The Organization of Alevis in Sweden:

The Federation of Alevi Unions in Sweden and the Alevi Cultural Centers

in Light of the Swedish Incorporation Regime

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to understand how and to which degree Alevis are organized in Sweden and how their organization depends on internal and external factors. The study presents a historical overview of Alevism, the Alevi movement and Alevis’ position during the rule of the Justice and Development Party in order to grasp the dynamics behind the organization of Alevis in Sweden. The data collected through two phases of ethnographic fieldwork along with a variety of experiences and ethical issues focuses on the Alevi cultural centers and the Federation of Alevi Unions in Sweden, the obstacles they face in their organizations and solutions to overcome them as well as their relations to Alevi entities, Swedish institutions and political parties and the other migrant associations from Turkey in Sweden. The study analyzes to what extent the Swedish incorporation regime and internal factors affect and shape the organization of Alevis in Sweden.
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5.1. Introduction

5.2. Incorporation regimes
Chapter 1. Introduction

I was 14 years old when my father told me that I was Alevi. Until that time, apart from Turkish Sunni Muslims, I had no idea of the existence of other religious and ethnic identities in Turkey, such as Kurds, Alevis, Assyrians, Laz, and Armenians. After I learnt that I was Alevi, I started to be more aware of these other identities in Turkey. It did not occur to me that it was possible to conduct research on Alevis and Alevism until I started the masters’ program in Middle Eastern Studies at Lund University. Through my studies I found opportunities to study Alevis, their citizenship status in Turkey and the Alevi diaspora.

When reading about the Alevi diaspora, I realized that much of the literature is focused on Alevi mobilization in Germany. In Sweden, there are seven Alevi associations in which people strive to preserve their cultural identity; however there has been no comprehensive research on Alevis in Sweden. I became curious of whom the Alevis in Sweden are, and how Alevi associations function in Sweden. Parallel to my curiosity, I found an internship project with the opportunity to map Alevi associations in Sweden. During this ethnographic fieldwork I became more interested in the organization of Alevis in Sweden since the majority of my interviewees referred to obstacles they face in their endeavor to organize and the strategies they apply to overcome these obstacles. So I decided to do a wider project and to go deeper with the organization of Alevis in Sweden for my thesis. In order to do that, I developed the research questions below.

1.1) Research questions

The aim of this project is to understand how and to which degree Alevis are organized in Sweden and how their organization depends on internal and external factors. In order to find answers for the main question, more detailed and concrete questions are needed.

- Do the Alevi Cultural Centers¹ in Sweden have organizational networks with other relevant Alevi entities, such as the Federation of Alevi Unions in Sweden (the ARF)², the Confederation of European Alevi Unions or any Alevi associations in Turkey?
- What are the relations between the AKMs?

¹ Alevi Kültür Merkezi. The abbreviated form AKM will be used throughout the thesis.
² İsveç Alevi Birlikleri Federasyonu / Alevitiska Riksförbundet. The abbreviated form ARF will be used throughout the thesis.
Do the Federation of Alevi Unions in Sweden and the AKMs have organizational networks and relations with the Swedish authorities and other migrant groups from Turkey in Sweden?

What kind of activities do the AKMs conduct in Sweden and what is the frequency of the activities?

What kind of obstacles do Alevis face in organizing processes and what kind of strategies they develop in order to overcome these problems?

What are the strategies, aims and future plans for the AKMs and the Federation of Alevi Unions in Sweden?

1.2) Methodology

My research on Alevism in Sweden is based on two phases of fieldwork starting from autumn 2013 until autumn 2014. I used semi-structured interviews, participant observation and conversations during the fieldwork. During the first phase, I conducted seven in-depth interviews with the Gothenburg Alevi Cultural Center (G-AKM)3, the Halmstad Alevi Cultural Center (the H-AKM)4, the Malmö Alevi Cultural Center (the M-AKM)5, the Dalarna Alevi Cultural Center (the D-AKM)6, the Stockholm Alevi Cultural Center (the S-AKM)7, the Uppsala Alevi Cultural Center (the U-AKM)8, and the ARF between 28th October and 11th November 2013. I also participated in the general meeting between the AKMs and the ARF on 9th of November where I met chairs and representatives of the AKMs in Sweden. Towards the end of this ethnographic fieldwork I came to the conclusion that Alevis in Sweden are in a process of institutionalization with a number of obstacles they face in their endeavors of establishing associations and steps they are taking to deal with these obstacles. These results constituted my presentation: “Alevis in Sweden in the Process of Institutionalization” at the conference “Alevi Identity Revisited” at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul on 21st and 22nd February 2014.

3 Göteborg Alevi Kültür Merkezi / Alevitisk Kultur Centrum i Göteborg.
4 Halmstad Alevi Kültür Merkezi / Kulturcentrum för Aleviterna i Halmstad.
5 Malmö Alevi Kültür Merkezi / Kulturcentrum för Aleviterna i Malmö.
6 Dalarna Alevi Kültür Merkezi / Aleviföreningen i Dalarna.
7 Stockholm Alevi Kültür Merkezi / Alevitisk Kulturcentrum Stockholm.
8 Uppsala Alevi Kültür Merkezi / Upplands Alevitiska Kultur Centrum.
After this project, I decided to deepen my analysis on the organization of Alevis in Sweden for my MA-project. I also decided to focus on the Stockholm AKM and the Gothenburg AKM in the thesis since both these AKMs were the most active ones with their own local centers at that time. During my second fieldwork, conditions changed for the G-AKM. The G-AKM is not that active any more. While preparing for the new fieldwork, I kept in contact with the representative of the G-AKM, the chair of the S-AKM, and the co-chair of the ARF\(^9\) in Sweden through internet and phone calls. I started my second period in the field in August 2014 when the G-AKM organized a Sunday breakfast. During this phase of the fieldwork, I conducted one participant observation and six interviews.

