not the most elegant topic. But the words sounded so beautiful that *I cried*" (Kerr 2017; my emphasis). At first, this declaration seems odd to an anthropologist of Italy. Why do certain languages have the power to make one cry (Italian) and others don't (say, German)? This is a cultural phenomenon, embedded in a larger fetishization of Italians, which connects them with passion, family, and all things beautiful.

For Fabio Parasecoli, stereotypes of Italians are perpetuated in large part by those outside of Italy. He points specifically to Italian-themed restaurants like Olive Garden in the United States, saying that "In order to counteract the perception of a mass-produced experience, Italian-inspired global chains try to create a positive impression built upon traits stereotypically considered Italian, such as family values, traditions, shared meals, warmth and vitality" (Parasecoli 2014: 235). Many Americans likely know that these are stereotypes and that Italians would be appalled to see that Olive Garden was serving 'loaded pasta chips,' (colloquially known as Italian nachos). Yet, the brand continues to be profitable.

In his classic *The Italians* ([1964]1996), Luigi Barzini investigates the connection between passion and Italians, which he calls the "allure of Italy." Through a study of the culture of his fellow countrymen, Barzini asserts that Italy is built on illusion, a balance between harsh reality

and spectacle. The Italian spectacle is used to ease the difficulties of everyday life: dramas, gestures, and a passion for food, he argues, are the ways Italians cope with a hopeless and unstable economic and social present and future (Barzini [1964]1996). To Barzini, these stereotypes are in some sense, true. They are true in so far as Italians use them to deal with a precarious present and dubious future.

I think it is safe to say that stereotypes are also perpetuated by Italians themselves in politics and in everyday life. For example, the spaghetti bolognese controversy aligns with this passion narrative insofar as the mayor uses the populist rhetoric of fake news to rally his constituents. The owner of Food Italy and my colleagues often explained that Italians are more passionate than Americans. When I inquired about what makes Italians more passionate, they would often reply something like, “our joy of eating.” Of course, only a small fraction of Italians work in the Italian food sector. What is significant is that the connection between quality in food and Italian national identity is valuable across the globe and much of this work is done on a daily basis through moments like the standardization work of the Food Italy catalog.

The imagined landscape is also a protagonist in standardizing narratives. As the above producer story says, “[c]ommitment and caring in enhancing their products are the basis of their decision to live and work in Sicily, but above all WITH Sicily.” An emphasis on WITH (in all capital letters) is key. Passion is not just passion for food but a commitment to being good stewards of the landscape. This is similar to the concept of *terroir* mentioned previously. In the case of *terroir*, landscape is static, never changing significantly from year to year. Ideas such as “real” champagne, which can only be made in the Champagne region were perpetuated by larger political processes to support a link between place and production. Heather Paxson in her study

of U.S. artisanal cheesemakers is quick to caution that “terroir, after all, is not a thing in the world to protect but an articulation of value that may or may not retain its currency” (Paxson 2012:212). To Paxson, terroir allows for standardization in diversity creating a commonality among cheesemakers. Terroir is both about uniqueness of the landscape and standardization across production sites, two elements that may seemingly be divergent.

In the case of Food Italy this tension is also at work. A unique landscape produces, for example, the flavors of a certain wine, and this is evaluated as “good.” This is clear in the narrative below about one of the winemakers featured in the Food Italy catalog.

Tenuta Lissandrello is situated among slopes, valleys and hills typical of central Sicily with its clay and fertile lands gently caressed by the sun and wind, producing grapes that contain a very high level of sensory qualities. Tenuta dell'Abate is continuously looking for quality and excellence through its the selection of the best grapes, which thanks to careful and innovative processing, creates products rich in warm inspiration like the lands from which they are born.

Images of a Sicilian landscape promote both economic value and the elements that are important in work and in life to producers. Innovative processing is not opposed to this story but a reason for it.

Like Paxson shows in the case of artisanal cheese, the industrial production of wine has allowed artisanal production to flourish (Paxson 2012). Advancements in oenology in larger productions, such as improving the process of fermentation, meant smaller wineries could produce more wine that appealed to a wider audience. For example, larger, industrial wineries in the 1960s developed the process of micro-oxygenation, which adds oxygen during certain steps in winemaking to diminish the strong taste of tannins (Nevares and del Álamo 2008). The less intense flavor makes a wine more palatable to more people. Further, developments in the

transportation of wine have also allowed smaller artisanal operations to grow in recent years.

Plastic corks are a good example of this because they are less costly and diminish the chances of wine spoiling. Promoting artisanal production means standardizing elements through marketing a product. In the process, differences in production are also diminished. The influence of industrial technological advances cannot be part of this narrative.

Elements of work life also change and can impact the work of standardizing narratives. This was especially clear when there was a staff change. During my time at Food Italy the manager of the company changed two times over the course of my 10 months. The most jarring of these departures was the person who was hired three months before me to lead the Food Italy project. Rosa had worked primarily in the theater and had a personality to match. The first time I worked on a translation project with her I made a small mistake to which I briefly said, “Sorry.” She took this moment to stop me mid-sentence. “We are all in this together, you can’t apologize.” I replied that it was the American in me to which she said, leave that behind and become Italianized (*Italianizzata*) or better yet *Rosa-izzata*, become Rosa-ized. This was meant to both put me at ease and introduce me to the Italian way of working, which did not include apologizing for mistakes.

One Friday, I came in and Rosa said she urgently needed to speak with me. She told me that today was her last day at Food Italy. This news surprised everyone, and I became the interim point person on the Food Italy project. After Rosa left, it was discovered that Rosa copied descriptions of producers from their sites to place in the catalog. When I inquired why this was a problem, I was told that she didn’t even *care enough* to explain why Food Italy chose a producer. It quickly became my job to write drafts about why each producer was hand-picked by Food

Italy. This was something I had difficulty speaking to because I had never been to an on-site audit or tasted any of the products. However, based on my time at Food Italy, I had developed a template for the narratives that make a producer certifiable. Elements such as passion for family, landscape or product were particularly compelling. During lunch that day, my office mate, Chiara, and I talked about how Rosa left all of us in the dark. Chiara explained that not only did she leave us on short notice but “she wasn’t even good at her job” because she “didn’t trust anyone.”

This account speaks to the ways in which work is a tension between standardized social interactions and diverse inputs and practices. The transformations that take place are personal—I have to stop apologizing, for example. I also operate within a context of what can be considered valuable, which I transform into a narrative about why a certain producer was hand-picked by Food Italy. While I was aware of these positions, I rarely thought of them explicitly. It was only when Rosa left, and only when the burden of description fell on my shoulders, that this work became clear. It is also important to highlight just how social this process is. Rosa’s swift departure brought into relief a major flaw in her work: her inability to work with others. The diversity of input was seen a critical to operating successfully.

3.5 Names Take Space in Italy

Moving from the specific historical development of Italy as a space of “good food” and the work of standardizing narratives, in this section, I show that being Italian also has value. Through the use of names, Italians situate each other to not only work across difference (Tsing 2015) but to also produce narratives about others.

I focus specifically on the uses of names which many in the Italian realm attach imagined spaces. As I will show, certain members of the Coreis (Sufi) community in charge of Halal Italia, navigate this by using their Italian given names with outsiders in a business context. Daily interactions with non-Muslim Italians also allow many to locate families on the peninsula and two islands through last names. Names illustrate family legacies in the Italian context and remain important to building work-related relations and trust. I explore the use of names as narrative to further theorize how local commitments form social bonds and relationships.

During our many rambling conversations in Halal Italia, Giuseppina, a worker who is Catholic, inquired about Fatima's father's last name. Upon hearing the name, Giuseppina said, "It sounds like a name from the south, maybe Calabria?" Fatima's family is indeed from Calabria. Names are connected to places. To be able to associate names with places within Italy means one has an insider status. Around the table, it became clear to all of us the trajectory of Fatima's family history. Her grandparents moved to the north to find work after World War II. We did not need to clarify this fact, for we all knew. Her last name was more than a connection to her paternal side; it spoke to a familiar story of internal migration stimulated by desperate poverty in the south of the country.

To someone familiar with the Italian context, a last name says much about a person's origin. Southern Italian last names generally end in -o while northern names usually end in -i or -a. However, at times this insider knowledge can lead to conflict. I became aware of this for the first time while studying abroad in Florence in 2005. A close friend from Sicily and I grabbed a coffee at a bar. Her last name is obviously southern, ending in -o. When paying for coffee by credit card, the proprietor glanced at her last name, and told her to never come back to his

establishment because “he did not serve lazy southerners”. Films such as “Welcome to the North” (Miniero 2012) and “Welcome to the South” (Miniero 2010) also play up differences, showing southern Italians enmeshed in family drama while northern Italian efficiency loses all sense of an enjoyment of life.

It is important to note that, historically, these two spaces— “the north” and “the south”—have been unequally valued. For much of its modern history, the south was often derided as “backwards,” a backwardness that is associated with people bearing certain names. “Backwards” in this stereotypical sense means those who work in the fields and have little formal education. An important element here is that the space associated with a name sets a certain expectation for interaction. In Italy, this is often a lens of difference. As Anna Tsing explains, “[t]he evolution of ourselves is already polluted by histories of encounter” (Tsing 2015, 29). Names emerge as indicators of histories in everyday encounters, including in work life.

While last names position Italians in space, first names serve to connect Catholic Italians to a temporal element of their religion. In addition to one’s birthday, children also celebrate their Saint’s name day. Every day of the year celebrates a saint. For example, in addition to Chiara’s birthday in February, she also celebrates August 11th, St. Chiara’s Saint Day. For Italian converts to Islam this legacy can create tension and inter-family strife between themselves and their Catholic families. This became clear to me when I had lunch with one of the pregnant members of the Islamic community. While discussing the arrival of her baby, I asked if they had picked out a name yet. The chosen name was not Catholic, which led to issues with the pregnant woman’s in-laws. When I pressed further, she told me that they worried about how the child

would be socialized, noting that she wouldn't have a Saint's Name day to celebrate like other children.

The near legal impossibility in Italy to change one's name is particularly relevant to members of the convert community. The members informally use their Muslim names during community events and in Halal Italia but not in the marketing firm, Genesi. I came to find this out early in my research when I spent a day helping colleagues at Genesi with "guerilla marketing" (marketing lingo for activities like passing out flyers). On my way to the pick-up point, I received the following message from Noor: "...with these girls my name is Francesca please." The last half of the sentence was written in English, which she said was to make sure I understood. This continued throughout the time I worked with the marketing group. Any time they met with outsiders I was told to use their Italian given names. This was only valid for the marketing firm; for Halal Italia I only used their Islamic names, and I was never corrected.

Use of first and last names are interrelated in personal and in professional spheres. Those working in the marketing firm can play up their insider status, using it as a form of capital. Between colleagues, given names also locate people in time and space. While the family legacy is situated in tracing the patrilineal line across places and times, some can be agentive in their choice of names. The names used to navigate business contexts produce relations to space, place, and familial history; as a result, subjectivities are relational, created through everyday encounters and practices. These practices also produce affiliations to north, south, Catholicism or Islam, which are critical to engaging successfully with others outside of one's business.

At the beginning of this section, I detailed a conversation between Fatima and Giuseppina. Their conversation continued and Fatima asked Giuseppina if it was scary for her to do her interview

for the job in a group interview “with a bunch of Muslims?” Giuseppina said no, because “you are like me ‘more Italian’ (*più Italiana*).” Fatima said, “Yes, believers and Italian.” Giuseppina said, “I don’t know. If you were from Saudi Arabia maybe I would feel differently, but we have similar values growing up here.” An Italian legacy situated in family put Giuseppina at ease. While this form of thinking could lead to excluding those who may not be able to easily cross boundaries, she found shared value, in part, through the time and the space of names.

The case of names in the convert Muslim community brings into sharp relief how important names are in the Italian realm. Last names of Italian origin connect one with certain places. This can be a value-add for the folks in Halal Italia, allowing them to connect to those outside of the community in established, standardized ways.

3.6 Conclusion

The myth of Italian good food is a complicated process, constituted by Italian nation-building, international regulations that promoted terroir, and other cultural and political movements. Italians also construct narratives about each other as seen in the example of last names. The work to situate people is a local example of larger narratives circulating about Italians and their food.

Certifiers in Italy see made in Italy products as economically and socially valuable. The development of a connection between place and production developed after the unification of the peninsula and the two islands. This was not a natural process but one that developed as much as within Italy as without. Through a historical lens, I show that like the institutionalization work of Halal Italia and Food Italy, the very idea of Italian food as “good” was a commitment created through local foodways and global and national political movements.

Checking is the work of creating this legible context, a context where spaghetti bolognese cannot exist, for example. Certifiers are motivated to standardize not only local practices such as what dishes can be from where, but also why and how people do their work. In this frame, being Italian has value and through a particular knowledge of names and place, social relations can be built and sustained. The frame created by checking circulates alongside the stereotype of the passionate Italian, which has economic and social value. Like the pizza effect, the turn to encasing Italian food was a co-constituted process, not only the result of efforts by Italians but a demand for Italian products from tourists and other, outside markets.

Chapter 4: Building Halal Institutions in Italy

4.1 Introduction

Standards vary and are influenced by the local cultural attitudes and values regarding foods. In this chapter, I attempt to understand the varying commitments on the part of different actors and institutions as they operate in the Italian halal realm. I begin with the commitments of the diasporic Islamic community and how institutions are inflected by the local context. I then think through how this is different for young Muslim consumers. Finally, I center on the beliefs of Coreis to further untangle how spiritual commitments shape and are shaped by the community's halal work.

As discussed in Chapter 2, those involved in the halal industry in Italy spoke at length about the use of training to promote Islam more broadly to non-Italian Muslim audiences. In one of the sessions, a halal expert described the ritual slaughter process. He explained that the animal must be well taken care of prior to slaughter; for example, the animal is forbidden from ingesting any animal by-products. After the halal expert finished, a non-Muslim Italian producer commented, "If vegetarians and vegans knew about halal meat, they may become meat-eaters again." The process of halal is understood as similar to other forms of certification that privilege the fair and ethical treatment of animals. I will show that local commitments, values, and notions surrounding food all play a major role in what certifiers and consumers deem halal. I show that through their work at Halal Italia, my colleagues were also creating a setting in which their Islamic philosophy and practice were widely accepted. This last point leads me to center on a

larger question about Islam that halal certifications bring to the fore: what is the process of making legible the very real diversity of Islamic practice?

Before we focus on the halal sector in Italy it is important to highlight the diversity of Islamic movements and practices across the globe. Shahab Ahmed's opus *What is Islam* (2017) captures this diversity in his opening vignette to the book. At a dinner at Princeton University, he was joined by a non-Muslim European scholar and a Muslim scholar. The Muslim scholar ordered wine, which is, as I mentioned before, considered *haram* or illicit in Islam. Curious, the non-Muslim asked the wine-drinking Muslim man if he considered himself a Muslim. The Muslim man replied that he did, and to further clarify he said that he came from a long line of "'Muslim wine drinkers'" (Ahmed 2017: 3). The other man, now even more confused, replied that he didn't understand. The Muslim man ended the conversation with "'yes, I know....but I do'" (Ahmed 2017: 3).

Religious categories about what is good and not good to eat or drink change over time and as a result of cultural values about food in different places. It may surprise some to know that dignitaries in the Islamic Ottoman Empire often drank alcohol (Mehrddad 2011). Too often we have static notions of what Islam is, and these notions rarely allow for diversity in practice or in ideological frames across time and space. As I will show, diversity of Islamic practice is a given in the halal sector, and it is also through the halal sector, that diverse practice can, and in the case of Coreis, do become legitimate.

Halal is directly related to the Qur'anic phrase, *halal wa tayyib* (طيب), which means what is halal is good, wholesome, and clean. The term *tayyib* is found more than a dozen times in the Qur'an and refers to a wide range of issues from how animals are raised to the healthfulness of the food

in question. While the consumption of food for many Muslims is a religious act, it is also an ethical expression. Many Muslims believe that *tayyib* encourages ethical food production, an ideal that is also highlighted in other audit bodies. Febe Armanios and Boğaç Ergene call this turn to wholesome, local, widely accessible food a “*tayyib-halal*” ethos (Armanios and Ergene 2018). Muslims advocating *tayyib-halal* find “the mistreatment of farm animals and the manipulation of their food by chemicals or biological means as troublesome, abhorrent, and thus anything but *tayyib*” (Armanios and Ergene 2018:193). This position has many parallels to other food movements, which center on the humane treatment of animals, non-GMOs, or chemically engineered foods.¹⁵

At the same time, technology is an important way in which halal is spread to different places and to younger audiences. Technologies have propelled halal food bloggers—known as “haloodies”—to the fore, such as writers like London-based Layla Hassanali, creator of the “Halal Girl About Town” blog. Haloodies not only guide consumers to halal food choices but they also expand notions of what is halal outside of Muslim-majority countries and beyond restaurants associated with diasporic populations. The tension between an expanding definition of halal along with the limitations of *tayyib-halal* fits well within the food culture of Italy because Italians take seriously the ethical sourcing of their food and rely heavily on networks to access it (Grasseni 2013; Counihan 2018).