### 1.3) Theoretical framework

In this thesis, I use the theoretical framework of incorporation regimes in order to analyze the process of the organization of Alevis in Sweden. The concept was suggested by Yasemin Nuhoğlu Soysal in her book “Limits of Citizenship: Migrants and Postnational Membership in Europe” (1994). She gives detail analyses of how the host society’s institutions and their incorporation regimes shape and affect organizational patterns of migrants. She selects Denmark, Britain, Netherlands, Austria, Sweden, France, Germany, Belgium and Switzerland in order to explain the difference of these countries’ incorporation regimes. She claims that Sweden sees migrants as corporate groups that require specific formalities for a migrant organization to fulfill. I analyze to what extent the Swedish corporatist system affects the organizational patterns of Alevis along with how Alevi associations view their organizational process. My point is that a migrant group’s organizational difficulties might not just stem from inside; but may also stem from the host country’s incorporation regime.

Another researcher who has made use of the concept of incorporation regimes in his study of Turkish migrant groups is Martin Bak Jørgensen. His PhD thesis “National and Transnational Identities: Turkish Identity in Denmark, Sweden and Germany” (2009), where he conducts a comparative analysis of how migrants’ organizing processes and the construction of collective identities are affected by the host countries’ political and discursive opportunity structures is also highly relevant for the understanding of the organization of Alevis in Sweden.

### 1.4) The findings of the project

\(^9\) The co-chair of the ARF was the chair of the federation in 2013 when I interviewed her. From 2014 she started to share her chairmanship duties with an administrative member from the D-AKM. She is the only chair I interviewed. Therefore, I will refer to her as the co-chair of the ARF throughout the thesis.
The Federation of Alevi Unions in Sweden is connected to the Confederation of European Alevi Unions consisting of 12 Alevi federations in European countries. In Sweden, there are seven Alevi associations located in Stockholm, Uppsala, Halmstad, Gothenburg, Dalarna, Malmö and Örebro. Except for the Örebro AKM, the other AKMs are affiliated with the Federation of Alevi Unions in Sweden. The AKMs conduct a variety of local activities related to Alevi beliefs and culture, educational activities, and commemorations. They conduct the cem ceremony which is a ritual of worship; they celebrate the break of the Ashura and Hızır fastings. Their cultural activities include concerts with saz players and Alevi singers, breakfast gatherings within the community, picnics and cinema nights. Educational activities include a wide variety of courses ranging from saz playing, dance, English and Swedish language, drama, cooking, and sewing.

The main result of the thesis is that Alevis in Sweden are in a process of establishing and maintaining an organizational structure and that there are internal and external factors that shape and affect the organization of Alevis in Sweden. The criteria set by the Swedish corporatist system for migrant organizations to fulfill constitute external factors which shape and affect the organization of Alevis in Sweden. The Swedish corporatist system encourages migrant organizations to have a national organizational structure through the federation and its local associations. This criterion shows a similar pattern with the organizational structure of the transnational European Alevi movement. There are also internal factors, such as the multitude of ways to define Alevism, influencing the ways in which Alevis organize in Sweden.

1.5) Literature review

There has been a wide range of research on Alevism, history of Alevism, Alevis in Turkey, the Alevi Diaspora and so on. In addition, there exists a vast production of “Alevi literature” of normative character and produced by Alevi authors. I will, like other researchers have done, only present some of the academic research literature on Alevis (Sökefeld 2008, 10).

The most known scholarly work published on Alevis before the 1990s, belonged to Krisztina Kehl-Bodrogi. Published as a monograph in German, “Die Kizilbas/Aleviten: Untersuchungen

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10 A saz is a musical instrument with seven strings. It is long-necked lute and is used by many cultures in Anatolia. Saz is a central instrument in the Alevi culture. Alevi poets play the saz. For more information see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ba%C4%9Flama
über eine esoterische Glaubensgemeinschaft in Anatolienv1 (1988), it is one of the first
publications presenting an overview of Alevis, their beliefs and their history in Turkey.

The 1990s and 2000s witnessed a boom of research on Alevism. David Shankland, in his
doctoral dissertation “Alevi and Sunni in rural Turkey: diverse paths of change” (1993)
presents an ethnography of Alevi and Sunni villages by comparing them in their contact with
modernization processes in Turkey. Shankland has published various scholarly works on
Alevi in Turkey. One of them is “Islam and Society in Turkey” (1999), where he explores the
Alevi community in the context of secularism and religion in Turkey. Developed from his
doctoral thesis, the monograph, “The Alevis in Turkey: The emergence of a secular Islamic
tradition” (2003) compares the traditional way of living in Alevi villages to the traditional
way of living in Sunni villages, and discusses their integration into the Turkish nation-state.
This study has been crucial for the understanding of Alevism since it studies Alevism in the
rural context.

Karin Vorhoff’s monography “Zwischen Glaube, Nation und neuer Gemeinschaft: alevitische
Identität in der Türkei der Gegenwart” (1995) and article “Let's Reclaim Our History and
Culture!' Imagining Alevi Community in Contemporary” (1998) are important scholarly
works on Alevi identity. Markus Dressler, in his two monographs, “Die civil religion der
Türkei. Kemalistische und alevitische Atatürk-Rezeption im Vergleich” (1999) and “Die
alevitische Religion. Traditionslinien und Neubestimmungen” (2002), presents Alevis’
relation to Atatürk and Kemalism and analyses Alevism as civil religion.

A number of anthologies have also been published on Alevism. Some of the most important
Religious and Social Perspectives” (1998), and “Turkey’s Alevi Enigma: A Comprehensive
Overview” (2003), have collected a wide range of articles on Alevism from different
perspectives. These anthologies constitute a very important part of the literature on Alevism.
Further, a great amount of articles on Alevi identity and Alevi mobilization have been
published.11

The existence of Alevi migrants in Europe, and the rise of the European Alevi movement
have drawn the attention from scholars from various disciplines. Alevi diaspora studies
generally focus on Alevis in Germany where they are efficiently organized and recognized as

a separate belief system. The most important book on Alevis in Germany is “Struggling for Recognition: The Alevi Movement in Germany and in Transnational Space” (2008) by Martin Sökefeld. This monograph presents invaluable information about the Alevi diaspora in Germany within the framework of transnationalism, diaspora and identity theories. Besim Can Zırh’s doctoral dissertation, “Becoming Visible Through Migration: Understanding the Relationships Between the Alevi Revival, Migration and Funerary Practices Through Europe and Turkey” (2012) is also an important contribution to the literature on the Alevi diaspora. His ethnographic research in London, Berlin and Drammen gives an overview of the Alevi movement and the dynamics behind it, in which funeral issues constitute an important force for claiming Alevism. Several articles on Alevis in Germany, Norway and England have also been published.¹²

Studies on the religious dimension of Alevis also constitute an important part of the literature on Alevis. One of the important scholarly works has been produced by Hege Irene Markussen. In her book, “Teaching History, Learning Piety: An Alevi Foundation in contemporary Turkey” (2012), she writes about the ways in which Alevis are taught and learned in an Alevi Foundation in Istanbul. Contemporary research on Alevis also focus on the status of Alevis during the accession process of Turkey to the European Union, the relationship between Alevis and the Justice and Development Party¹³, and the Alevi openings which were initiated by the AKP. Some of the articles published on these topics belonged to Soner and Toktaş (2011), Çarkoğlu and Bilgili (2011), Ulusoy (2011) and Borovalı and Boyraz (2014).

1.6) Disposition

The thesis consists of six chapters focusing on research questions and design, methodology, historical background, data presentation, theoretical framework and analysis, and conclusion.

Chapter one presents the aim of the study, the research questions and design. It also introduces the findings of the project briefly and a literature review.

Chapter two discusses ethnography and ethnographic methods in the qualitative research, and their application to my MA-project. I present my two-phased ethnographic fieldwork and my methodological experiences in conducting participant observation and interviews. I discuss

¹³ Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi /AKP. The abbreviated form AKP will be used throughout the thesis.
ethical principles in qualitative research, the insider/outsider dichotomy and the representation of the other in relation to this project.

Chapter four presents the history of Alevism by using two perspectives: transformations of Alevi identity through phases of secularization, turn to leftist ideologies, and orientation as a cultural and religious identity, as well as a focus on Alevis’ positions of visibility, hypervisibility and invisibility.

Chapter four introduces the Federation of Alevi Unions in Sweden and the Swedish Cultural Centers. I discuss the obstacles they face in their organization in Sweden and the solutions they develop to overcome these difficulties. The chapter also focuses on their relations with the Confederation of European Alevi Unions, Alevi associations in Turkey, Swedish institutions and political parties, and with other migrant groups from Turkey in Sweden.

Chapter five presents the theoretical framework of incorporation regimes by Yasemin Nuhoğlu Soysal, which I make use of to examine the organization of Alevis in the light of the Swedish corporatist system, and demonstrate external and internal factors that shape and affect the organization of Alevis in Sweden.

Conclusion summarizes the main findings of the project, reflects on the research questions, and suggests directions for further research on Alevis in Sweden.
Chapter 2 Methodological reflections on the ethnographic study of Alevis in Sweden

2.1) Introduction

There are different kinds of methods that can be applicable in social sciences in order to conduct research. In quantitative research, statistical correlations are common while interviews, observation, and audio-recording are examples of methods applied in qualitative research (Silverman 2006, 15). Ethnography focuses on studying people in their naturally occurring settings, understand and explain their thoughts, actions and behaviors in their daily lives and get an insider’s view by using certain methods of data collection (Brewer 2000, 18). Typical ethnographic methods are observation, participation, or interviews.

In this project, I have conducted interviews with representatives for the AKMs in Sweden and the ARF, as well as participant observation in meetings and activities at the cultural centers. In total I conducted three participant observations and thirteen interviews. Therefore, I may say that my approach to the ethnographic study of Alevis in Sweden has been interview-based. This approach well served to the aim of the study which has been to learn how and to which degree Alevis are organized in Sweden and how their organization depends on external and internal factors. Ethnographical methods have been good fit in order to get answers for my research questions in my research and produce a reliable and valid work. However, it should be noted that every method has its drawbacks. Qualitative study is about people’s lives, thoughts and beliefs and these are bound to change.