As discussions with halal certifiers and halal consumers will demonstrate, shifting concerns are stabilized through a myriad of devices including trust in others, research, and spiritual frames, which are all values and commitments created in the local context. Put another way, local values

¹⁵ Food Italy also does not certify GMO derived foods.

and beliefs are crucial to developing Halal Italia's global halal project. Part of my aim is to understand how diasporic Muslim consumers engage in their halal landscape. Through a focus group with young Muslims, I uncover the local attitudes about halal that parallel and diverge compared with those building a halal industry.

Following this wider net, I then narrow the investigation to center on Halal Italia as an institution. I focus on how Coreis' convert status allowed Halal Italia to develop in the first place. I trace the history of Coreis and the community's philosophical commitments, which are part of what I call "novel Sufi" movements. All of these examples show that the halal procedure itself creates a context in which Halal Italia is religiously legitimate despite their diverging practices and beliefs.

4.2 Halal in the Local Context

I cannot stress enough that the halal certification industry, like made in Italy, exists almost exclusively for an external audience. This means that it is challenging to find foods that are halal-certified in Milan on a daily basis. My co-workers at Halal Italia were able to find a space to laugh about this lack of access. For example, Giuseppina once talked about a Muslim friend from Turkey who was getting married in Parma (a city well-known for its production of prosciutto, a cured pork product). She said they are planning the wedding "but there is nothing for them to eat." Fatima chimed in with her own story about visiting Parma. She went with her husband and a friend. They were hungry and stopped at a restaurant. On their way to their table, they walked down a long corridor flanked with drying pig hind legs on both sides. When they sat down, they told the waiter, "No wine please, and do you have anything without pork?" The waiter looked at them and said he wasn't sure if they had anything without pork. We all started

laughing and another woman in the office sarcastically said, “the hard life of Muslims” (*la dura vita dei musulmani*).

Legitimacy of halal bodies is complicated because the halal economy, which includes Islamic banking and halal food certification, developed in Southeast Asian countries (Rudnyckyj 2010), while religious legitimacy remains in the Middle East. As John Bowen states, “High and increasing demand for exporting halal foodstuffs has given food industries strong economic motivations to find credible agencies to declare products as halal.” (Bowen 2018: 7). Most of these credible agencies are run by Muslims living in non-Muslim majority countries. Diasporic entities guarantee that foods made outside of Muslim-majority countries meet the standards of halal. However, as I argue throughout this dissertation, these standards are interpreted within local food cultures.

Boğaç A. Ergene and Febe Armanios argue that “diasporic Muslims...play an equal (and sometimes greater role) than their co-religionists in majority-Muslim countries with regard to how halal food is consumed and molded in today’s world” (Armanios and Ergene 2018, 6). At the level of regulation, this is best observed by the many directives Italian halal audit bodies draw on to write their own standards. They incorporate international halal accreditation standards with national, regional E.U., and international food safety guidelines such as the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HAACP) and the ISO 9001. Standards vary between local halal audit bodies because every audit body interprets their own guidelines. To further understand that this is not just simply combining standards but producing certain values present in the local context, let’s look at the case of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs).

GMOs are crops with genetically added traits, such as the capacity for a crop to produce insecticide, which reduces the need for chemical pesticides. The food sources grown out of this process are known as GM crops, of which the most common are corn, rapeseed (canola), and soy. In Italy, for both the halal and the made in Italy realms, GMOs have raised concerns and neither sector allows GM crops. Local concerns about GMOs cut across religious and non-sectarian lines.

There is no consensus on the permissibility of GMOs in the halal domain. The main halal certifying body in North America, the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America (IFANCA) certifies GM derived foods. This is not surprising in the context of the United States where GM derived plants are more ubiquitous (Ackerman 2009). This is not to say there is no debate about GM crops in the United States (for example, see Stone 2010), only to demonstrate that, in Italy, there is an intensified public debate over GMOs.

As already discussed, one of Food Italy's three main rules to certify a product is the prohibition of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs). This is striking in the Italian case because most food products in Italy have little risk of being derived from GM crops or being contaminated by nearby GM fields. European Union (E.U.) Legislation specifies that "GMOs for cultivation are to undergo an individual risk assessment before being authorized to be placed on the Union market" (European Parliament 2015).¹⁶ Beyond E.U. legislation, Italy has some of the most restrictive laws on the cultivation of GM crops (see, for example, *Disposizioni sanzionatorie* 2005). In 2017, the E.U. even ruled that Italian laws on GM crops were too stringent (Cusack 2017).

¹⁶ For more information on European Union (EU) regulations see Directive Nos. 219 and 220 of 1990, and 259 of 1997

Food Italy certifiers believe GM crops undermine an imagined cultural past because they are technological advancements. I was told that by forbidding GM-derived food products, Food Italy is promoting a Mediterranean Diet and cultural knowledge of the landscape. For Food Italy, GM crops complicate local values of landscape because they symbolize scientifically modified means of production that are in contrast to an imagined, authentic Mediterranean past—a past tied to cultural knowledge of farming and of food production.

Halal audit bodies are less concerned with preserving cultural knowledge and more focused on the uncertain, long-term health effects of GM-derived food products. The quality manager at World Halal Authority (WHA) explained that GM crops and derivatives cannot be certified halal because there is no scientific consensus on whether GMOs are safe. Because GMOs are *potentially* harmful or unhealthy, they should be avoided (categorized as *mashbooh* or doubtful). He went on to explain that the Qur'an says halal prohibits harmful substances and this is the same logic they apply to cigarettes, which are not certifiable because they are harmful to human health even though there is no proscription found in the Qur'an or the Hadith.¹⁷ For halal certifiers, GMOs signify a precarious present, which can lead to potential future harm.

While Food Italy and WHA both proscribe GM crops, their representatives diverge in reasoning; however, the boundaries of what is certifiable is drawn from local anxieties surrounding GM crops which differs from, say, the U.S where halal certifications allow GM-derived foods. The ways in which regulations are further interpreted is productive and reflexive. Each audit body

¹⁷ The majority of modern jurists define smoking tobacco as *mukrah* (detestable) or *haram* (forbidden). However, smoking continues to increase in Muslim-majority countries, for more information see *Halal Food: A History* (Armanios and Ergene 2018). The use of analogical reasoning which links GMOs to cigarettes is a common method in Islamic jurisprudential reasoning.

produces new meanings through the products they choose to certify and the logics they invoke, which directly impacts forms of checking in Italy (what can and cannot be deemed certifiable).

Next, I turn to Italian-Muslim concerns about halal.

4.3 Halal Consumers in the Diaspora

Certifiers are not the only ones with concerns about halal foods in Italy. In this section, I show that the commitments differ between consumers and certifiers. While certifiers wish to institute a halal procedure, consumers must always question their food choices for the major reason that halal labels are not easy to come by in Italy. This section relies on findings from a focus group to understand how these commitments differ. Held at the Università degli Studi di Milano,¹⁸ the focus group included three student participants, two men and one woman, all ranging in ages from 18 to 20 years old. Two of the participants were from second-generation immigrant families, while the other had immigrated to Milan a few months earlier. By looking at how consumers think about the halal landscape, I mean to see how the local culture of halal food impacts the project of the certifiers.

First, I show that like halal certifiers, consumers of halal similarly conceptualize halal as part of a broader suite of certifications. For consumers, certifications are important avenues to produce identities and help one to untangle a landscape of complex ingredients. While consumers acknowledge similarities between halal and other certifications, it is difficult to find halal-certified foods in the domestic market. So, how do Muslim consumers understand local Italian foods? Through the examples of local foods, I show that for Muslim consumers, halal foods are

¹⁸ I chose to focus on consumers of halal because there has been little attention to how religious groups in Italy navigate the food system. In contrast, questions about eating ethically for the majority of Italians includes a growing, well-researched literature, see for example Orlando 2018.

not fixed. This is in contrast to the efforts of halal certifiers who mean to make legible production processes by standardizing this diversity.

4.3.1 Halal is like any other certification

The two second-generation Muslims spoke at length about the differences between their generation and their immigrant parents. They made it clear that eating halal is more important to them than it was for their parents. They believed that the rise of certifications like organic and vegan should also allow for halal to be present in the Italian context. As one participant explained:

There are other examples, examples from other countries, so it's just a matter of taking that model there and making it...but I look around and say if there are vegans, organic, there are gluten-free products. There are many alternatives, certainly there should exist halal.

For this participant, halal certification is another food alternative. All of the participants expressed that their parents did not worry about halal foods. Their parents' generation simply did their best to eat halal. The newly immigrated Muslims did not take as much interest in having certified products available in supermarkets. As one participant explained:

They try much as they can to deceive you [through labeling]. You have to be really careful because then maybe you think there are chemical things, but in reality, it's just an acronym that hides another thing. There are so many things...for example, a snack [I ate]. I never thought long ago that there could be something inside [that is haram (non-halal)], but...you should check after some time. Good or bad you buy the same things because you know you can recognize them. In this sense I'm telling you now in the first years [of immigrating] we did not know these things.

There are also important parallel themes to glean between the trainings discussed in Chapter 2 and the halal consumers' attempts to position halal as another quality certification. Both populations imagine halal to be included in a broader world of certification such as vegan,

organic, etc. In this conceptualization, halal can and should be part of the broader turn to check the origin of foods.

What is striking about how the young Muslim consumer speaks about halal is that raw ingredients are never fixed, the opposite of the frame the halal certifier is building. The participant says, “You should check after some time,” which suggests that deeming a food halal for consumers is much more fluid. This is a theme that continued when speaking about local Italian foods.

While it is better to know if something consumed is not technically permissible, participants repeated that one should do their best and continue to gain knowledge and awareness. To better understand how young Muslims, do or do not come to consensus, I showed the focus group pictures of common Italian foods. I then asked if they would consume the food and why or why not. The first image of a cheese pizza was deemed halal.

Moderator: Why do you all say it is halal?

Participant #1: Because there is no meat, it is vegetables and cheese, I don't see any meat that would make it not halal, I think.

Participant #2: There might be lard used.

Participant #1: I think lard does not come to mind because there is something... I want to expand on this point...for example, when someone maybe I do not know a Moroccan works with I don't know, an Egyptian who maybe works in a bakery when he works in a bakery he says “look, I don't eat brioches that have lard,” there is this tendency to warn others about certain things. In my opinion, for pizza there has never been a voice like that so... pizza has nothing [non-halal] in its dough.

Participant #2: I've never heard anything.

Participant #1: Exactly.

While pizza is considered halal, one of the participants explained that no one has *really* investigated what goes into pizza dough. Despite possible issues, there was a consensus that pizza may be, at least at the moment, consumed. Not all foods, however, were met with

consensus. Interpretations varied regarding *cannoli*, which is a Sicilian pastry with a deep-fried shell filled with sweetened ricotta cheese. As it flashed on the screen, one youth said, “Yes, it is halal,” while another said, “No.”

Participant #1: I think it is halal because [the ingredients are] 100% ricotta and chocolate. There isn’t a problem unless there is...something that I don’t know about.

Participant #2: The dough has lard.

Participant #1: What are you saying? Never... I don’t believe it.

Participant #2: Your position doesn’t work that way [just] because you would like that they are halal.

Participant #1: But it’s not true. There isn’t alcohol. There isn’t anything [haram (non halal) in it].

Participant #2: In my opinion, alcohol maintains the sweetness longer, so...

Participant #1: No. I’m scared to do more research. I think it is halal because there isn’t any alcohol. There isn’t any meat.

[Does some research on his phone] No there is lard!

Participant #2: It’s better to know.

Participant #1: There is also 50 milliliters of marsala [a type of wine], whatever, this is not the original recipe. This is just a recipe therefore who knows? I will research it myself and make it at home.

The first participant is worried about what he may find out with more research; the other participant quips, “It’s better to know.” The use of knowledge in navigating halal foods is complicated and can change perceptions of certain foods. For the first participant, the discovery that wine and lard are found in *cannoli* does not mean he will stop eating *cannoli*. Quite the contrary. He decides he will “make it at home himself.”

For the first participant, the issue of alcohol is reframed as an issue with the ingredients. This view contrasts with how alcohol is understood by certifiers. For consumers, the issue is not whether to allow trace amounts of alcohol because such amounts do not inebriate (*istihlak*). In fact, the *amount* of alcohol is not debated. While certifiers incorporate scientific and Islamic debates, focus group participants discuss the ingredients. For consumers, the skill of navigating

what is halal or *haram* is developed through constant checking. Yet, it is important to note that checking in this case does not always provide consensus.

Doubtful aspects abound in the local context, as one focus group participant said: producers are “trying to deceive you.” The ethnographic examples expanded in this section illustrate that the cultural work of eating halal is inflected by the local context whether you are a certifier or a consumer. However, the similarities end there. For consumers, the possibility of getting halal status wrong now and again is an accepted and expected part of the process. This is not the case for the halal certifier who, as I will show, must build a frame deemed legitimately halal through their work as well as through their practices and beliefs.

4.4 Halal Italia and the Work of Being an Italian Muslim

In this part of the chapter, I grapple with the spiritual foundations at play that have influenced the development of Halal Italia. My aim is to follow the historical foundation and spiritual commitments of Halal Italia’s parent organization: Coreis. Through this historical thread, we can fully understand the project Halal Italia is creating through their form of checking; a project in which they are accepted and legitimate followers of Islam. In order to untangle these elements, I begin with the history of Sufism in the West followed by the spiritual genealogy and philosophical foundations of Halal Italia’s parent organization, Coreis.¹⁹ I end by investigating how Coreis members address issues of religious practice in their daily work lives.

¹⁹ Scholars have referred to the Sufi group that runs Halal Italia as Ahmadiyya (Sedgewick 1999), because they trace their Sufi genealogy through the Moroccan, Ahmad ibn Idrisi and the Singaporean Abd Al Rashid ibn Mohammed Said. The community does **not** follow the Ahmadi movement that developed in 19th century British India.¹⁹ However for this paper, I call the group Coreis, which is how they refer to themselves in public and private settings.

4.4.1 Sufism in the West

Sufism has a long history in the West. One of the most important Sufis, ibn Arabi²⁰ (d. 1240), was born in Muslim Spain. Contemporary Islamic scholars such as Abd ar-Rahman Badawi (1917-2002) have shown the importance of Sufism in Western Christian thought. According to Badawi, ibn Arabi profoundly influenced Dante Alighieri's vision of the afterlife in the *Divine Comedy* (Idrissi 2013:19). Additionally, tariqas—Sufi orders—were a common fixture in Muslim Spain during the Early Middle Ages.

Mark Sedgewick, the leading scholar of contemporary Sufism in the west, divides western Sufism into four categories: immigrant tariqas, standard tariqas, novel tariqas, and non-Islamic groups (Sedgewick 1999). Immigrant tariqas include, for example, Senegalese Murids who found tariqas on Italian soil. This distinction specifically refers to immigrants taking their tariqas to a new country. To Sedgewick, a standard tariqa is best exemplified by the Naqshbandi of Muhammad Nazim al-Haqqani (1922-2014). Al-Haqqani was educated as an Islamic scholar in Cyprus, at a time when the British ruled the island. His tariqa, based in London, is what Sedgewick considers to be 'standard,' for three reasons. First, his *silsila*²¹ is straightforward and uncontested because it is recognized by Muslims across the world. Second, his tariqa follows the

²⁰ Ibn Arabi's full name is: Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Arabī al-Ḥātimī aṭ-Ṭā'ī he was an important philosopher of Sufism referred to as *al-Shaykh al-Akbar*, the Greatest Master.

²¹ *Silsila* is Arabic for "link" and speaks to a spiritual genealogy which is made official through an *ijaza* or a form of diploma that grants permission to induct others.

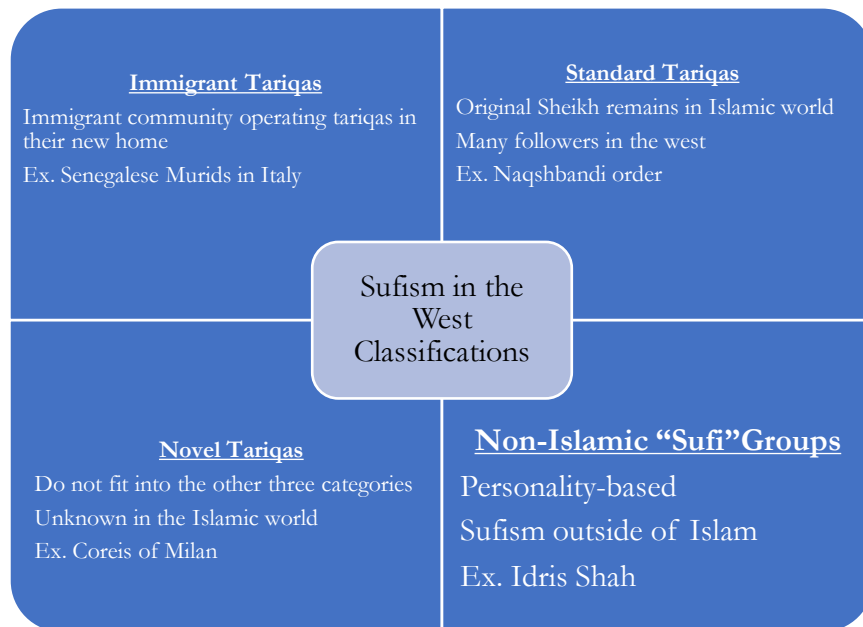


Figure 4.1 Mark Sedgewick's Classifications of Sufism in the West. Created by author.

sharia closely, making it orthodox. Lastly, al-Haqqani fits into an established pattern of how Sufism has been spread to other areas, namely, through a charismatic Sheikh.