In this chapter, I will start with a description of ethnographic methods and continue with the characteristics of my two-phased ethnographic fieldwork, where I describe how my ethnographic fieldwork started and proceeded. Further, I will analyze my methodological experiences both in conducting interviews and participant observation. Lastly, I will analyze the ethical issues I had to take into consideration during the project.

2.2) Ethnographic methods

There are two important data collection techniques in ethnography: participant observation and interviews. Participant observation requires a researcher to participate in people’s lives in naturally occurring settings, talk to them, and observe their behaviors, rules, norms and actions (Brewer 2006, 82-3; O’Reilly 2005, 92-97). Participant observation carries the ambivalence between being objective and being subjective at the same time. Observation involves a certain degree of objectivity and taking a mental and physical distance from
peoples’ lives. Participation, on the other hand, involves subjectivity and identifying with peoples’ thoughts and feelings. Therefore, finding a balance between the extent of participation and observation in the field is what makes participant observation a fruitful method to understand peoples’ lives (O’Reilly 2005, 96-115).

Interviewing is another ethnographical data collection method that can take forms of chats and informal questions, guided conversations, one-to-one in-depth interviews, group interviews and focus groups. Interviews may be structured, semi-structured or open ended (unstructured). In a structured interview, there are fixed and planned questions like in a survey. In an unstructured interview, on the other hand, the point is to let the interviewee talk freely like in conversations. In a semi-structured interview, there are some questions in order to receive some fixed answers; at the same time, the participants are free to wander off the point (O’Reilly 2005, 120).

Ethnographic interviews are likely to be unstructured or loosely structured with open-ended questions where interviewing is flexible and interviewees are free to wander of the point to talk about their thoughts, feelings and reflections (O’Reilly 2005, 118). However, there still needs to be control in an unstructured or loosely structured interview and the researcher needs to direct the interviewees gently and to create follow-up questions according to the answers (O’Reilly 2005, 120; Silverman 2006, 112).

2.3) Two-phased ethnographic fieldwork

I conducted a two-phased ethnographic fieldwork in my research on Alevism in Sweden. I started the first phase in September, 2013, mapping Alevi associations in Sweden. Initially I contacted the chair of the S-AKM and explained the scope and the aim of my research in order to gain access to the Alevi community in Sweden. There are two kinds of access to the group: overt access and covert access (Silverman 2006, 81). Overt access necessitates informing the participants about the aim of the research and receives their agreements while covert access is conducting the research without participants’ knowledge. Overt access can be gained through key actors in the group called “gatekeepers”. Covert access, on the other hand, can only be used if it is the only way to collect data and /or when authorities prevent overt ways to access information (O’Reilly 2005, 64). I gained access to the Alevis in Sweden through a gatekeeper, the chair of the S-AKM. He gave me contact information to the Alevi Cultural Centers in Sweden. I contacted them by email explaining the scope and the aim of the mapping project and received their agreements to participate in my research.
I entered the field for the first time when I visited the Gothenburg AKM in order to do participant observation on September 27th, 2013. The G-AKM had a seminar with a police officer on criminality among youth in Gothenburg. During this activity, I observed the local center, the members’ behaviors and the atmosphere in the AKM and had small individual conversations with a few women in the kitchen after the seminar.

On October 28th, 2013 I travelled to Gothenburg to conduct my first in-depth interview with a representative of the G-AKM. On October 30th, 2013 I travelled to Halmstad in order to conduct my second in-depth interview with the chair of the H-AKM. During the interview, an author on Alevisim also joined the interview. On November 1st 2013 I conducted my third in-depth interview with the chair of the M-AKM, in their local center in Malmö. On November 9th, 2013, I joined a general meeting and met the chairs and representatives of Alevi associations in all Sweden. I had contacted the co-chair of the ARF and received her agreement to join the meeting and also to conduct an in-depth interview. I could not join the second part of the meeting because the participants wanted to discuss private issues. In the break of the general meeting, I had the opportunity to make an interview with the chair of the D-AKM. I conducted my fifth in-depth interview with the chair of the S-AKM in the local center in Stockholm on November 10th, 2013. On November 11th, 2013 I met the co-chair of the ARF in the local center in Stockholm and conducted my sixth in-depth interview. I travelled to Uppsala on the same day and conducted my seventh in-depth interview with the representative of the U-AKM in the building of the Left Party in Sweden. To sum up, I conducted seven in-depth semi-structured interviews with the representatives of the G-AKM, the H-AKM, the M-AKM, the D-AKM, the S-AKM, the ARF and the U-AKM. I recorded each interview with my mobile phone and with the consent of the participants. I made two participant observations in the seminar at the G-AKM and in the first part of the general meeting of the ARF and the AKMs. This was the first phase of my ethnographic fieldwork.

After the first phase of the ethnographic fieldwork, I wrote a report where I analyzed the process of Alevis’ institutionalization in Sweden, and presented my results at the conference “Alevi Identity Revisited” at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul. Then, I needed to get some distance from the mapping project in order to see the research topic for my MA-project from new perspectives. During this time, I had the opportunity to engage in further literature on methodology and Alevisim in order to contextualize my research topic. In the meantime, I kept in contact with the representative for the G-AKM, the chair of the S-AKM and the co-
chair of the ARF through internet and phone calls until the second phase of my ethnographic fieldwork in August 2014.

While planning the second phase of my fieldwork, I decided to focus on the G-AKM and the S-AKM since they were the most active ones in Sweden. I decided to deepen my analysis on the organization of Alevis in Sweden, and formulated new research aims and questions focusing less on mapping the AKMs and more on the organizational patterns, obstacles they face in their organization in Sweden, the strategies they develop to overcome them, their aims and future projects.

The second phase of my fieldwork started when I on August 24th 2014 participated in a Sunday breakfast organized by the G-AKM in order to gather donations for the Yezidis under the attack of IS. This solidarity campaign was initiated by the Federation of Alevi Unions in Germany (AABF).14 I conducted participant observation in the breakfast activity and took field notes. I also had the opportunity to conduct in-depth interviews with the representative of the G-AKM I kept in contact, a member of the G-AKM, and a previous administrative member of the G-AKM. The priest of the Syrian Orthodox Church in Gothenburg15 also joined the breakfast activity and I made a phone interview with him about the Assyrians’ relation to Alevis in Gothenburg on October 6th, 2014. On October 24th and 26th 2014, I conducted the last two in-depth interviews with the co-chair of the ARF, on the phone. In sum, I conducted thirteen in-depth semi-structured interviews and three participant observations throughout the two phases of my ethnographic fieldwork.

Revising my research design before starting the second phase helped me to collect new data and to stay focused during the participant observation and interviews in the second phase of the fieldwork.

2.4) Methodological experiences

In this section, I will elaborate on my experiences during the two phases of ethnographic fieldwork and the problems I faced in conducting participant observation and interviews. Conducting ethnographic fieldwork was exhausting but fun; definitely worth trying and satisfying in struggling with challenges. Using participant observation and interviews was rewarding in increasing my understanding of the organization of Alevis in Sweden. I will start

14 Almanya Alevi Birlikleri Federasyonu. The abbreviated form AABF will be used throughout the thesis.
15 The Syrian Orthodox Church: St. Gabriel Community represents Assyrian community in Gothenburg. For more information see http://stgabriel.se/
by elaborating my experiences and challenges in conducting the interviews and continue with participant observations.

2.4.1) Interviews:

I conducted my first interview with the representative of the G-AKM. It was my first time conducting an ethnographic interview, and it was very exciting for me. I strictly followed my interview guide and tried to ask every question in the guide. It was a long interview, but we took some small breaks when we had some informal chats in which I believe built the trust between us. After this fruitful interview, I thought every interviewee would give me the exact answers I expected since she had been giving the answers I was expecting to hear. However, I became aware that ethnographic interviews are not as outlined as I imagined when I had my second interview with the chair of the H-AKM. First of all, I had time constraints in conducting the interview since the chair was available only after 7pm. Also, another interviewee joined the interview which forced me to focus on two interviewees at the same time. The chair was prone to talk about his experiences of being an Alevi and I was gently trying to direct him to answer my questions. Since the H-AKM had no local center, they generally talked about their aspirations for the Alevi community in Halmstad. In this interview, I learnt to be more flexible and I understood that the questions in the interview guide were not completely fit for the H-AKM. Therefore, I selected and re-formulated some of the questions during the interview and asked more about their aims of establishing an association in Halmstad. When I was doing my analysis, it occurred to me that the chair’s own experiences on Alevism also gave me valuable information about Alevis in Sweden.

My third interview was with the chair of the M-AKM who mostly talked about the European Alevi Movement and the Swedish approach to faith communities. I let him talk about his experiences. Although I did not receive enough information about the M-AKM, I learnt about a general picture of the European Alevi movement from the perspective of an Alevi in Sweden.

I conducted my fourth interview with the chair of the D-AKM during the break of the general meeting, so I had time constraint. Therefore, I needed to concentrate the questions and ask only the most relevant ones for the project.

My interviews with the chair of the S-AKM and the co-chair of the ARF gave me invaluable information on the AKMs since both interviewees were experienced in associational
functioning and administrative issues. Still, the chair of the S-AKM did not seem comfortable in responding the questions so I reminded him that he has a right to withdraw from the interview if he wanted. He chose to continue the interview. In the interview with the co-chair of the ARF, I realized that I interrupted her a few times in order to express my thoughts. While transcribing the interview, I understood that I should have let her talk more and develop her own opinions instead of giving mine. During this first phase of fieldwork I learnt that interviews are not identical and every interview comes with new experiences.

Before I started the second phase, I kept in contact with three key actors: the representative of the G-AKM, the chair of S-AKM, and the co-chair of the ARF. I called the chair of the S-AKM and the co-chair of the ARF and we talked about developments in the organization of Alevis in Sweden. The chair of the S-AKM sent me SMS with information on activities of the S-AKM, and I kept in contact with the representative of the G-AKM through Facebook. I believe that keeping in contact and tracking the developments helped me to maintain trust between these key informants and me. So, when I asked them for a second interview, I faced no difficulties in receiving their consent to participate.

To plan the second fieldwork I needed to formulate questions specifically focusing on the organization of Alevis in Sweden. I went over the interview guide for the mapping project, my previous reports and detected patterns of organizational functioning, the obstacles they faced and the solutions they had. I prepared an interview guide mainly focused on these organizational patterns. Specifically for the G-AKM, I added extra questions on their previous activities and the AKMs’ future plans on this interview guide. For the interview with the priest of the Syrian Orthodox Church in Gothenburg, I prepared another interview guide focusing on their relations with the G-AKM. I also prepared more detailed and organized interview guide for the co-chair of the ARF because she is one of the most important key actors among the Alevis active in organizations and networks in Sweden.