There is some dispute about where exactly to place the Coreis community, because their practice is orthodox and the founder, Sheikh Yahya Pallavicini's *silsila* is also recognized. In addition to receiving an *ijaza* (which allows one to induct others into the order) by the Singaporean Abd Al Rashid ibn Mohammed Said in the 1970s, Pallavicini was also granted an *ijaza* by Ahmad ibn Idris al-Idrisi (a descendant of Ahmad ibn Idris, who founded the Ahmadiyya) when they met in Dubai in the 1990s.

However, Coreis differs because of their emphasis on transcendental unity—the belief in the validity of all Abrahamic religions. As such, Sheikh Pallavicini has often urged Italians who wished to convert to Islam to return to Catholicism. As a result of his well-publicized declarations, Pallavicini was accused more than once of disbelief (*kufra*). Attacks likely came

from students of Salafism²² and Wahhabism²³, who understood this form of Sufism to be un-Islamic. This is because most non-traditionalist Muslims would assert that proper access to God and final truth can only be achieved through Islam.

The above classification (see Figure 4.1) helps to illustrate why legitimacy for the Halal Italia label may at times be problematic. In scholarship Coreis is neither considered an immigrant tariqa nor a standard tariqa. Although Sheikh Pallavicini's group is not part of the category "non-Islamic groups"²⁴ which is completely new and is therefore placed outside of Islam, his group—through an emphasis on the validity of all religions—differs from mainstream forms of Islamic philosophy.

Like Sedgewick, I place the Coreis community in the 'novel' tariqa category. The novel tariqa includes "any tariqa which does not fit into one of my other three categories. It is into this category that Sufi Guenonians or Traditionalist Sufis fall" (Sedgewick 1999:4). The community, made up primarily of converts, follows a syncretic form of Islam merging elements of religious philosophy, sharia law, and standard Sunni Islamic practice. To put it even more simply, they merge Islamic practice with the philosophy of the scholar René Guénon, the father of modern

²² Taken from the work in Arabic for the first community of Muslims *salaf*, Salafism is a modern revivalist movement.

²³ Based on the teachings of Muhammed ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792) who interpreted the teachings of Medieval scholar Taqi al-Din Ahmad ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328). Ibn Taymiyya promoted a scripturalist form of Islam. As a result, he heavily critiqued the Mu'tazila philosophical school the most important philosophical school of Islamic thought at the time. The Mu'tazila school based merged Platonic reason with Islamic theology. Today, Wahhabism is often described as an ultraconservative branch of Islam, which was started in Saudi Arabia.

²⁴ Idries Shah's (1924-1996) tariqa is an example of a non-Islamic group because he placed his form of Sufism outside of Islam, arguing that Sufism has been adapted to many different places and time periods (Sedgewick 1999).

Traditionalism. Followers of this school believe divine truth has been revealed and passed down through tradition since time immemorial.²⁵

Key to Traditionalism is the idea of transcendental unity. According to this philosophy, revelations before Islam are also valid because spiritual knowledge is cyclical. Due in major part to the community's belief in transcendental unity, Jewish slaughter (*shechita*) was accepted for the first few years of the Halal Italia certification.²⁶ Only recently, in 2017, did the rules change because the Persian Gulf states no longer allowed ritual slaughter by the other monotheistic religions (known as people of the book in Arabic or *kitabī*).

Questions about the place of other monotheistic religious certifications in the halal certification came up frequently. A Halal Italia colleague, Haroun, explained that additives and flavorings during the inspection must meet one of the following conditions: halal certified, kosher certified, and/or of vegetable, microbial or synthetic origin. Kosher certification is granted to producers who follow the dietary standards of Jewish law (Lytton 2013). At the time of my study, it was still acceptable for Halal Italia to allow Kosher certification in the upstream document check. But Haroun recommended that companies not include a kosher symbol on products going to the Gulf states because the products “will come under more scrutiny.” He said that ideally, “he would like to have [all the logos] together but at this moment it is not possible.”

Kosher used in this way is unusual for a halal certification. Yet, for Halal Italia it points to the philosophical foundations of their form of Traditionalism. The spiritual frame relieves the

²⁵ Scholar Marcia Hermansen, in her classifications refers to the Coreis group as Perennials those who believe in the philosophy of perennialism.

²⁶ The major difference between Jewish ritual slaughter (*shechita*) and Islamic ritual slaughter (*dabihah*) is principally that Jewish slaughter blesses the production area while the blessing must be spoken over each animal in Islamic ritual slaughter.

tension between accepting kosher certifications while also discouraging the company from using kosher labels on packaging. This novel tariqa ameliorates tensions through their institutional practice of checking. Through their local community beliefs in transcendental unity, kosher can be recognized during certain stages in the process. This tension is never fully resolved but helps them foster relations with the Italian producers and leaders from other religious faiths. At the same time, the unresolved nature of operating within a multi-religious society is the very reason for Halal Italia's success.

4.5 Novel Tariqa and Local Acceptance

As a result of Sheikh Pallavicini's notable western ideals of interfaith dialogue, in 2009, the Milan Chamber of Commerce asked Coreis to participate in a pilot project to set up a halal certification body. Through the pilot project, Halal Italia was born, and the community created its regulations which combined Islamic Sunni law (sharia) with Italian and European health regulations. During the pilot project, Halal Italia certified five companies. An inter-ministerial agreement was signed shortly thereafter, on June 30, 2010, when ministers of the OIC (Organization of the Islamic Conference) were present. Largely ceremonial, the occasion meant that the government officially recognized Halal Italia. The event comprised representatives from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Economic Development, Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policies, and Health.²⁷

A press release about the event titled "Made in Italy: 'Halal', mark of quality compliant with the [Qur'an]²⁸" says that "the 'halal' certification project is particularly important within the context

²⁷ For Coreis, this was also an important step in their fight to make Islam an officially recognized religion in Italy.

²⁸ The title translated Qur'an as Koran for the sake of consistency in this dissertation, I changed the transliteration.

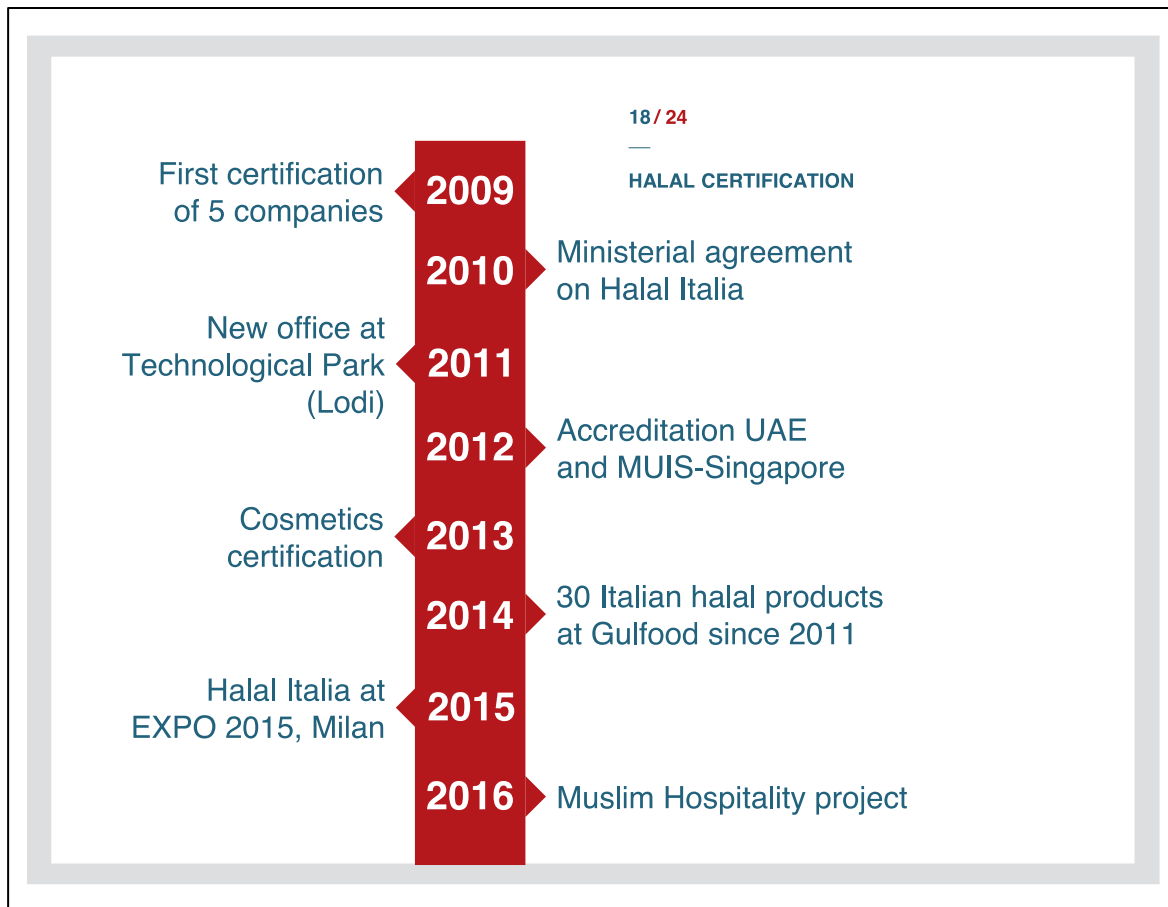


Figure 4.2 History of Halal Italia. Taken from company powerpoint.

of the [Ministry]’s support for the internationalisation of the Italian productive system through activities aimed at facilitating Made in Italy products’ access to Islamic markets and could contribute to strengthening the bond between Italy and Muslim majority nations” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2010). For the government, Coreis and their halal entity, Halal Italia, is an ideal representative of Islam, so much so that the government gave resources, both time and money, to help Coreis develop Halal Italia.

The government believed Halal Italia to be a good representative likely, in no small part, due to Coreis’ emphasis on transcendental unity. Members of Coreis embraced this governmental endorsement, never hiding the company’s beginnings. When I inquired about the relationship,

members would say that working with the local government is an important principle of Islam, and that local practice must remain under the purview of local government.²⁹ At the same time, Imam Pallavicini would often tell me that he was not interested in worldly matters. His mission was to continue to lead a spiritual journey. Discussing this further with colleagues, I was told that the everyday work of Halal Italia is valued as work necessary to support Coreis' spiritual endeavor.

4.6 History of the Coreis Philosophy

In this section, I briefly follow the life of René Guénon the founder of modern traditionalism in order to highlight how his philosophy changed over time. I also trace the different movements from Guénon's founding to highlight the Coreis community's own framing of Islamic practice especially because their practice greatly influences their halal institution. Based on this history, it becomes clear that it is through their project of checking that they both perform their Islamic piety and create a setting in which they fit into wider Islamic practice. As I have already mentioned, there is a history of animosity towards Coreis from other Muslims in Italy precisely because of the movement's European, Sufi origins.

René Guénon, who would later become known as Abd al-Wahid Yahya, was born in 1886. In his early 20s, he joined the occultist Parisian group, the Martinist order³⁰, the founder of which was previously a member of the Paris Lodge of the Theosophical Society.³¹ Guénon's engagement

²⁹ This position aligns closely with the contemporary Muslim Reform Movement, an organization of Muslims against Islamism, particularly the extremist desire to return to love like the salif (or first three generations of Muslims).

³⁰ A Christian mysticism movement.

³¹ Henry Olcott and Helena Blavatsky founded theosophy in the U.S. in 1875. A form of Western esoterism, most important for our purposes a major tenet is that of the single origin of all religion. The movement greatly influenced René Guénon's thinking about Perennialism.

with Perennial philosophy was based on the theosophical notion that the primal source of religion could be found in many religious texts including the Hindu Sanskrit scriptures, the Vedas,³² and the books of Hermes³³ (Sedgewick 2009; Sedgewick 1999).

Throughout his life, Guénon would publish works on a variety of the world's religions. He began his academic studies with an introduction to Hindu spiritualism. He wrote a doctoral thesis on the subject, but his advisor at the Sorbonne, Sylvain Levi, rejected it because it fell too far from an academic study (Sedgewick 2009). In it, Guénon argued that Hinduism was a source of spiritual truth. Through his exegesis on Hindu texts he expanded on his idea of Perennialism, a concept first proposed by a Florentine priest named Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499).³⁴ Ficino's Perennialism was widely accepted until the 17th century. It then fell to the margins of theology until Guénon picked it up and made it his own. Diverging from Ficino, Guénon did not believe rational thought had the capacity to uncover divine truth. He thought that, rather, truth could only be uncovered through ancient spiritual practice (Sedgewick 2009; Hermansen 2005; Dressler, Geaves, and Klinkhammer 2009).

It was not until Guénon became close friends with Ivan Aguéli,³⁵ a painter and writer of Sufism that Guénon converted to Islam. Aguéli received an *ijaza*, and he initiated Guénon into the

³² An early Hindu scripture written in Sanskrit.

³³ Written in Arabic, *The book of Hermes the Wise* is a text on treatment of illness through many methods including invocations. The author known as Hermes Trismegistus is a renowned figure in the both the east and the west (for more information see Library of Congress n.d.).

³⁴ Ficino believed Plato's philosophy provided proof of Christianity. This is similar to the Mu'tazila philosophical school which was active in Iraqi from the 8th to the 10th centuries. According to the Mu'tazila school, *kalam* or knowledge is achieved through rational thought. That is, God is accessible through reason. Ficino argued that rational thought, as a universal human capacity, allows one to access the divine structure. Ficino also believed that all religions come from the same origin.

³⁵ Aguéli's teacher in Egypt was a man named Abd al Rahman Illaysh, son of an Egyptian Maliki³⁵ mufti. Abd al Rahman Illaysh was also close friends with Amir Abd al-Qadir, the famous Algerian military leader who directed the anti-colonial struggle against the French. Al-Qadir was also an avid reader and interpreter of the works of ibn al-

Shadhiliyya Arabiyya Sufi Order in 1910. It is unclear whether Guénon was practicing Islam after his conversion or if he continued a syncretic form of Taoism, Catholicism, and Buddhism (Sedgwick 2009).

In 1930, René Guénon travelled to Egypt. He remained in Egypt, married, and had four children. By all accounts he became a devout Muslim, following the requirements of the sharia (Islamic Law) and the Sunna (the words and sayings of the Prophet Mohammed). He also joined a Sufi order called the Hamidiyya Shadhiliyya order, the head of which was the well-known Sufi, Salama al-Radi. In his later life, Guénon became devoted to Islamic religious practice, emphasizing the merits of Sufism in his later writings (Sedgewick 1999; Sedgewick 2009; Hermansen 2005).

Throughout his life, René Guénon was an influential teacher. The development of his ideas along with larger global events such as WWI and movements like occultism, garnered a wide audience in the west (Sedgewick 2009). His influence in Coreis today is somewhat minimized as Halal Italia attempts to highlight their Islamic practice. However, it was due to Coreis' acceptance of many paths to God that thrust them into the spotlight in the 1970s and 1980s and was also a major reason why the Ministry of the Interior asked the community to start their halal certification. Coreis represents a novel form of Sufism, and with their educated Italian leader,

Arabi (1165-1240), the great Andalusian Sufi mystic referenced earlier. Through his work "The Meccan Revelations" (*Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*), ibn-Arabi expounded on the virtues of esoteric metaphysics. Al-Qadir's influence prompted Illaysh to establish the Society for the Study of Ibn al-Arabi in Italy. Agueli played a major part in the society.

both the media and government officials found the community more acceptable than immigrant communities.

Even after spending over 20 years in Egypt, Guénon's following would be remain primarily in Europe (Sedgewick 2009; Hermansen 2005; Dressler, Geaves, and Klinkhammer 2009). Partially due to the lack of an influx of immigrants following the colonial encounter, Italian Sufism became the most visible form of Islam in Italy, which makes it very different from other western European contexts, such as France.³⁶ The central figure of Italian Traditionalist Sufism, Abd al Wahid Pallavicini, had little to no competing Muslim voices in the organization's first years. It was during this time that the community gained prominence in the Italian public realm.

Through the personal history of Guénon, the commitments of Coreis come into focus. Guénon engaged with many religions throughout his life, finally settling on Islam by his mid-40s. Based on Guénon's teachings, Coreis continues to uphold values of interreligious dialogue and in extreme cases encourages those seeking to convert to Islam to convert to other, monotheistic religions. As I will show, Halal Italia creates a setting in which the community is a legitimate authority on Islamic practice.