I conducted six in-depth semi-structured interviews in the second phase of the ethnographic fieldwork. The first three interviews were conducted when I visited the G-AKM’s local center for the Sunday breakfast event on August 24th, 2014. I conducted the last three interviews on the phone. The first interview was with a member of the G-AKM who was prone to talk about

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16 See the first phase interview guide in the Appendix.
17 See the second phase interview guide in the Appendix.
18 See the additional questions for the G-AKM in the second phase interview guide in the Appendix.
19 See the priest interview guide in the Appendix.
20 See the co-chair of the ARF interview guide in the Appendix.
Alevi beliefs and culture. Each time I gently tried to direct him back to the questions, he kept talking on Alevism so I decided to be flexible and not to be so fixated to receive the answers I was looking for in this. I conducted the second interview with the representative of the G-AKM. I had the third interview with a previous administrative member of the G-AKM. This interview was very informative and the informant was quite comfortable in responding the questions. While transcribing the interviews, I became aware that the three informants had been given contradictory answers to some of my questions. Some were quite open about the current situation of the G-AKM and others were more prone to downplay current problems.

My fourth interview was with the priest of the Syrian Orthodox Church in Gothenburg. It was conducted on the phone on October 6th, 2014. He was quite willing to answer my questions on the Assyrian community’s relation with the G-AKM. The two last interviews were with the co-chair of the ARF, also on the phone. The interview guide was quite comprehensive so we needed to do it in two parts. We cut the interview after around 30 minutes and continued 2 days later. I recorded all interviews apart from the one with the priest, in which I took notes instead. Interviewing by phone was different than face-to-face interview. In face-to-face interview, it is easier to follow the interviewees’ mimics and speeches, to conduct more interactive communication with the interviewee and to give trust to the other person with the researchers’ gestures and mimics too. In phone interview, I assume it is also easier for the interviewee to downplay some information since there is no direct face-to-face interaction. It was difficult to record the phone interview also since I used my phone as a recording device. Therefore, I tried to record the interview to the computer by putting the phone on speaker with the consent of the informant.

2.4.2) Participant observations:

I did my first participant observation when I joined the activity in the G-AKM on September 27th, 2013. It was an activity for women in which they had called for a police officer to give a seminar on criminality among youth in Gothenburg. Interacting with people for the first time was challenging. I had some small conversations with a few women throughout the activity. They were curious of why I was in the activity. Some of them approached and asked if I am Alevi, and some asked which city I come from in Turkey and tried to guess whether I am Turk or Kurd and Alevi or Sunni. I responded their questions with the answer that I am Alevi but I was there for my research.
The seminar was in Swedish and had difficulties in following what people were saying. This was the most challenging part of the participant observation since I did not understand the language and the seminar. The representative of the G-AKM translated some parts of it for me. They were trying to represent Alevism and what kind of a culture it is to the police officer. As far as I understood, the topics on integration and adaptation were discussed in the seminar. If I had known Swedish at that time, I could have understood better how the members of the G-AKM viewed Alevism and how they represented themselves to the Swedish authorities. Therefore, this stands out as the most difficult part of the participant observation. After the seminar, we all had a meal together. While eating, we listened to Alevi songs from Internet. After the police left, a woman performed saz for a while. Finnegan argues that participation and observation of performances are crucial in the study of oral traditions and verbal arts. She gives examples of different kinds of performances and labels them “differentiated and planned” and “less or no planned” events. A planned performance can be a concert, a festival, songs or speeches in a ritual or in a ceremony while a less or not planned event can be interchanging of songs in a gathering, stories in a conversational setting, or conversations (1992, 91-102). In the study of Alevism, performances holds an important place since Alevi culture is mostly expressed orally through Alevi music, cem rituals, semah dances (the ritual dance), and stories. In this regard, the seminar with the police officer was a planned event while the saz playing during the meal was a no planned event. Such performances communicate to the researcher on how Alevis express their identity, how they try to keep Alevi culture alive and what kind of topics they are mostly concerned with in Swedish context. In this sense, I became aware that apart from the importance of being Alevi, Alevis in Gothenburg also give importance to migrant issues in Sweden.

My second participant observation was in the general meeting between the ARF and the AKMs. The meeting was held in the S-AKM’s local center. There, I met all the chairs, administrative members and representatives of the different AKMs. At first, some people approached me with suspicion while some were more welcoming. The center is used by the ARF, the S-AKM and a group of Iranian Alevis called Yarsanlar.

In this general meeting, I experienced difficulties. I was allowed to join the first part of the meeting. The chairs and administrative members were sitting around and I along with a few participants was sitting separately. Before the meeting began, they wanted me to introduce myself and I explained my research and the reason I attended the meeting. I took notes after they started the meeting. In the break, the co-chair of the ARF informed me that some people
did not find my appearance in the meeting appropriate and did not want me to join the second part of the meeting since they wanted to speak of private issues. At first it was difficult for me to accept this and I tried to explain that I was there as a researcher but would of course respect their wishes. I spent the rest of the meeting chatting with some people in the kitchen. During this participant observation, I learnt that one may have to face difficult situations in conducting ethnographic fieldwork. I also learnt to accept and respect the participants’ wishes although I felt offended.

I did my third participant observation when I started the second phase of the fieldwork. I was invited by my contact, the representative of the G-AKM, to a Sunday breakfast at the G-AKM. I arrived at the local center before the activity began and helped people in the kitchen. Since I had visited the G-AKM twice before I was quite comfortable talking to people. I also found important changes in the local center. The biggest room that was owned by the G-AKM before was this time decorated with Azerbaijani sayings and pictures of Azerbaijani elders. I realized that the local center had changed and I learnt that the G-AKM had moved to a smaller room in the same center due to economic difficulties. The main room was now hired by the Azerbaijani Association but still available for the Alevi and the two associations also share the kitchen. The breakfast activity was conducted in the main room. Among approximately 15-20 participants, I sat close to the previous administrative member of the G-AKM, a man who was a non-Alevi interested in the G-AKM and a candidate of the Left Party of Sweden (Vänsterpartiet). While we were having our breakfast, I had small conversations with them and was given a brochure of the Left Party.

In this last participant observation, I felt more comfortable and more experienced. I participated in the activity and observed people’s behaviors and actions. I also found the opportunity to have small conversations with several people during the activity, and to conduct in-depth interviews with three people after the activity finished.

2.5) Ethical Considerations

In this section, I will discuss ethical considerations in qualitative research and in the qualitative study of religion and I will present reflections related to my own project. I will explain the insider/outsider dichotomy and its relevance and importance to my own research and I will point out the representation of the other and its relation to my research on Alevi’s organization in Sweden.
There are four main ethical principles to consider at every stage of research process. The first one is to respect people’s right to decide their own actions. In this sense, a person has his/her own right to decide if they want to be part of a research or not (Dahlgren et al 2007, 56). Being open about the aims of the research, getting informed consent and ensure confidentiality come with this initial principle. Participants have a right to know what the research is about and their identities shall not be exposed without their consent (Dahlgren et al 2007, 56). In both phases of my ethnographic fieldwork, I was open about the aim and the scope of my research; firstly the mapping project and secondly the focus on obstacles and strategies in the organization of Alevis in Sweden. I gained the participants’ informed consent and reminded them their right to withdraw if they wanted. I also ensured confidentiality of the participants by not exposing their identities in transcribing the interviews and writing the reports, although they allowed me to use their names. During the participant observations, I informed as many participants as possible about my research and why I was there.

The second ethical principle is that the research has to be as beneficial for the participants as possible (Dahlgren et al 2007, 56). My research on the organization of Alevis in Sweden can be beneficial in the sense that the ARF and the AKMs can make use of information inside to some extent. It can also be beneficial in the sense that my thesis may be read by people and authorities in Sweden, so it can spread information about them.

The third ethical principle is to cause no or as little harm as possible to the participants (Dahlgren et al 2007, 56). In this sense, my research on obstacles and strategies Alevis use in their organization might be disadvantageous if my conclusions do not coincide with the way they would like to present themselves. However, my research does not put Alevis in danger, so the conclusions will not harm them. The last ethical consideration is about justice that means treating participants equally (Dahlgren et al 2007, 56). I have to have an equal distance to each participant and not take sides.

Politics and religion constitute sensitive issues in the qualitative study of people. In matters of politics and religion, people are more sensitive to talk about their feelings and thoughts or to be a part of a research. In this sense, keeping a neutral role between different approaches, being aware of people’s sensitivities about their religious and political views and trying to be as objective as possible constitute important ethical considerations in the qualitative study of people (Donovan 1999, 235-47; O’Flaherty 1999, 331-347). In these sensitive topics, a researcher needs to be objective and to have an equal distance to any kind of identities,
beliefs, thoughts and political views. He/she needs to keep a neutral role between them and not to take sides. Although the researcher shares the same identity, thoughts, political views and beliefs with the participants, he/she needs to blanket them during the research process and to treat his/her participants equally.

In my research on the organization of Alevis in Sweden, I have faced both sensitive issues, and also sensitivities related to ethnicity. First of all, when studying Alevis, it is important to be aware of the heterogeneous religious dimensions Alevism is centered on and how these are related to peoples’ personal beliefs. It should be noted that there are a variety of definitions of Alevism either within Islam or not, a culture or a lifestyle that also creates fractions among Alevis. Also, Alevism defines itself in its opposition to Sunnism; therefore they take distance from Sunni traditions. Secondly, there are political affiliations and orientations. Alevism has strong affiliations with leftism in Sweden. Thirdly, the majority of Alevis in and from Turkey are ethnically Turks or Kurds and their definition of Alevism can show slight variations through ethnical lines. Considering my family background with a Turkish Alevi father a Sunni mother, this was a continuous insider/outsider challenge for me.

2.5.1) The insider/outsider dichotomy and reflections on the fieldworks

During participant observations and interviews, I was constantly asked “where are you from” or “Are you Alevi/Suni or Kurdish/Turkish”. Sometimes I was asked directly sometimes indirectly. I did not want to hide my identities although I was worried that being a Turkish Alevi from my father’s side and Sunni from my mother’s side would affect the project in a negative way. Therefore, I revealed my identities if I was asked directly. I acknowledged the fact that my insider status also gave me a certain degree of privilege in gaining access to the Alevi community. Further being familiar with Alevi beliefs and the leftist political history in Turkey, affected my interaction with the informants. I easily understood their points since we on certain issues have the same references. However, I was also bound to inform my participants that my mother is Sunni. I could not misguide my participants to believe that I am Alevi just because I wondered whether the participants would be more careful in their approach if they learnt I am Sunni from my mother’s side. My ethnic identity as a Turk was also of concern since I mostly interacted with Kurdish Alevis. Therefore, representing myself in the fieldwork was a question at the every stage of the research. Sanja Cukut Krilic, in her research on female immigrants from Bosnia-Herzegovina and former Soviet Union Republic in Slovenia, also faced the insider/outsider dichotomy. Her father being a Bosnian Serb was a
concern for her that pushed her to make critical decisions on how to present herself to the research participants. Studies on sensitive minority identities in relation to a dominant identity can put the researcher in a difficult situation in representing himself/herself. Despite acknowledging this fact, I did not hide my identities to the participants. For instance, I did not mislead the participants to think that my mother is Kurdish since she comes from a Kurdish city, which might be more “acceptable” in the eyes of some of the Kurdish participants.