4.7 Traditionalism: from Philosophy to Movement(s)

At the time of René Guénon's death in 1951,³⁷ three Traditionalist Sufi orders existed:

Darqawiyya, established by Roger Maridort, and two branches of the Alawiyya established by

³⁶ Following the end of colonialism in the decades after WWII, the French government allowed for those from previous colonies to obtain work permits ("France" 2020).

³⁷ Before René Guénon's death, a young Swiss man from Basel named Frithjof Schuon (1907-1998) corresponded with him. Titus Burckhardt and Frithjof Schuon would be central to the development of the Traditionalist religious organization. After the death of René Guénon, Schuon's Alawiyya (later called the Maryamiyya) would become the largest Traditionalist religious organization in the world.

Frithjof Schuon and Michel Valsan, respectively (Sedgewick 2009; Hermansen 2005). In the late 1970s, Abd al-Wahid Pallavicini established a fourth order in Milan. In the following section, I examine the history of Coreis and its founder in Milan: Sheikh Pallavicini.

One of Frithjof Schoun's young followers was an Italian named Abd al-Wahid Pallavicini (née Felice Pallavicini (1926-2017)). On January 7, 1951, Titus Burckhardt initiated Pallavicini into the Schoun's Alawiyya. As a musician, Pallavicini traveled extensively in Asia. He met his wife in Japan who was, at the time, a practitioner of Zen Buddhism. In the mid-1960s, Pallavicini left Schoun's order. Sources vary, but it was likely a result of Schoun's romanticized and orientalist view of the East and Islam. Coreis continued to place a heavy emphasis on Guénon's Traditionalism.³⁸

4.7.1 Pallavinici's Coreis

While traveling in the early 1970s as a musician in Singapore, he joined Abd Al Rashid ibn Mohammed Said's tariqa, the Ahmadiyya.³⁹ Modernity and multiculturalism were important issues to this tariqa. However, Pallavicini disagreed with the Sheikh's position (and the standard Islamic one) that Islam is the one, true religion Al-Rashid even went so far as to obtain a fatwa (an authoritative ruling on a question of Islamic law) from the esteemed Al-Azhar University, but Pallavicini remained unconvinced. Despite their differences, Al Rashid did give Pallavicini an *ijaza* to induct others into his order. Pallavicini also later received an *ijaza* from Ahmad ibn Idris al Idrisi (a relation of Ahmad ibn Idris, the founder of the Ahmadiyya) (Sedgewick 2009). As you can see from Figure 4.3, the spiritual genealogy of Coreis is complex.

³⁸ The history presented here is taken from discussions with those at Coreis combined with Sedgewick 1999 and Hermansen 2005.

³⁹ To clarify, this is not the same movement founded in 19th century British India by the same name.

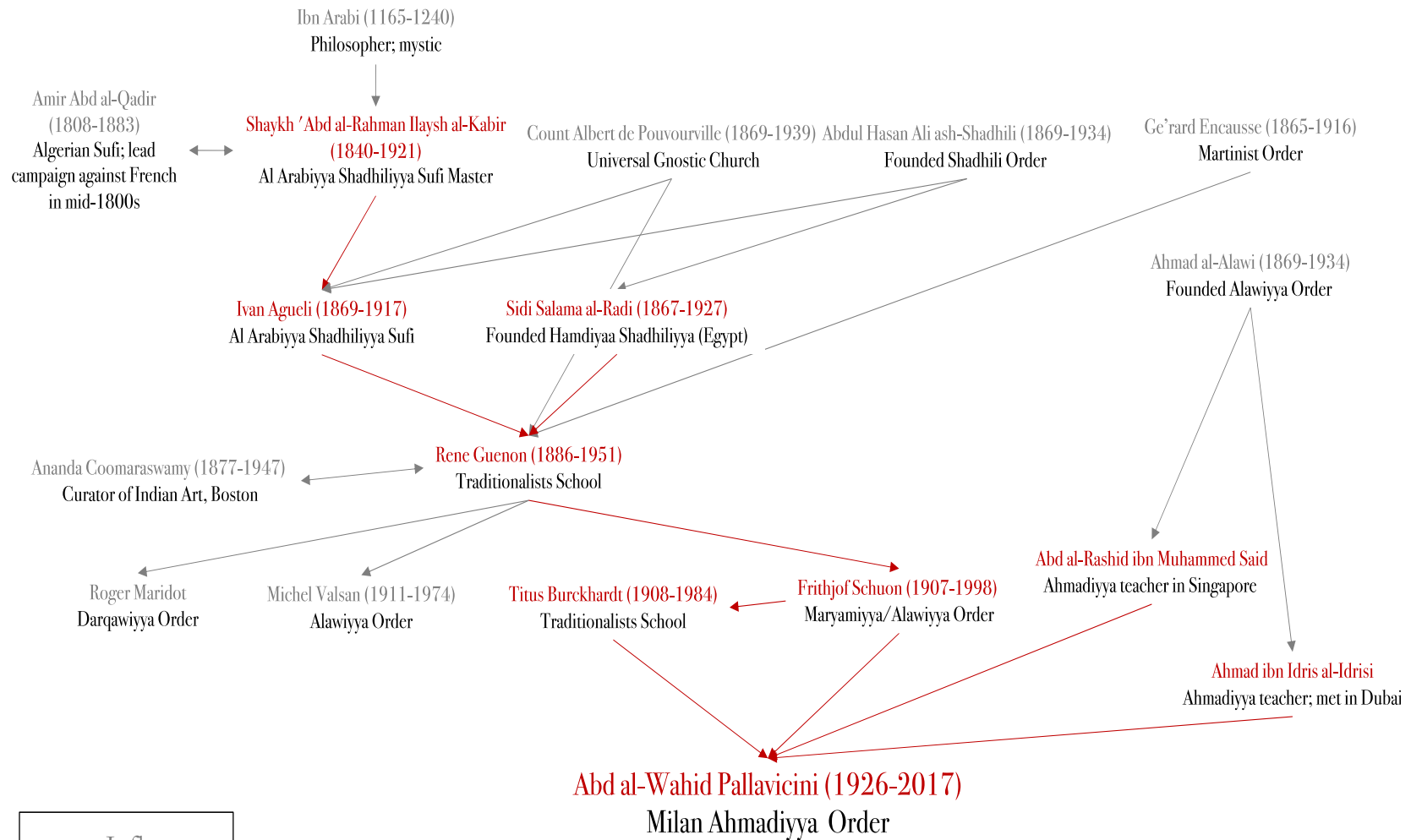


Figure 4.3 Coreis' Spiritual Genealogy. Compiled from a number of sources by the author.

Pallavicini had no intention of founding his own order, but that's exactly what happened in the late 1970s. During the Second Vatican Council of 1962-65, Catholic authorities approached the Centro Islamico d'Italia in Rome for a spokesperson of Islamic religion.⁴⁰ At the time, Pallavicini attended Friday prayer with the group. The center recommended Pallavicini, whose excellent understanding of Catholicism and Italian made him an easy representative. The Second Vatican Council established a secretariat for non-Christians, believing that all religions contained *Semina Verbi* (seeds of the Word), unsurprisingly, this orientation appealed to Pallavicini's transcendental unity (Sedgewick 1999). Through his participation, Pallavicini became well-known to the media and to other religious organizations. He gained much attention from Catholic Italians looking for spiritual guidance. He was reluctant to start his own community and for years he only ran a circle where he discussed his interpretation of Sufism. In the late 1970s, with a band of committed followers, he finally formed Coreis.

By the 1990s, Coreis had about 40 followers, all Italian and mostly young, in their 20s and 30s. This first generation has aged, and now, there is a growing second and third generation. The majority of these first followers were well-educated and born to Italian Catholic parents. Today, many of these converts and now their children work in the two businesses run by the community. It is important to note that although Coreis believes in transcendental unity, the community

⁴⁰ The organization now directs the Roman mosque, which was built much later, in 1994.

abides by Sunni Islamic practice following all pillars of the faith⁴¹ as well as hosting a weekly Friday Jumu'ah.

There also exists a French branch of Coreis based in Lyon with some converts living in Paris. The French organization is called the Institute of Higher Islamic Studies (*Institut des Hautes Etudes Islamiques*). Created in 1994, the current president of IHEI is the son of the Sheikh, Imam Pallavicini. The Sheikh is credited with founding the French community and French members visit the Milan headquarters monthly. The French branch aligns with how tariqas operate across the globe. In an interview with the French community, I asked if they had a halal certification business and I was told that Sheikh Pallavicini would like them to have one, but the French market was already too inundated with halal certification. This is not uncommon as many Sufi orders expand across the globe and often address the limitations of national peculiarities.⁴²

The Italian press has played a major role in spreading Coreis' Sufism in Italy. In 1986, Pallavicini made up part of the Vatican's interreligious envoy to Assisi meant to promote peace across religions. Pallavicini was interviewed by the press, who liked him. And by 1991, he was the most interviewed Muslim in Italy (Sedgewick 2009: 140). This created fissures in his standing with the broader Italian Muslim community. By the 1990s, Muslim immigrants were settling in Italy. Objections to Pallavicini's Islam came from his presenting Islam as Sufi and as Traditionalist. When relations between Pallavicini and other Italian Muslims became strained, his son, Imam Pallavicini, stepped in to help cultivate better relations.

⁴¹ The five pillars of Islam are 1. Profession of faith (*Shahadah*) 2. Prayer 5 times a day (*Salah*) 3. Fasting during Ramadan (*Sawm*), Annual giving to the poor/almsgiving (*Zakah*) 5. Pilgrimage to Mecca (*Haji*)

⁴² The Sheikh is important for both branches as a *murshid* or the guide of his community.

The development of a uniquely Italian Islam followed a circuitous route. Coreis, though small in number, remains well-connected due to their presence at many interreligious summits. Italian governmental and other religious bodies recognize Coreis and their halal certification, Halal Italia. However, other certifiers find the group of converts suspicious, likely in part because they are associated, incorrectly, with the Ahmadiyya movement founded by Mirza Ahmad in India. For example, while at a halal conference, Haroun tried to speak to IFANCA⁴³ representatives who refused to talk to him. Haroun said that he was eventually able to talk to the IFANCA representatives about how the community operates especially highlighting his daily Islamic practice. After this discussion, he was allowed to eat lunch with the IFANCA representatives. In this way, their program is made trustworthy through a demonstration of their daily, “standard” Islamic practice; a performance that is furthered by their participation in the Islamic economy. Yet, the community’s piety through institution-building does not convince all Muslims, and, as a novel tariqa, the community’s Islamic practice is often called into question. One of my friends, a practicing Muslim whose parents immigrated to France from Algeria, said to me over tea one afternoon, “You know, they aren’t really Muslims.” I asked her why she thought this, especially given that they follow the regulations of the sharia. She replied that her brother visited, and they attended Jumu’ah at Coreis’ al-Wahid mosque. He told her that the men and women should be completely separated. Women sat in the back during prayer and men closer to the *minbar* (pulpit). There is no curtain or wall separating the male and the female prayer areas.

⁴³ IFANCA stands for the Islamic Food and Nutrition and Food Council. They are the largest halal certifier in the United States.

All of these examples show that there is a tension at play; that those affiliated with a novel tariqa are also the center of Islamic institution-building in Italy. Sometimes suspicions about religious practice can be resolved through the performance of piety, while at other times, practices are seen as diverging too far from Islamic norms. During my time in the field, I saw this tension play out during one of the saddest moments for the community—the death of Sheikh Pallavicini.

I first met Sheikh Pallavicini in 2015. He was a tall, thin man who wore a long white robe (*gallabiyah*) that matched his long, white beard. His head was covered by a kufi cap. In November 2017, one of my friends at the community called me crying and said, “the Sheikh left with a smile on his face.” On the day of the funeral in mid-November, there were security guards at the entrances and there were also two photographers. I stood in the back but finally took a seat about 30 minutes in. Those of Muslim faith were in the main mosque area. I saw many from the French community as well as other Muslims from outside of the community, including Senegalese Murids and representatives from the Moroccan community.

Those of non-Muslim faith sat in the corner on chairs. The Sheikh’s raised wooden casket faced Mecca. Draped on top of it was a blanket with Quranic scripture. It stood between the men’s prayer area and the non-Muslim area; a material bridge between religions. The community performed Jumu’ah and the Sheikh’s son, Imam Pallavicini, gave a short sermon (*khutbah*). He discussed the life of the Sheikh (and his father) as one who resurrected Islam in Italy after the time of Dante Alighieri and Frederick II.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Dante and Frederick are important historical figures to the community as they represent the decline of Islam in Italy. The Norman Emperor Frederick II (1194-1250) was king of Sicily and he kept the Fatimid Caliphate at bay. The Fatimids were a Shi’ia Islamic empire that ruled Sicily as the Emirate of Sicily from (831-1091). Dante Alighieri in his opus *The Divine Comedy* (1320) represents Ali and the Prophet Mohammed in the eighth ring of hell

At the end of Jumu'ah, the Muslims greeted each other with *As-salamu alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh* (May the peace, mercy, and blessings of Allah be with you). After, Imam Pallavicini asked to hear three testimonies about the life of the Sheikh. He asked the Senegalese Murid community to speak first. In elementary Italian, the leader said that no one welcomed them in Italy except for the late Sheikh. They felt embraced by him and began to understand the importance of an agreement with the Italian State and Islam.⁴⁵ The second to speak was a leader of the French Ahmadiyya community (the leader of the French arm of Coreis IHEI), who delivered his testimony in French. Imam Pallavicini translated. He said that Sheikh continues to live on. The third person to speak was a member of the Moroccan community who lauded the late Sheikh's piety.

This ethnographic encounter is an exemplar of the daily articulation of a novel tariqa, which is defined by a foundational tension. The funeral held in the community mosque, welcomed those of Christian faith, an indicator of the community's emphasis on transcendental unity. Yet, those who spoke about the Sheikh were all Muslim leaders who emphasized his piety and the standard practices of his novel tariqa.

4.8 Conclusion

The Geunonian philosophical tradition continues to flourish in Europe where interpretations inflect ideas about Islam in Europe, more broadly. As discussed, the philosophy promotes the underlying universality of the world religions, a part of which is the idea that all monotheistic

(sowers of discord; there are only nine circles in Dante's *Inferno*). To the community, the late medieval period marked a point in which Christianity began to dominate their homeland.

⁴⁵ Coreis is involved in seeking an *Intesa*, an official recognition of Islam by the state. Other religions such as Mormonism have this distinction, which grants members of the religion certain rights including tax breaks and recognized places of worship. Due to the population's diversity, Muslim leaders have been unsuccessful in finalizing an *Intesa*.

religions have similar spiritual origins and are therefore valid (transcendental unity). And this commitment, notably, diverges from standard Sunni philosophy.

The daily work of Halal Italia is embedded in a larger assemblage of institutional commitments and halal consumer values who also see halal as a label similar to vegan or organic. Anxieties present in the local context also greatly impact what can even be deemed halal, as evidenced by the comparable proscription of GMOs in WHA and in Food Italy. Commitments to clean, pure food can and often do overlap within the same national context.

At the same time, halal foods are a constant concern for young Muslim consumers. For these consumers halal is fluid and remains so indefinitely. This is in contrast to the work of the certifier which is meant to render legible production practices for a fixed period of time. In the case of the certification industry in Italy, this happens three years at a time.

In the work of rendering legible local products through procedure, so is Coreis rendering itself legible to the broader Islamic world. Halal Italia's work is not only to check the manufacture of materials but also to position themselves as an authority on halal vis a vis a disparate institutional landscape. It is in the daily work of their halal institution that Coreis makes a claim about their form of Islam.

Chapter 5: Institutional Workspaces

5.1 Introduction

During my fieldwork, I noticed that many people involved in both Food Italy and Halal Italia lived close to, if not within, their places of work. Upon first working with Halal Italia in 2014, I believed that this proximity was due to the mosque, that community members were choosing to live within the complex in order to participate in religious events. I quickly learned that the owner of Food Italy and his family also lived in the Milan office space.

In recent years, researchers have shown that collaborative relations (Tsing 2015) and sentiments (Krause 2018) are crucial to the circulation of goods. I expand this insight to include how the spaces in which employees participate in the market economy also inflect their commitments in daily practice. By examining workspaces across Food Italy and Halal Italia, I argue that Italian forms of business also structure how workers in each business understand their world created by their work in these spaces.

In Italy, living close to or even within a place of business is not in and of itself unusual. Forms of housing in Italy are similar to many other European countries in that people primarily live in mixed-use spaces. It is common to have an apartment above cafés, bars, and bakeries. In this chapter, I examine how this form of residence shapes market practices, decision-making, and labor relations among owners and workers.

Contributing to a larger literature on the cultural dimensions of capitalism (Ho 2009; Tsing 2015), my discussion of gender, labor, and space confirms the importance of gender and kinship for business practices (Yanagisako 2002; Krause and Bressan 2018), with special emphasis on

family-based forms of business residence. Understanding how space, gender, and labor are entwined and mutually productive of one another and of the food sector in Italy – one of the country’s most economically important and renowned sectors of production and export – enriches anthropological understandings of economic life. Specifically, I demonstrate how spatial relationships are converted (Bear et al. 2015) into economic capital through the harnessing of labor and the domestic sphere in the service of business and capitalist productivity (Krause and Bressan 2018). As I will show, the navigation of space is structurally analogous across both institutions but each place value on relations differently.

While interning at Halal Italia, I was called to work in both the community’s companies: Genesi, a marketing firm, and Halal Italia, a halal certification firm, depending on what was needed on any given day. Each company had its own space within the compound, about 20 feet apart. I was often asked to work part of the day in one business and the second part of the day in the other. I was not the only one crossing these boundaries. Kamil, a Halal Italia employee, would often work in the Genesi office. In addition to this relationship, I began to notice that most of the employees in the two businesses lived just above their workplaces.

Similarly, spatial boundaries are somewhat flexible for Food Italy employees, though this workspace structured interactions differently. KHC has two offices: one in Catania and another in Milan. The offices share responsibility for many of the different certifications. For example, for the most part, my Food Italy supervisor was in the Catania office. The Milan office had a large co-working table, behind which there was a small office where my work colleague, Chiara, and I primarily worked, and an open area behind the large conference table where the owner

worked, though this arrangement was flexible. Working in the owner's area was common, especially when we were collaborating on Food Italy.

Anthropologists who have studied the Italian economy have largely focused on industry and familial obligations (Blim 1990; Yanagisako 2002). I extend this literature to the service sector to further theorize how space and kinship ties influence the way people participate in the economy. Anthropologists have observed forms of communal living such as family compounds in Italy (Yanagisako 2002; Krause 2018). Similarly, I investigate owners and employees living in or close to office spaces. Investigating how people use space for work and for private life brings to the fore the deep entanglements of each. As Lisa Roefel and Sylvia Yanagisako (2019) explain when speaking about medium-sized Chinese and Italian fashion firms, “Kinship pervades their [business owners and workers] transnational business ventures and it is an inextricable part of the process through which financial, cultural and social capital are converted into each other” (17).

Michael Power admits that his own analysis focuses on “scope rather than depth” and that there is much to be done to understand the social process of checking empirically. This chapter addresses this call by adding more empirical research to the mundane functioning of certifications. To further address this, I investigate how independent entities performing forms of checking function on a daily basis, as much of the work of certifying takes place in the certification entity's workspace. In other words, the audit, which takes place on the producer's site, is a small, though significant, part of the process. In this chapter, I focus on the working world in the two offices to argue that family and relations in these spaces are articulated to different ends. Food Italy renders children invisible in the office in order to appear impartial. In

contrast, Halal Italia allows children in the workplace to promote their legitimacy as a religious community capable of certifying foods as halal.

Theorists of labor have consistently argued that space structures relationships, but how is this dynamic articulated in daily work? Anthropologists studying Italy have shown that kin relations are foundational to economic relations (Yanagisako 2002; Blim 1990; Krause 2018). Gender plays a major role in economic practice in Italy and that by not including how women navigate responsibilities, it would contribute to rendering them invisible (Maher 1987:156). I argue that space is another important dimension that shapes the cultural and gendered contours of economic practice. Food Italy and Halal Italia's business relationships are structured by kinship-based forms of business residence, which not only inflect the daily running of the businesses but are leveraged to support their differing claims of legitimacy. As I will show, for Food Italy, their emphasis on impartiality means that families, and specifically children, who dictate daily work life are rendered invisible to outsiders. This is important because of Food Italy's position as a southern Italian-run entity. Stereotypes about the south often revolve around family as central, even to work life. Workers at Food Italy are also part of an arm of an impartial auditing company (KHC), and so they want to move away from this southern Italian stereotype. They do this in many ways, one of which is to make children scarce to outsiders. On the other hand, for Halal Italia—an institution embedded a religious community—children are a fundamental part of community and, therefore, are made visible.

In recent years, Laura Bear, Karen Ho, Anna Tsing and Sylvia Yanagisako have critiqued economic models, believing them to universalize capitalism and, at the same time, conflate the ends and means of market exchange (Bear et al. 2015). Following on this critique, I similarly

think through how audit society has been theorized as totalizing in which the effects have been measured without regard to how this works empirically within audit bodies, or in this case certifications. In other words, how do workspaces support values of legitimacy and impartiality crucial to the work of food certifications?

My argument is two-fold. First, I look specifically at the entities who are overseeing forms of checking to go beyond the theories about the totalizing effects of auditing. While this new administrative style may have dysfunctional, totalizing consequences in some cases, in Italy, notions of kinship and space remain organizing features of daily business life. Italian business entities emphasize or de-emphasize familial relations in their workspaces in ways that support their claims of being legitimate actors and entities.

Second, I argue the moral orders at play within these entities is translated in different ways. I follow on the idea that “[e]valuation, assessment, checking and account giving are part of everyday human interaction... They are sometimes explicit, always varied and usually take place as part of the tacit understandings with constitute social life” (Power: 142). Modes of work, space, and kinship, like audit regimes, are the result of specific political and social norms. I begin with the history of place, space, and work in Italy to untangle the development of family business structure. Next, I unpack the patterns and relations in these workspaces with a tool familiar to anthropologists: the kinship chart. Finally, I look at the dynamics of the mundane in these spaces to understand how the workspace, while analogous, translates different ideals about family and work to impart differing forms of legitimacy.

5.2 Historical Trajectories: Family and Small Businesses

Mixed-use spaces are primarily regulated under zoning laws in the United States. In Europe, zoning laws⁴⁶ differ considerably. In much of Europe, the emphasis is less on the function of spaces than on the form (Hirt 2012). The European Union does not stipulate any zone planning but rather leaves this up to member states. Article 22 of the Treaty of Rome which established the European Economic Community exempts property from forms of Europeanization (Caruso 2004; Jacobs 2008). As Harvey Jacobs explains, “So, for the time being, property is a matter of national concern not European concern” (Jacobs 2008, 67).

Overall, it is true that many countries in Europe have spaces that are more about form than function though there is still a separation between residential and industrial zones. As Sonia Hirt shows, rapid industrialization in the middle of the last century moved national governments into action (Hirt 2012). Many governments including the U.K. and France separated residential zones from polluting industrial zones. The United States differed considerably. The federal government separated cities and towns into business, industrial, and residential zones, the latter being further divided into single-family zones (Hirt 2012).

In Italian cities, zoning regulations fall mainly to regional and local guidelines. The 1947 constitution required that the Italian national government formulate a law on zone planning but no law has ever been ratified by parliament. Land-use decisions are primarily made at the local level by municipalities through local development plans, though this too differs from region to region. In 1998, the Bersani law attempted to change this though the law meant to keep large

⁴⁶ Zoning laws are laws that specify the function of a space which is often divided into districts. The U.S code divides industrial, residential, and business zones. Residential zones are further split into single-family.

superstores from taking over the market and running small shops out of business. The law restricted the areas where large supermarkets could be built, making the decision a regional one not a municipal one. The law was liberalized in 2006 with the Bersani decree law, which did not change the zoning regulations but allowed for stores to remain open longer and throughout the year.⁴⁷ The lack of a central law meant that in many Italian cities that are not UNESCO World Heritage Sites⁴⁸, you encounter an eclectic mix of commercial, residential, and industrial properties. Homes and businesses do not have to be separated. As such, you often have offices next to residences above stores close to a shoe factory.

Questions about the Italian mixed-use space model did come into sharp relief following a 2013 fire in Prato's fast fashion district, which killed seven sleeping Chinese immigrant workers (Krause and Bressan 2017). On paper, the factories do not have more than 15 people working. This meant that the government did not check the safety standards because a company of 15 and under is considered a small business in Italy (White 2013). While the fire led to some reform in Prato and crackdowns of mixed-use spaces, the schizophrenic, local nature of Italian law and regulation did not coalesce into a nationwide directive.

5.2.1 Family and Business in Italy

In 2003, then Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi, was in the midst of a scandal about his explicit conflicts of interest. When asked why he wouldn't sell his media empire he responded, "I wanted to do it, but my children won't let me... They are in love with my companies. They want to

⁴⁷ Milan and its region of Lombardy have a number of laws governing zoning laws (*assegnare la destinazione d'uso*). The most comprehensive was law Regional Law March 11, 2005, number 12. Article 52, specifies "Changes in zoning with or without construction plans". New or change-use buildings must "conform to municipal provisions (*Legge Regionale: 11 marzo 2005, N. 12* 2005).

⁴⁸ UNESCO, an arm of the United Nations designates World Heritage Sites, which areas that meet one of ten criteria including "masterpiece of human genius" or a "cultural tradition" (UNESCO World Heritage n.d.)

continue to manage what their father constructed.” (Johnston 2003). Even Silvio Berlusconi, the richest man in Italy, is beholden to the wants of the family in business. According to the Italian governmental statistics bureau (ISTAT), 70% of companies in Italy’s industrial and services sector entail a “...family-business structure (where control is directly or indirectly exercised by a physical person or family)” (*The Annual Report 2013: The State of the Nation: Summary 2013*:

6). In this section, I untangle the reasons that Italy has a uniquely sizeable amount of small family-owned businesses. I begin by tracing the rise of family businesses in Italy from the interwar years to show how policies, such as worker’s rights and socialized healthcare, allowed for small family owned businesses to flourish.

The beginning of fascist period in Italy from 1920 to 1922 saw little government meddling in the private sector. The National Fascist Party (*Partito Nazionale Fascista*) eased trade controls, the lira was traded internationally, and many domestic regulations were dropped (Felice 1977). However, labor unions took a pummeling throughout the fascist period, and by the end of 1925, the fascist syndicates had taken their place (Cohen 1979; Foot 2003).

During fascist rule, women in many parts of Italy were encouraged to work at home (De Grazia 1993). Though the fascist gender ideology discouraged women from working outside of the home, in practice, women procured food from markets, took part-time jobs, and volunteered in times of war. Yet, it is important to note that, as Carole Counihan shows, women in Italy during this time primarily participated in reproductive labor, which was, and continues to be, socially and monetarily undervalued (Counihan 2004). However, the larger fascist vision of proper gender and labor relations rarely won out against the pragmatic arrangements central to Italian

economic growth. While their labor was valued less, women participated in both the public and private spheres (Moyer-Nocchi 2015).

In the post-World War II years, the left-leaning Christian Democratic government instituted a number of policies that stimulated an increase in small family-run businesses. From the 1950s through the 1960s, Italy experienced a period known as the “Economic Miracle” (*il miracolo economico*), fueled in no small part by the United States heavily investing in the country as part of the Marshall Plan. By the mid-1950s, agriculture was still the largest sector of the Italian economy, but it was increasingly characterized by small independently owned plots, which were broken up to the workforce of large estates migrating north and to cities (Oglethorpe 2014; Ginsborg 2003; Gaggio 2007; Krause and Bressan 2017).

The post-war period was also typified by immigration on two fronts: from rural to urban sites and from the south of the country to the north. This major economic change greatly impacted women’s roles in labor. Based on interviews with 15 Florentine women, Carole Counihan (1988) shows that an integral part of ideal femininity is dedication to home and family. Counihan explains that “...women are responding to changes in Italian society and economy by entering the workforce” (1988: 59) and that ideals of femininity as altruistic pressure women to manage the household. Still today, women are considered the primary caregivers of children, though they have answered this call in many innovative ways.

In the jewelry industry in Arezzo in the post-war years, women often did “homework” or taking work home so companies could avoid taxes on health and social security. While illegal, many officials ignored the practice, seeing it as an informal way to keep down unemployment. As Dario Gaggio writes, “homework grew into a generally accepted practice, especially in the



Figure 5.1 Halal Italia staff working in shared space (October 2017). Author is on the right.

jewelry sector” (Gaggio 2007: 182). During time of economic change, women informally worked both inside and outside of the home.

In the 1970s, national healthcare became a right in Italy. National healthcare, run by the *Servizio Sanitario Nazionale* (SSN), was established in its current form in December 1978. It guaranteed that the “Republic protects health as a fundamental individual right and in the public interest” (Turati 2013:47). With socialized healthcare, many entrepreneurs were—and still are—more likely to start businesses because they do not need to provide healthcare for their employees. This historical timeline is similar to healthcare structures in other European nations like France. At the same time, it is important to note that these other strong welfare states in Europe do not boast the large number of family-owned businesses as seen in Italy.

Italian labor laws also help explain why family-owned businesses are so robust in Italy. In 1970, the *Statuto dei Lavoratori* (Worker’s Statute 1970) made it nearly impossible to fire workers for employers who hired more than 15 employees. If workers were found to be dismissed unfairly, they would be reinstated. For fear of having a disgruntled employee in their company, the law

motivated business owners to hire less than 15 employees which also influenced companies not to officially hire people. Rather, companies decided to turn to a precarious, labor model of yearly contracts (Molé 2011). This historical underpinning combined with a strong social welfare state set the stage for an increase in small businesses in the Italian economy.

Due to the yearly contract model, the organizational structure of most small businesses remains horizontal. Employees are typically not managed directly by anyone other than the owner.

Oftentimes, the owner addresses many issues raised by staff, but workers also rely on each other to solve issues that may arise. Another feature to come out of this history is the common practice of co-working spaces. In the two companies I worked with most, workspace was shared by all.

Perhaps related to the horizontal structure of the businesses, there is little to no hierarchical office separation.⁴⁹

5.3 Identifying patterns through kinship and locality

Work life in Italy is shaped by the historical legacy of mixed-use spaces and the tendency to live in or close to one's place of work. At first glance, the historical trajectory means that all small businesses combine home and work in similar ways and to parallel ends. However, through the relations expressed in the following kinship charts, it becomes clear that the social process is

⁴⁹ This differs significantly from the spatial separation that Karen Ho (2009) identified in Wall Street firms. As Ho shows, the back-office space, where most women and people of color work, is a place where employees bring their own lunch, and work 9 to 5. To the front office staff this assumed frugality and lack of commitment to work is why front office staff are compensated more and are considered "smart." This spatial separation structurally reinforces the notion that back office workers do not produce anything of value through their labor.

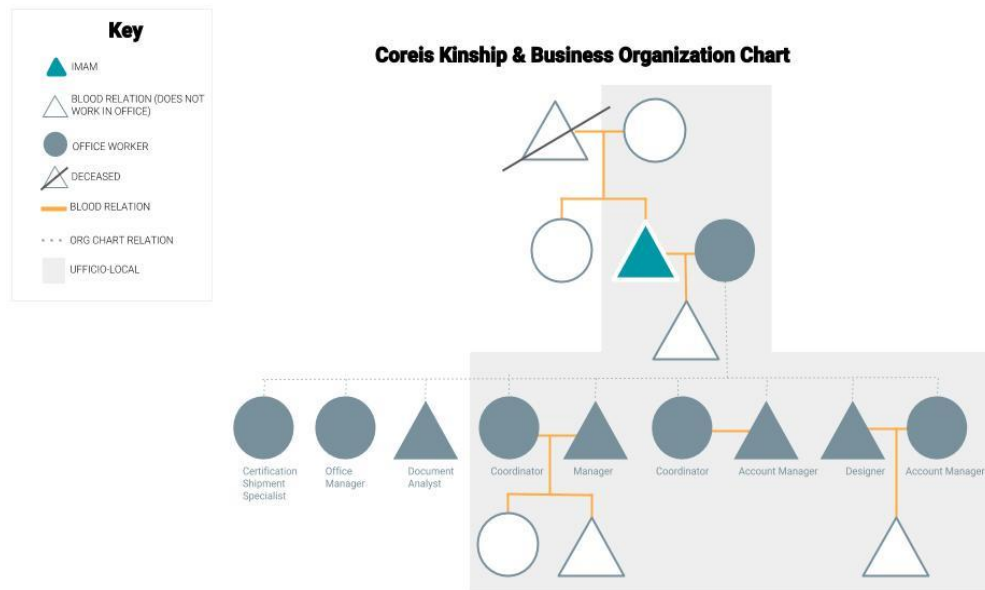


Figure 5.2 Kinship and business organization at Coreis (not including auditors). Created by author.

different for each entity and that the dynamics of the mundane vary. This difference is crucial to understanding how each form of workspace dwelling is translated to outsiders.

In my time working with Halal Italia, I began to notice that spatial distinctions shape business life. Found in a new and upcoming neighborhood of Milan, Coreis was donated by the founder of the Islamic association. The complex has a prayer space, a courtyard, two different office spaces, a dormitory, and a kitchen. Additionally, the community owns many of the apartments on the property. This means employees often come and go as needed. For example, I often arrived at the offices while workers were running errands. Mohammed and Fatima often went to the bank during the day. They ate lunch at home, which was within the complex. Their home overlooked the mosque courtyard.

As the kinship chart shows, thirteen members lived and worked in the community offices in Milan during the time of my study. I show this on the above kinship chart as “ufficio-local”—those who live within the workspace. The majority of Coreis employees live in the apartments

just above the businesses, most are married couples. This means the apartments house a series of nuclear units. Those who lived in the compound often told me that the location made it much easier to frequent Friday prayer (*Jumu'ah*). Further, the community supported living costs, especially for young couples. Fatima told me that without the community's support they would never be able to afford to live in the area, which was gentrifying quickly. In the case of Coreis, the movement to work is two-fold: young married couples are raising their family within the complex because it is convenient, and the community provides stable jobs for those who work in the businesses and are members of the community. Residential proximity to the businesses meant children frequently appeared in the offices. I will delve into this point further later.

While the Halal Italia office is entirely a communal space, the Food Italy office was not. The back of the space held the apartments where his family lived. The front of the office is dominated by a large conference table, used for trainings and visiting auditors. The office also has two smaller office spaces, one where Chiara and I worked and another where the owner and others worked. While I primarily worked in the office with Chiara, I sometimes also worked in the owner's office or at the training table. The owner's desk was large and meant to host more than just himself.

As a space dwelled in by the owner and his family, this nuclear family was at the center of business life. As the KHC kinship chart illustrates, the business owner's family lived within the compound. Employees' residences were elsewhere. Also, in the Food Italy case, kin relations are common. Two relations of the owner are active in the business: his wife (W) and a sibling's daughter (SID). Further, sisters (Z) also work in the office.

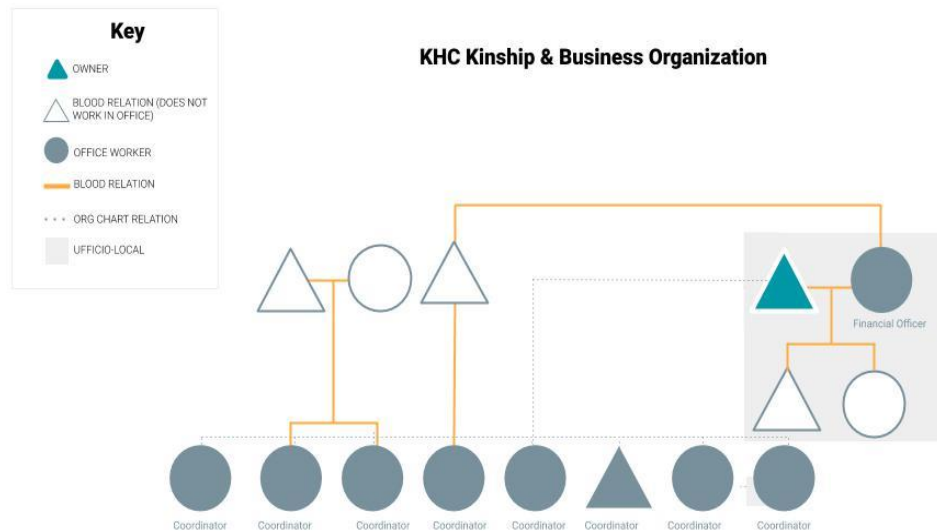


Figure 5.3 Kinship and business organization at KHC (not including auditors).

Comparing the kinship patterns of the two spaces brings the specificity of each into relief. A superficial analysis would end with an argument that kinship motivates relations in Italian office spaces. This would, however, flatten the differences between the two spaces, which offers an insight into the motivations at play in each context. As I will delve into further, Halal Italia's work is motivated by the perceived legitimacy of their religious community and the space reflects this commitment. In contrast, Food Italy staff publicly hide familial relations, even though these relations are at the center of the daily organization of the business.

5.4 Gender Roles and Children at Work

One way to see the differences in how each workplace is structured is the presence of children in workspaces. In both cases, gender norms expect women to be the primary caregivers for children. This expectation in many cases may mean that women remain at home. However, in at least one institutional case this did not mean there were less women, but that more children were visible in the workspace.

“I’d really like to interview Noah⁵⁰, he’s an auditor, right?” I asked Fatima, the administrator at Halal Italia. We sat close together at a large table co-working with three other employees. She smiled and said, “He just lives upstairs, I’ll ask him when I see him next.” As we continued working, we could hear Noor’s son, one of three main employees at the community’s other business, Genesi, stomping on the wood floors right above us.

As I spent more time in the offices, I became accustomed to the workplace dynamics: the stomping above us, my colleagues running home for various tasks like letting in the cleaning lady and eating dinner at their homes attached to the compound.

When Noor’s son was sick, which was unfortunately fairly often at the age of 2, she would often bring him into the office while she worked on important emails; other employees and even the visiting anthropologist would pitch in with childcare. One day while helping out at the marketing firm, Noor left to check on her son. He was upstairs in their apartment above the offices. The proximity to work meant she could care for her son, while also contributing to the capitalist labor of the community. This was also encouraged. The Sheikh of the community believed that women should be near their children until the age of 5, as they were responsible for raising the next generation of Italian Muslims. Non-Muslim workers were also encouraged to bring family members into the office. Giuseppina often brought her twin daughters into the office. They would sit quietly and do their homework while waiting to be taken to their math lessons. The visibility of children in Halal Italia showed their commitment to family. I will show later that this

⁵⁰ Shortly after my interview, Noah changed roles and was no longer an auditor with Halal Italia. He remains active in the community.

commitment supported the organizations legitimacy as an Islamic community, which could then be trusted to implement halal standards.

In contrast, small children never made an appearance in Food Italy, at least while I was present. The owner's adult children made frequent appearances; however, employees' children were never in the office. Women, seen as primary caregivers, were allowed to take care of children outside of the office space. One of the workers in Food Italy, told me she felt very fortunate to work at the company because the boss' wife, who also manages the workers "is so kind and understands family." She told me this as another employee left to get her child vaccinated for the school year. The emphasis on family at Food Italy privileges the owner's family who also dwell in the space. Workers are encouraged to support their own children though this takes place outside of the office. The lack of visibility of children is one way family ties remain hidden, which as I will show later supports the notion that Food Italy is impartial.

In Food Italy, the adult children were encouraged to make themselves scarce when there was an event in the office. Alessia and her brother, Giacomo, both in their early twenties, live in the apartment behind the main office. When it was just Chiara and me, the children made appearances often, scampering to the kitchen to eat breakfast or to make coffee. When I spoke with the owner's daughter, Alessia, she told me that she hated when the space was used for trainings for outsiders because it meant she couldn't leave the back apartment or come home if she was already out. When I asked why she couldn't return she explained that it was business and that she couldn't interrupt sessions.

At the same time, the adult children engaged often with employees, as evidenced by my fieldnotes that recorded the following incident:

“Help me move this.” Chiara, the administrator at Food Italy’s parent company, said as we pushed boxes back from the main table where the Food Italy’s parent company runs courses. She and I are usually the only ones working in the Milan office. We moved the large television screen closer to the couch divided by a partial wall. A few minutes later Alessia came out from the back apartment and said unapologetically, “Excuse me, if you are going to move things you have to let me know.”

Chiara, who is also a lawyer, must manage the owner’s household because this is also her workspace. She is expected to complete tasks to support his family including arranging the cleaning schedule with the janitor, organizing boxes in the basement (a storage space used for both the home and business), and ensuring that the office and, therefore the owner and his family, have coffee.

5.5 Communal Space as Value-Add

I was working when the doorbell to the Halal Italia office rang. Mohammed slipped out and returned with a young woman. I introduced myself, and she and Mohammed sat at the large co-working table in the office. Listening to their conversation, I heard that she had grown up Muslim but had stopped practicing. She was now seriously dating an Italian Catholic and considering having a family with him. As a Muslim woman she was aware that the sharia forbade her from marrying a non-Muslim. She was interested in learning about the conversion process for her partner.

After she left, Mohammed turned to me and said, “It happens a lot that we have people converting for marriage, but they don’t really mean it.” In response I asked, “Because it needs to be for other motives?” He said, “No, it’s just difficult because the community puts a lot of energy into potential converts.” He said at the moment they had three new potential converts, but he

expressed some uncertainty about them: one was too strict, the other didn't study enough, and the third was still at the very beginning stages of the process.

This example shows two important elements of the communal space. First, that accepting new converts can be risky because they, too, would participate in many spheres of the community. Second, the space serves as a community resource for many Muslims, not just those who belong to the community. Many members work across the businesses and are also responsible for offering advice to Muslims who do not belong to the community. The workspace is also an Islamic community resource, and this provides legitimacy from the wider Islamic community.

In a presentation to United Arab Emirates representatives about Halal Italia, the audit body emphasized the historical foundations of Islam in Italy, Coreis as a community of Muslims, and Halal Italia linking Muslims and non-Muslims through food. It is telling that in this presentation about Halal Italia, the community emphasized their community efforts, which I was told many times was part of the Halal Italia initiative (see below slide).

The emphasis on Coreis' efforts legitimizes the community. In this slide they highlight their position within the *ummah* or global Islamic community. They provide education for those outside of the community and work within governmental systems to promote Islamic needs. The presentation promotes the notion that members of Coreis are legitimate spokespeople for Muslims, more broadly.

5.6 Family Explicit and Obscured

In the case of Food Italy, family forms the basis of the relations within the office, though, as I have shown, the interaction between family and non-family members can be challenging. Indeed,

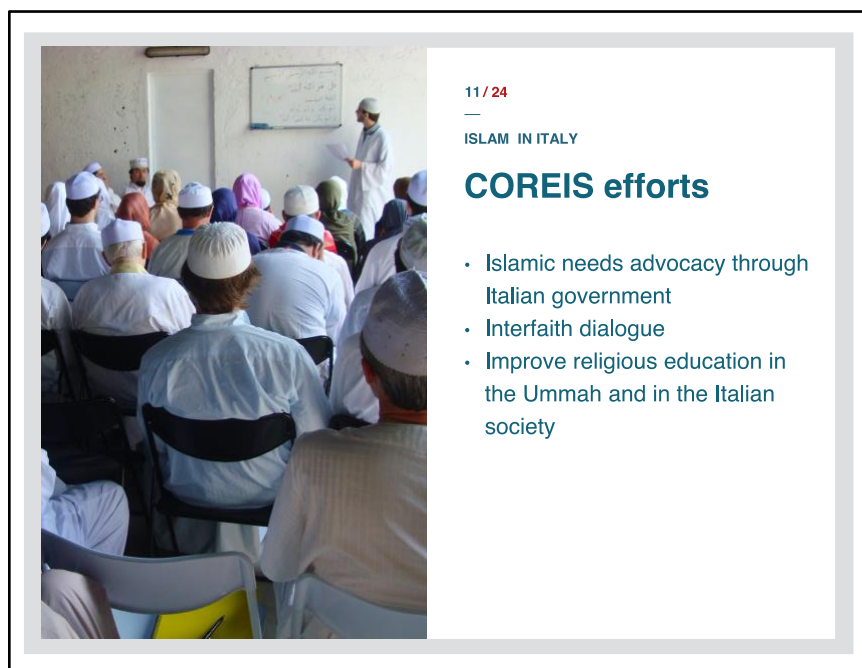


Figure 5.4 Coreis community gathers for a lecture. Taken from a slideshow intended for UAE representatives.

family members who work in the business use kinship ties to push their own agendas with non-family workers. This family strife is not a new phenomenon for Italian businesses; it has been well-documented by Sylvia Yanagisako (2002). However, the challenges recorded by Yanagisako demonstrated inter-family strife. In the case of Food Italy, issues between family and non-family workers most often arose. This was especially clear at the end of May when I helped with a major event for Food Italy's parent company.

Six workers from the Catania office made the trip to Milan, including the daughter of the owner's brother-in-law (niece). Chiara, the Milan office manager, made dinner reservations for the speakers and the office staff at 10:00 p.m. The owner's niece, Ana, believed the reservation to be too late. All of the workers were crammed in Chiara's tiny office, and Ana strategically brought in the owner's wife (her aunt) to discuss timing. The owner and his wife said they would attend if Chiara moved the dinner reservation to 9:00 p.m. Chiara begrudgingly and immediately obliged because, as she said later, Ana is "related to my boss." The boss and his wife did not

come to dinner and Ana did not arrive to the restaurant until 10:30 p.m. When I asked Chiara about this, she told me that “she is the boss’s niece. What can he do?... They argue a lot, but he can’t fire her... she is family.” In the tight quarters of Chiara’s office, Ana played up her family relations; without bringing in the owner’s wife into the small office space, she would have likely lost the argument. Internally, there may be strife between workers, but the outward facing campaigns value impartiality. What is interesting is that the familial ties in the business are not discussed with outsiders. For example, on the Food Italy certification site, there is a news article about the Food Italy office in Milan, where all the aforementioned familial-based conflicts took place. The article reads: “New offices have been designed for smart working, with high ergonomic efficiency and advanced tools to support communication with international clients.”⁵¹

I had thought an emphasis on family would likely be an added bonus for many of the producers that they work with. I once made a comment that many of the producers that were in the process of certification had *fratello* or brother in the name, I was told this is because most companies are family owned.

All of the workers in the office were from Sicily, a fact that I never heard them bring up with others, though people would start conversations by asking where they were from. The Food Italy workspace allows opportunities for the owner to downplay his southern Italian identity. In many ways, the Food Italy brand dealt in knowledge of the southern parts of the country while asserting they are impartial and could, therefore, be trusted.

⁵¹ <http://www.fooditalycertification.it/news/i-nuovi-uffici-food-italy-certification>

From the conversations I overheard, the Food Italy team never used either their southern Italian identity or stereotypes about families in the south to forge relations. I was told many times at Halal Italia that “southern people are different than northern people in that they work like they are with family.” In contrast, with producers and distributors, Food Italy explained that they are an impartial entity. Members of Food Italy, while relying on a form of social relations common in work life in Italy, publicly emphasize their impartiality, not the least of which is through office space. Power believes that audits “[transform] the environments to which they are applied.” As illustrated by the Food Italy case, auditing bodies also transform their relations based on values promulgated by the specific form of checking. For Food Italy, this is never discussing family ties nor having children visible to those outside of the business, even though these relations have an impact on the mundane work life.

5.7 Conclusion

Following World War II, legislators passed a series of laws granting universal healthcare and protecting workers’ rights. The legislation encouraged an increase in small, family-owned businesses in two ways. First, people could open business without having to pay for workers’ healthcare and second, many businesses remained small, to avoid possible legal disputes.

Space influenced socio-economic configurations in Italian service-oriented businesses. By centering on the service sector in Italy, I mean to expand theorizations of economy, space, and family to understand how spatial patterns operate in business relations both within organizations and with outsiders. While the two workspaces considered in this study look similar, the multiple functionalities of each determine different forms of sociality. These differences are governed by the perception of space ownership. In the case of Food Italy, the space is owned and dwelled in

by the owner of the business. The familial aspects of work remain unsaid to protect an image of impartiality, which might be questioned if the owner made his familial ties explicit or employees and the owner emphasized their southern Italian identity.

However, Coreis' business spaces are seen as community property and ties are made explicit.

The Halal Italia space allows women and men to participate in a wide range of activities such as childrearing or providing spiritual advice. The space as community resource legitimizes Coreis position within the larger Muslim community. Through space they make explicit their role as spiritual advisor, family-friendly organization, and educator for the broader Muslim community.

In this way, both businesses convert spatial relations into value.

Spatial patterns in Italy shape two interrelated elements of economic life. First, spatial patterns influence decision-making on a daily basis. The owner's niece, Ana, strategically navigates this space to influence decision-making. She uses her familial ties to decide the scheduling of the organization's dinner. Also, in this context, members of the Islamic community decide that they can put time towards personal ends, such as, taking breaks, going to the bank, or checking on their children. Decisions are inflected by the understanding of space in both contexts. In Halal Italia, space is treated as community property, and women and children fluidly cross material and symbolic thresholds between home and work.

Second, space informs a labor hierarchy but perhaps not as expected. The corner office that separates the supervisor from his supervisees does not exist. Rather, the hierarchy becomes clear around who can transgress the boundaries between work and home. For example, Noor brings her son into the office when he is sick, and all workers pitch in with childcare. In contrast, those in the Food Italy space, whether affiliated with the business or not, do not bring their children

into the office, and the adult children remain hidden to outsiders but participate in the daily running of the business; the grown children have a say in what Chiara can do to her workspace.

My emphasis on how space operates is to incorporate the many influences that form economic life in Italy. I mean to think about the many logics at play in work. Such an approach illuminate how value in capitalism “...move[s] back and forth between non-capitalist and capitalist forms” and how “these forms shape each other and interpenetrate” (Tsing 2015: 65). It is in the encounter—with objects, spaces, and people—that these categories of work, home, and family are valued.

Chapter 6: Alta Qualità

6.1 Making Something Good: Daily Valuation Practices

Fatima and I were walking to the Post Office when she pointed and said, “that’s our butcher shop.” I looked over to see that the shop was dark without any indication of “halal.” Through the darkened window I could see a white countertop with empty glass cases. I may have confused the scene for another of type of store if it weren’t for the cured meats hanging from hooks in the window. I asked Fatima, “Is he a Muslim?” She responded, “No, but he has alta qualità (high quality) meat and he sources halal meat for us.” This was the first time I noticed the use of the term alta qualità.

In this chapter, I investigate the use of alta qualità which, I argue, is a way both Muslim and non-Muslim Italians qualify what is a good food. I think about how values circulate through the category of alta qualità. I draw on economic sociology and research on the process of qualification to center on how humans both categorize something and decide whether it is good. The evaluation step of this can occur individually or in conversation with others. Let’s take the example of spaghetti. From the word alone, every reader will quickly classify a spaghetti as a type of pasta. With as little information as a noun, humans quickly categorize material into social worlds: you may think of recipes you make or your dinner last night. Now, whether the spaghetti I’m specifically referring to is a good version of spaghetti is a question I could engage with others to assess. In conversation with someone who is stocking the shelves at the grocery store, she may mention that whole wheat spaghetti tastes really different and persuade me to get the normal, durum wheat version. I can, and likely would, default to her knowledge and expertise. She has experience with spaghetti and can offer sound advice on whether this particular spaghetti

is *good* and, therefore, worth buying and eating. However, evaluation is not always the result of social input and can happen simultaneously. For example, categorizing spaghetti as a pasta may be enough for me to decide not to buy it. This could be the result of many factors, including a strict diet or an allergy to pasta.

In this chapter, I grapple with this duality in what economic sociologists call the “process of qualification,” specifically in the Italian milieu. I investigate the term *alta qualità*, which is used to categorize a food as “good” food. However, I distinguish that something deemed good does not always mean it is worthy of consumption. As I will demonstrate *alta qualità* does not always turn a food item licit, although it is an important way Italian Muslims evaluate their food choices. For both certifications, *alta qualità* plays a role institutionally and allows one to decide if something can be certified. I contrast these two cases to show that although the term is the same, the evaluative practices differ and, therefore, speak to the myriad ways foods as material become embedded in local sociality.

6.2 Alta Qualità in Language

In this chapter, I leave the term *alta qualità* in Italian. *Alta qualità* can be roughly translated as high quality but also has connotations of “high end.” *Alta qualità* is not just used in everyday conversation but is also used in the Italian food sector, more broadly.

Alta qualità is often associated in the Italian realm with Geographic Indications (as discussed in further detail in Chapter 3). For example, for some products, like *prosciutto cotto* or Italian baked ham, there are three levels of quality depending on the amount of moisture in the final product (“Prosciutto Cotto: What Are the Differences?” n.d.). The lowest amount of moisture is designated as *alta qualità* and this is defined by law. Baked ham that does not have the additional

alta qualità means parts of the pigs are combined together. There is little to no recognition of where the parts come from. As a result of the mixing process, baked ham that is not alta qualità tends to have a high moisture content, usually over 80%. In contrast, the muscles are clearly visible for a baked ham leg that is distinguished as alta qualità. This is also measured with humidity, which is around 75%. This is just one example of how alta qualità, which is ubiquitous in daily life, is also associated with legal distinctions of artisanal craft food products in Italy.

I noticed that the category of alta qualità to Halal Italia staff is similar to the Islamic concept of *tayyib* (pure; good), which I expanded on in Chapter 4. As explored elsewhere in this dissertation, the World Halal Authority would not certify cigarettes as halal because they are not *tayyib* (wholesome; good; pure). Interlocutors also mentioned this verse when making connections between quality and allowable foods. It is notable that the community of Sufi converts often invoked alta qualità, using *tayyib* rarely. Though this could be a consequence of my own positionality—as a non-Muslim American and only an advanced beginner Arabic speaker. In any case, what is clear is that in many different contexts, involving many different audiences in Italy, alta qualità is an important avenue to understand this process of qualification.

6.3 Valuation, Qualification, and Dual Processes

The question of social order and individual action has long been of interest to anthropologists. In recent years, this has become framed as a two-part process: categorization and evaluation. As the spaghetti example showed, categorization can happen almost immediately. For theorists like Pierre Bourdieu, this process of categorization speaks to social order (Bourdieu 1977). That is, classifying frames are forms of social order which are reproduced in daily life through the second step in the process: evaluation. Evaluation is when we take the category to decide

whether, for example, a particular package of spaghetti is good. The relationship between categorization and evaluation was also about the constraints of individual action. Put another way, individuals could not evaluate whether something is good or bad without categories. Categories are the fields or worlds of classification, which constrain individual evaluation. Let's turn to an example in art to further clarify this point. For example, there is a category of what is *not* art, and *not art* can never be *good* art (Kuipers and Franssen, In Press). Pricing art is also a good example of this process. It is through the process of institutionalizing prices that art dealers also create cultural meanings about different actors and the quality of the work (Velthuis 2003). Food, like art, is also subjective and what makes good food is often framed by categories that influence how actors decide to consume or to certify a product.

Food has been a particularly fruitful avenue to explore categories of symbolic boundary-making. Mary Douglas emphasized that food is symbolic, which not only generates meaning but provides order. For example, she posited that Muslims and Jews do not eat pork because pigs do not fit into the cultural categories that define what is edible. This structure produces symbolic boundaries between what is "clean" and what is "dirty" (Douglas [1966] 2002). Boundaries that, in turn, support community identity because they also mark the margin between religious adherents and those outside of the religious community. By combining structuralism with symbolic anthropology, she emphasized the binary oppositions (clean/dirty) that order people's worlds with the ways in which these symbols express culture (Douglas [1966] 2002).

To further think about categorization, I also incorporate elements like taste. For example, Michele Lamont shows that ideas about taste across classes in France and the U.S. produce codes for how to classify others (what she calls symbolic boundaries). She is interested in the "nature,

content, and causes of the subjective symbolic boundaries that can potentially frame, channel and limit people's lives" (Lamont 1994:174). Classification is a code; a way people order their lives. Yet, people are not wholly beholden to classifying structures. People make decisions based on codes and the cultural resources afforded to them by society. Put another way, categories are frames, not determinants of action. People evaluate whether a book, a piece of art, or a food is a good version of that category based on many aspects including their positionality, access to cultural resources, and personal commitments. Fatima's choice to use a non-Muslim butcher speaks to this. She deems the meat as *alta qualità*, yet this choice is certainly partially a result of her location. Because the area in which she lives is gentrifying quickly, it is rare to come across a Muslim butcher.

Pushing this process further, pragmatist economic sociologists focus on justification, or put simply, how actors justify their actions (Boltanski and Thevenot 2006). For Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thevenot justifications speak to "economies of worth" or the justification of action against a number of scales. What I want to highlight is that to be successful, a justification must draw on values that resonate with the audience. Values are framed by repertoire, which are flexible forms of justification used in various situations to support claims. To explore repertoires, economic sociologists of this school have focused on qualities and how people justify what is a good something. For example, Frank Heuts and Annemarie Mol ask: What is a good tomato? (Heuts and Mol 2013). By foregrounding qualities, the authors show that asking this particular question can shed light on the practice of valuing. By evaluating a tomato as good, tomato experts are also performing and valorizing their own practices to increase the value of the tomatoes themselves. Huets and Mol expand evaluation to valuing, which demonstrates the

“varied ways of performing ‘good tomatoes’, from assessing and appreciating, to adapting and improving.” (Heuts and Mol 2013:130).

As I have detailed earlier, this process is not only enacted through justifications but through a specific historical and cultural history. Qualities are not only performative but shaped through and across cultural histories. As Susanne Friedberg (2010) shows, freshness is a concept that has changed over time and in relation to new technologies like refrigeration and changing conceptions of what is beautiful and natural. Like freshness, *alta qualità* is a frame that is significant due to its specific history attached to the best foods, which in the past 30 years has been operationalized into Italian food law.

As authors Gislinde Kuipers and Thomas Frassen explain, “...reality is often local and limited” (Kuipers and Franssen, In Press: 2). Beliefs about goodness are social. As such, social scientists have examined the process of qualification for many actors in one sector, the Dutch tomato realm. However, I am interested in how qualification can operate differently within the same context across two different realms of certification. My data show that *alta qualità* does not fit neatly into either individual agency or into structural frames. In other words, *alta qualità* is not just a mirror of larger institutional processes, nor is it an individual endeavor. Rather, it is a moment of encounter framed by both.

The category of *alta qualità* in Italian complicates the idea of consumption as purely the result of institutional frames. It says something about how we as anthropologists, producers, and consumers navigate our own choices and how unseen elements outside of traditional transactional studies of capitalism (trust, community, commensality, identity, gender) are leveraged, rooted, disembodied, and brought to bear in and outside of these transactions. I have

found that the utterance *alta qualità* indexes many of these diverse motivations and logics. It is an important linguistic device that draws boundaries around what is considered good. However, good in this context, does not always mean fit for consumption.

6.4 Institutionalizing Alta Qualità

The morning began chaotically at Halal Italia. Fatima got a call from a Sicilian company that wanted to be halal certified. After Fatima explained the halal certification process, they responded angrily. Fatima exclaimed: “We don’t doubt your product is *alta qualità*.” Her assurances were met with shouts on the other end. This went on for about 10 more minutes.

After, Fatima, a little shaken from the call, turned to those of us in the office and said, “Why do producers think, just because we make them go through a certification process, we think their products are not *alta qualità*?” This rhetorical question turned into a discussion about the need for oversight, even if it the company is a small, artisanal producer. The women in the office used this time to speak about a company in Naples that did not pass an audit as a result of too “many little things,” such as “eating on the line of production.” It soon became clear to me that the company’s failure was about more than little things. The women said that it was clear that the grandchildren who managed the factory were not interested in halal. My Halal Italia colleagues explained that the common refrain from those who fail an audit is, “But my product is *alta qualità*”.

For non-Muslim producers, *alta qualità* categorizes a product as a material like halal which does not need halal oversight. The logic here is that they already care about their product so they should be granted a halal certification. The fact that producers use *alta qualità* says something about how non-Muslim Italian producers justify their claims, performing their product as *already*

something of value. Producers who fail the halal certification process believe this utterance has weight when communicating with Halal Italia staff. However, this justification does not convince Halal Italia staff who respond by saying the quality of the product is not the issue; indeed, they don't "doubt" the *alta qualità* of the product. In the absence of a halal certification, *alta qualità* stands to merge failing an inspection with the perceived high standards of production that may or, as is often the case, may not follow halal guidelines. In the Italian case, *alta qualità* is used as a way to make judgments about a product outside of procedure. For Halal Italia staff, *alta qualità* does not designate a product as halal, while for some producers it does.

Interestingly, Halal Italia staff see value in using *alta qualità*, encouraging the use of term in marketing strategies. For halal certifiers, a product's *alta qualità* should be emphasized in the marketing strategy as made clear in the following ethnographic example.

I woke up early and met Haroun in front of my apartment complex, north of the city, to attend a Halal Italia training. The training would last the whole day and include content about what halal is and how it should be implemented. As we travelled further northeast, neighborhoods turned to large grey buildings. Once we reached our destination on a street lined with grey buildings, parking meant leaving the car on the side of the road. We walked along the road, stopping in various buildings to ask for directions. Finally, we found the company.

Much of the training course was explaining what halal is and how it can be implemented. The last part of the session focused on marketing products with halal certification. During this part of the session, Haroun gave the example of a certified halal salami company who had decided to make a new brand for their halal line of products. They named this new brand Al Pasha. Haroun pointed out that there is nothing inherently wrong with the name but that it probably did not have



Figure 6.1 An example of 'simple' and 'good' marketing for Halal Italia.

the same impact for consumers in Muslim-majority countries. While in Italy and the U.S. we might associate al-Pasha with luxury, Haroun pointed out that the meaning is simply an Ottoman dignitary. He urged the workers at the training to stay away from stereotypes such as these, adding that “marketing should be based on the *alta qualità* of the product not on stereotypes.”

Haroun explained that marketing halal products should be simple. Yet, the labeling seen in Figure 6.1 is anything but simple. The cheese has five labels including the Italian Protected Designation of Origin (for more information on this label, see Chapter 3). When I asked Haroun about this on our car ride home, he told me that the packaging showed that it was a quality product. Labels, in many cases perform the value of *alta qualità*.

Differing from the Halal Italia example, in the case of Food Italy, *alta qualità* could actually bridge the gap for when a certification did not exist institutionally. This was made clear to me



Figure 6.2 Author and Food Italy colleague at a tradeshow.

when I participated in an event to showcase Food Italy in May of 2018. The event was called “Compliance Day” and drew hundreds of people working in the certification industry. For the event, my supervisor and I were to staff the Food Italy booth (see Figure 6.2). We all went to the event space the day before to help set up the booth. I took this time to talk through what I should say the next day when attendees asked about the Food Italy certification.

“Food Italy seeks high quality (*alta qualità*) products and selects them for you,” my boss explained. I nodded and wrote down the sentence just in case I lost my Italian words in all the chaos. We were going to be handing out wine for a tasting to conference participants. To make sure no one drank too much on an empty stomach, we put out taralli, small rings of dough the size of a pretzel and a common snack food in Italy.

The next day, with my words in my hands, I confidently asked if I could pour a cup of wine for the rush of people between sessions. While pouring and explaining the notes of the wine, I overheard a curious epicurean talking to my boss: “I like these taralli. Do you all certify these

too?” “Yes,” she responded quickly. After the woman left, I turned to my boss and expressed my surprise. I didn’t know we certified taralli. In fact, I was the one inputting all of our products into the e-commerce site, and I had never seen them.

She laughed and said that they were *alta qualità* from a local grocery store chain. In this case, *alta qualità* meant intentional deceit. My supervisor knew we did not certify any taralli, but because they were designated as *alta qualità*, we *could* have certified them. Certainly, my supervisor’s response could point to a nosy anthropologist asking too many questions. In any case, armed with *alta qualità*, my boss at Food Italy can make claims of certification with little worry.

Alta qualità not only has different meanings but does different things for all of the people involved in the certification process. For non-Muslim producers, it is a failed justification that does not hold weight for those at Halal Italia. For Haroun, *alta qualità* is an important avenue to valorize a product through marketing. For my Food Italy supervisor, *alta qualità* means she can tell a fib to conference attendees. *Alta qualità* illustrates one form of valuing in the local context. By using it, people qualify their world and their place in it.

6.5 Consuming Alta Qualità

Alta qualità can also be used when making buying decisions and consuming certain foods. In this section, I expand on this notion further to untangle how *alta qualità* helps those who do not have access to halal foods understand their place in Italy. Before going to Milan, I saw myself as a scholar interested in halal. In my mind this was absurdly black and white. Halal or not halal. Made in Italy or not made in Italy. What I began to notice was a reliance on the vague. As I was struggling to find a binary, my friends and colleagues were maintaining the grey to varying ends.

Before I returned to the United States, two young couples at Halal Italia with whom I was close, invited me and my husband for dinner. We ate at the house of Fatima, who, at the time, was about 5 months pregnant. To save her from having to play host and cook a large meal, her husband offered to pick up burgers. Confused, I asked from where the meat was sourced to see if it was halal. Her husband responded that the meat was *alta qualità*. When I asked what he meant by *alta qualità*, he said that because the animals are treated well, the burgers are allowed. I tried many times to find out if the meat was certified halal. Calling and stopping by the chain restaurant and asking another community member but I could never get a clear answer from either the company or my colleagues. I learned that this was not really the point. The point was that through the category of *alta qualità* the beef was consumable.

However, this does not mean all foods deemed *alta qualità* are necessarily consumable. One night, I went to an iftar that the Islamic community was hosting with a Catholic group. The event began around 8pm. When I arrived, I saw Ali carrying trays of meats from a restaurant which was next to the Catholic church. I asked if I could help, and he pointed to the many meat trays stacked high in the bar. I grabbed one, not quite realizing just how much weight it was. After stumbling, I was upright and moving quickly towards the church following Ali along streetlights, misty with rain. When we arrived, I sat next to another Halal Italia colleague and her son. We began to eat after prayers by the Catholic and Muslim leaders. The trays carried from the bar included prosciutto, a pork-based cured meat, bresaola, and a few vegetarian options.

The Muslims in the room ate none of the food. When I asked my colleague, Alia, why she wasn't eating the non-pork cured options, she replied that while they were *alta qualità*, she also worried about contamination. The pork was produced in the same place and likely came into contact with

the other foods. It was important that Alia categorized the food as *alta qualità*. She likely did this so as not to insult the Catholic community because she was not eating the food from the trays. *Alta qualità* then indexes quality and is also used to maintain social relations because it is valued, though *alta qualità* does have limits in non-Muslim spaces.

Issues of non-Muslim spaces did not only happen in the case of Halal Italia staff. In an interview, a young Italian-Muslim, Mohammed, brought up the issue of ethnic butchers found primarily in my neighborhood of Milan. He explained, “Butcher shops are *not* places of *alta qualità* because they are going for the lowest price.” For Mohammed, price was also an important indicator of the *alta qualità* of meat. In response I asked if he knew of any Italian-owned butcher shops that sell halal meat. He replied that they “would not have halal meat. Their audience is Italians. Wine is also sold.” At issue with Italian-owned butcher shops is not the quality of the meat but the association of wine in these spaces and, therefore, possible contamination. This example shows that *alta qualità* can also be missing from spaces and that the places that lack *alta qualità* are risky.

Food Italy staff similarly used *alta qualità* to decide on foods. However, Food Italy staff applied the term and lack of it to foods during an audit. I went on the audit with my Food Italy colleagues to a high-end restaurant in Milan’s famous Galleria Vittorio Emanuele known for high-end shops and restaurants. The restaurant under inspection specialized in Milanese cuisine. After an intense morning session going through the documentation of all of the restaurant’s food, we were told to order lunch. This, too, was an element of the inspection. Chiara, told me to order *ossobuco*. The hearty dish is a specialty of Lombardy and is comprised of braised veal shanks

that are braised. Because the lunch was part of the inspection, she told me it was important to taste it.

After the day-long inspection, which the restaurant passed, Chiara told me “the *ossobuco* was not alta qualità.” She felt that some of the raw ingredients might have been frozen. I agreed and asked, “Then why was the restaurant certified?” She responded, “[the restaurant] followed the rules.” A few moments later, I asked the head of Food Italy what he thought about the food. He explained, “The flavor was good, this determines quality.” To the head of Food Italy, flavor indexes quality. This is in contrast to what Chiara believes, which is that the raw materials were not alta qualità. Although Chiara did not believe the restaurant’s food to be alta qualità, it passed the inspection anyway. Like in the Halal Italia example, local consumer categories and evaluations differ from the aspects that become institutionalized.

When I asked my colleagues at Food Italy what makes a product worthy of certification, they answered with two elements. First, company structure. When I asked them to expand, it became clear that the producer needed to have a good system in place to show that they implement the rules of the certification appropriately. This is similar to themes of structure for halal certifiers. Structure, in this case, deemed a company worthy of certification. The second element was taste. As I was told, taste should be used to determine quality. This claim was always in the context that personal relationships do not trump taste. However, taste is fairly subjective as the audit example shows. When tastes diverge structure is invoked. “They followed the rules,” responds Chiara.

In the case of consumption, alta qualità is simultaneously a category and an evaluation. This category is not static and often changes depending on three elements on the consumption-side,

first, context. As the example with the Catholic community shows, the context of contamination cannot make an alta qualità food halal. Second, places can change whether something is deemed alta qualità. Mohammed warns me about ‘ethnic butcher shops’ that are not, on the whole, imagined as places of alta qualità. Third, tastes differ as seen in the example of Chiara and the owner of Food Italy. To the owner, the ossobuco tastes good, to Chiara it does not. In the process of institutionalizing qualifiers such as alta qualità the fact that they have a good structure in place becomes most relevant.

6.6 Conclusion

Alta qualità is contextual, indexing a vast number of meanings, values, and logics. I provide context to understand how, when, and why alta qualità is uttered. I am interested in the process of qualification which is two-fold but happens simultaneously in the use of alta qualità: classifying and evaluating a material food as good. Through encounters of when the term is uttered, I show how concepts in local food ways impact the work of the certifier. I think through how alta qualità is used for different ends and on different scales. In the case of consumers of halal, alta qualità is an important way to signify that a food is good, but this does not always mean it is consumable. In contrast, for Food Italy, alta qualità signifies taste and structure. When these elements become institutionalized, alta qualità becomes about structure for Food Italy and good marketing for Halal Italia. In both cases, alta qualità helps actors evaluate whether something is *good*.

Alta qualità indexes a haziness that develops from stark boundaries—halal or haram, Made in Italy or not. In the past, anthropologists have focused on how food sustains certain identities, be they ethnic, socio-economic, class, or racial. Yet, alta qualità moves away from food as solely

identity-affirming or community-building. It indexes something else. The use of the term points to the registers people use to navigate their food choices daily.

The origins of *alta qualità* parallel the historical development of an Italian national identity through food, as explored more fully in Chapter 3. I have compared two certification industries to show how different actors view complicated scenarios as both consumers and certifiers. The term also highlights important elements in building an institutional pattern. For example, my Food Italy boss in the case of the *taralli* sees *alta qualità* as having weight even though standards may not be met.

For halal certifiers, *alta qualità* is used to urge companies to move away from stereotypes circulating about the Islamic world. During the training, which takes place before a halal inspection, there is already an understanding that the product is *alta qualità*. By simply beginning the certification process, certifiers believe there is a certain high-quality level of production. However, *alta qualità* has its limits. Some companies believed that their *alta qualità* products meant they did not have to go through the halal certification process. Through *alta qualità*, certifiers, producers, and consumers make assessments about foods.

Certifiers pronouncing *alta qualità* engage with procedure in varying ways. For Food Italy, a perceived lack of *alta qualità* foods does not necessarily mean a restaurant will not receive certification. Of course, *alta qualità* also means different things to different people. For Chiara, the food at the high-end restaurant was not *alta qualità* even though they had met all of the requirements necessary for certification. For the owner, the questions about *alta qualità* were a matter of taste. Along with certification procedures and subjective elements like taste, *alta*

qualità signals a material as possibly certifiable. At the extreme end of this continuum, alta qualità can nullify procedure in favor of convenience, as seen in the case of taralli.

Although heavily used, alta qualità also has its limits for consumers. Context can be an important marker to determine if something is both alta qualità and consumable. This was made clear during the *iftar* with the Catholic community.

Evaluation is multiple and points to the many values certifiers and consumers draw from in their daily work and social lives. Through the cases expanded on in this chapter, I showed that the use of alta qualità points to various frames encountered through food. I also showed that alta qualità illustrates a register of values that encompasses each person's frame. The process of qualification through the use of alta qualità positions certifiers and consumers as drawing from similar registers. It is in the encounter between varying uses of alta qualità and subsequent consensus that the term is translated into value for those in the certification realm.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

In *Invisible Cities* by Italo Calvino (1972), the intrepid explorer, Marco Polo, has audience with the emperor Kublai Khan. Polo describes a number of fictitious cities to the busy emperor throughout the book. After Polo describes the ninth city of Aglaura, which exists differently in discourse than in lived experience, the Khan believes he can more accurately describe cities from his own mind. The Khan tells Polo that his cities would be based on a model comprised of elements which all cities should possess. However, the Khan is not able to describe any of the cities Polo has seen. Polo responds:

“I have also thought of a model city from which I derive all others... It is a city made only of exceptions, exclusions, incongruities, contradictions... But I cannot force my operation beyond a certain limit: I would arrive at cities too probable to be real” (Calvino 1972:32)⁵²

Similarly, the project of the certifier is to operate within a world that is empirically true but also one of discourse, and like Polo’s cities they are limited by the worlds they inhabit. There is only so much they can know about the production processes that they are certifying. Diversity in local practice, products, knowledge, export markets, and of auditors themselves means that the procedure cannot always be applied the same way for every production scheme. Put simply, there are many steps in the process where cultural attitudes and social relations may creep in. This is true even when a certain tool or device is used to inspect a material food. A material investigation through scientific means may appear straightforward, for example, my coworkers

⁵² Translated by author from the original Italian which is as follows: “Anch’io ho pensato un modello di città da cui deduco tutte le altre... È una città fatta solo d’eccezioni, preclusioni, contraddizioni, incongruenze, controsensi.... Ma non posso spingere la mia operazione oltre un certo limite: otterrei delle città troppo verosimili per essere vere.” (Calvino 1972:32)

often collected samples from production lines. Samples were sent to a lab to check for, say, porcine residue in the case of halal, or harmful bacteria in the case of Food Italy. Yet, when I spoke to coworkers about this practice, they explained that they would only collect samples if they felt they could not trust a producer. Scientific work is a cultural and social phenomenon, and one that cannot easily be untangled from trust.

Yet, the most surprising finding was not that certifications are anything but straightforward. Rather, through the comparison of the daily workings of halal and made in Italy certifications, I found that the audiences for certifications varied and were not only consumers in foreign markets. Through their daily work, certifiers are making places in which they are legitimate brokers, and this has implications for the certifications they create through daily practice.

7.2 The Many Audiences of Certifications

If we compare across ethical projects in food, we learn how food becomes reframed in varying contexts and how working within these frames creates both legible worlds and legitimate actors. Put another way, the certifying process has many audiences, not just consumers in foreign markets but also other Italians and, in the case of halal, co-religionists. This is likely not particular to the Italian context. However, the values that are circulated are unique to the Italian case. For example, the contemporary context means that Italian foods are sought after because they allow, in some sense, one to consume an idyllic place: the feelings attached to Italy have economic as well as social value. As a result, even halal certifiers deal in Italian foods as the best-made in the world and they use marketing and standardizing narratives to position themselves as authorities on local foodways.

I began this dissertation with an ethnographic account that illustrated how important Italian food culture was to the halal certification process. At issue for certifiers and business representatives was the difference between grana padano and parmesan cheese. As I mentioned, the audience was upset that Dr. Mohammed confused parmesan with grana padano—both cheeses look similar, are aged, and are made in the north of Italy. However, the similarities were not the point, people at the training were laser focused on the differences and these differences mattered. As a result, consumers are not the only ones who have a say in how certifications are implemented; trainings also provided a moment for Dr. Mohammed to illustrate his knowledge of Italian foods. Dr. Mohammed demonstrated that he knew differences in products by correcting himself. Differences—in products, people, and markets—may seem like uncomfortable bedfellows next to certifiers’ standardizing practices. However, diversity and standardization are not polar opposites but ways in which certifiers can demonstrate their local knowledge, an important attribute when certifying Italian foods. Dr. Mohammed must know his hard, Italian cheeses even while training others about halal. Although the work of the certifier is to, in some capacity, standardize narratives, they also rely on knowledge of Italian food diversity and it is through this knowledge that their projects becomes legitimate.

The culture of food certifications in Italy continues to be a powerful force in the creation of the halal industry today. We can call this uniqueness the “Italian-ness of halal.” Italian-ness plays out both individually and institutionally and guides both certifiers and consumers in how to elect foods as halal. The Italian certification realm influences the structure of both types of certifications. They both work on a 3-year timeline, at which point certifications can expire, and they both implement annual audits. Both entities operating in Italy incorporate international

regulations into their production process, and, in both cases, international regulations are not wholly applied but interpreted and reframed in the same context.

Halal is created within a context of local cultural values, and as such, the influence of the local context is unique. Another example of this Italian-ness is the issue of genetically modified crops and organisms (GMOs). The Italian World Halal Authority (WHA) does not certify GMOs, while the US-based IFANCA does. Italians are especially suspicious of GMOs and this suspicion carries through, even to religious certifications. This is significant because halal is not a detached set of rules, but rules that are reframed within local cultural ideas about food.

The Italian-ness of the halal realm also comes out of a particular institutional history. A major divergence in Halal Italia's philosophy compared to the standard, Sunni Islamic philosophy is that they believe in Transcendental Unity, or the idea that all world religions seek knowledge and are therefore valid. While this has created a fissure between the Muslims that make up Coreis and those outside of the institution, this has also made Coreis a major voice in Italian Islam and, subsequently, halal.

The Italian government more easily entrusted the community to start a halal certification due to Coreis' broad acceptance of other religions. The government gave Halal Italia resources including professional guidance and funding to start-up their venture and the government did this with the aim of exporting made in Italy products into Muslim-majority country markets. It is clear that Coreis was uniquely positioned to start the halal certification industry in Italy. This was also an important opportunity for Coreis. In their work of rendering local products halal through procedure, so is Coreis rendering itself legible to the broader Islamic world. Halal Italia's work is not only to check the manufacture of materials but also to act as an authority on halal across the

globe. It is significant that their halal certification is accepted broadly, while their beliefs are not. Through their halal certification, Coreis is staking a claim about their own legitimacy as practitioners of Islam.

The Italian-ness of halal is not only a matter of legitimacy for global market audiences but also becomes apparent in daily work life. For example, Italian work life is enmeshed in kin relations and the ways in which Italian certification institutions function on a daily basis is analogous. This is not the first ethnography to note the importance of kinship in Italian work life (Blim 1990; Yanagisako 2002). Halal Italia operates similar to Food Italy, however, the differences between the two also matter.

Halal Italia welcomed children in workspaces and women who worked at the entity were encouraged to cross boundaries between work and home. Women ran home to let in the cleaning lady or to check on their children. In contrast, workers at Food Italy rarely brought their children into the office despite the fact that there were many kin relations. Family is not only important and fraught in Italian work life but is also a key element in organizing profitable institutions whether overtly religious or not. While kin relations and spatial boundaries look similar across the two institutions, they diverge in what they communicate. Halal Italia employees bring their children into the office and encourage women to cross boundaries because they are part of a religious community first. In contrast, Food Italy, an entity run by southern Italians, wishes to appear professional and, as a result, they obscure kin relations and kinship locality patterns. Both of these logics legitimize kin networks in work life, though to different ends.

Another key component of the Italian-ness of halal is the made in Italy mark itself, which conjures ideas of craftsmanship that ease contradictions of global capitalist exchange. The simple

fact that we cannot know all the steps in food manufacturing has produced similar forms of checking—audit bodies like Food Italy and Halal Italia make money by easing this obscurity created by technological advancements in food transportation. Yet, these forms of Italian checking are also apart from all others because they rely on and deal in made in Italy. There is no doubt that all Italian food certifiers, producers, and consumers—whether halal or made in Italy—see made in Italy products as economically and socially valuable. The process of associating good food with Italian food production was a recent phenomenon and one that developed as much within Italy as without. Yet, despite a complicated historical origin, halal certifiers, like their other food certification counterparts, center their project on the craftsmanship associated with made in Italy foods. Being Italian has value and, with their particular knowledge, Halal Italia also legitimizes the place of Islam within Italian society.

The Italian-ness of halal is an aspect of the different audiences that stake varying claims in global capitalist exchange. The particulars of the Italian halal case are significant and cannot be swept under the category of “global halal.” In this way, I speak back to a dearth of research on the national qualities that influence the implementation of halal checking (Fischer 2015).

Through a comparative frame the distinctiveness of working life in Italy becomes apparent as well as how this uniqueness influences local forms of halal. The discourse about global halal worlds, while important, has also created worlds too probable to be real, and it is only through local comparison that we can fully engage with the particulars, adding to how certifiers remake and value many aspects of their lives beyond profitable ventures. This turn adds to a diverse economies approach that takes seriously the ways participation in capitalist endeavors reinterpret local cultural institutions for global aims.

7.3 The Value of a Comparative Methodology

We live in unique times when the value we place on food foods is based on symbols. In places like our local grocery stores we walk past packaging that boasts Halal, Kosher, sustainable, organic, fair trade, Non-GMO, made in the USA, made in Italy, and on and on. These seals that dot our landscape are at the heart of this dissertation and show an important shift in decoding where our food is sourced. While social scientists have investigated these recent symbols, little attention has been paid to how cultural foodways influence these operations across more than one institution in the same context. This comparative approach is a key methodological component and opens up the opportunity to look at the differences that matter.

There are two forms of food certifications that social scientists have examined separately. On the one hand, anthropologists have examined how secular certifications function within a local community (Lyon 2008; Besky 2008; Fisher 2018; Haedicke 2016) and, on the other hand, social scientists have investigated religious certifications (Bergeaud-Blackler 2017; Allam 2008; Armanios and Ergene 2018; Farouk 2013; Horowitz 2016). Yet, more work is necessary to examine how local certification institutions operate and interpret local and global rules across secular and religious lines within the same context.

The inclination in social science to investigate either religious or secular certifications is in part due to the belief that they address seemingly different risks. However, following on many foundational works in anthropology, I take seriously the idea that risks are constituted by local ideas about foods. In other words, while there may be universal proscriptions for a religion practiced across the world, these are interpreted in different ways based on local commitments, structural constraints, and ideas about those foods; not to mention that these proscriptions often

change over time. For example, the prohibition of alcohol is considered a distinctive feature of Muslim societies, yet, rules about the consumption of alcohol for Muslims have changed over time and in different places. It is well known that for two centuries the Ottoman elite banned alcohol while continuing to drink alcohol themselves (Ahmed 2017). What this example shows is that rules not only change over time but are only part of the story. How rules are implemented and interpreted is just as important. Yet, despite the importance of the cultural and political context, few studies on religious certifications have taken a comparative approach.

Anthropology provides an important methodological lens into this comparative approach. For almost 20 years anthropologists have shown that objects are not detached from the people that own, produce, and, in this case, certify them. This is an important point because many studies rarely compare religious certifications with non-religious ones, even though the objects produced from both processes are embedded in local values. Material culture studies emphasized the human significance of things beyond just materials of exchange emphasizing how we live with and through things (Miller 2009; Appadurai 1988). We have known for some time that materials are made meaningful through their embeddedness in social systems.

I urge social scientists who focus on food certifications to incorporate this ethnographic perspective and comparative methodology, centering on local food culture as key to building institutions that deal in the global exchange of foodways. We must begin to incorporate comparative frames across ethical projects. Make no mistake—my call is not meant to equate ethical projects, but rather to better understand, like the example of Dr. Mohammed, the differences that matter.

7.4 Conclusion

Let us return to Italo Calvino's classic, *Invisible Cities* (1972). By the time you read through the first few cities you are struck by the improbability of them—cities of the unborn, of sadness, and of earth instead of air. Cities are places of disorienting gloom, in fact, there are no places to live at all. Yet, these cities allow us to think about the constraints of the material world and how they structure how we live. Each world in *Invisible Cities* has its own logic no matter how strange or irrational; they are cities and we can imagine them as such despite the improbability of them. Like Calvino's cities, the world in which food certifications operate have their own particular logic, one that cannot be teased apart from cultural patterns of food. We can imagine certification worlds as the endless outskirts of Calvino's invisible cities. Cities that are structured by their own special qualities, yet they remain cities nonetheless.

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