During the whole process, I experienced being an insider and an outsider in multiple ways. As Krilic argues, there is no fixed category between being an insider and an outsider. “The researcher’s multiple and shifting positionalities” affect the research process, and help the researcher reflect on the issues from different perspectives (Krilic 2011, 161). In more critical terms, the researcher’s background, roles and perspectives all shape the research process. From this point of view, I was an insider and outsider in many ways, not just by being a Turkish Alevi. I am a student who came to Sweden to study masters. I have my own beliefs and thoughts about being an Alevi and about being Turkish. I have my own political views. The outsider and insider positionalities helped me to reflect critically and analyze the organization of Alevis from different angles. Further, neither the researcher nor the participants can have complete knowledge of their own communities or of the community they reside in. In this regard, and considering the complexity of Alevism, neither I nor the participants have a complete understanding of Alevi identity. I acknowledged and reflected on this fact during the research process.

2.5.2) The representation of the other

Data interpretation and writing the reports also bring up ethical considerations to consider. These are mostly related to the anonymity of the participants and to telling the truth about them. Anonymity of the participants is crucial because thick description in qualitative research might increase the stigmatization of the group and harm them (Dahlgren et al 2007, 62; Silverman 2006, 31). Therefore, the identities of the participants should not be exposed either in the reports or in the transcripts. In my transcription of the interviews and in this thesis, I have chosen not to present the informants with their full names, but rather with their positions in the AKMs and the ARF. Since they are official representatives and since they themselves saw no problems in revealing their identities, I have come to the conclusion that this semi-anonymity is sufficient.
Telling the truth also constitutes an important part of the representation of the other (Brown 1999, 350-3). The results of the research need to be as close as possible to reality. On the other hand, the truth might harm people. Therefore, the representation of the other brings up an ethical dilemma: a researcher has to tell the truth for the sake of academic integrity and has a moral duty not to harm people. Interpreting and presenting data honestly also involves presenting facts that the informants on second thoughts would like to keep outside of the public eye. Some of my informants were reluctant to talk about the obstacles they face, others were not. In this case, I am aware of my academic responsibility of telling the truth in the research. I am, however, concerned that writing about the organizational problems they face might harm their feelings and trust. I have spent quite some time reflecting on the way I represent the informants and the organizations. I will make copies of the thesis available to the informants to make sure that there are no misunderstandings of the truth, so that they will continue to trust me as a person and as a researcher.

2.6) Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I have presented ethnographical methods and their application to my project. During the two phases of my ethnographic fieldwork, I conducted three participant observations and thirteen in-depth semi-structured interviews. I have reflected on my experiences in conducting interviews and participant observations which I mostly learnt to be flexible and to respect my participants’ wishes in unexpected situations. In the ethical considerations section, I have reflected on the sensitivity issues of peoples’ beliefs, thoughts, and political views and the importance of keeping a neutral role and bracketing your own identities as a researcher; on my insider and outsider positionalities which helped me to reflect on my research topic from different angles; and on the importance of the anonymity of the participants and of telling the truth about them as a researcher.
Chapter 3 History of Alevism, the Alevi movement and Alevis during the rule of Justice and Development Party

3.1) Introduction

Writing about Alevism and specifically about the organization of Alevis in Sweden brings up the issue of defining Alevism. A person who would intend to read this thesis would most likely want to learn what Alevism is, who the Alevis are, where these people come from and also to locate Alevism in relation to other identities in his/her mind. There are three main difficulties in trying to define Alevism (Zırh 2012, 39). Initially, the answer of what Alevism is “…depends on who is asking, in which context, and why” (Zırh 2012, 39). Secondly there are not enough historical sources to detect the origin of Alevism and thirdly, there are also political concerns involved in attempts to define Alevism (Zırh 2012, 40). Consequently, Alevism has been defined from different competing perspectives, as a “heterodox sect within Islam, as Turkish Anatolian Islam, as a philosophy, as Sufi or Shiite in nature or as a syncretistic mixture of Islam, Christianity and Shamanism” (Koçan and Öncü 2004, 473). None of these attempts to put Alevism into one specific category gives a true definition of Alevism, and rather undermines the beauty of the subject which stems from its complexity (Sökefeld 2008, 4).

Many chose to give a negative definition and introduce Alevism as opposed to Sunnism by referring to which Sunni practices they do not practice (Zırh 2012, 52-4). Zırh here mainly withdraws this conceptualization from Sökefeld who refers to “the master narrative of Alevism” existing among Alevis, which is:

…the narrative of Alevis in opposition against- and time and again as victims of- dominant powers, be they the caliphs in the heyday of Islam, the Ottomans or, much later, reactionary or Islamist forces in the Turkish Republic. It is the master narrative of Alevis as standing in opposition to Sunnis. In all realms like ritual, politics, history, values, and life-ways Sunni Islam is employed as a negative template in order to define what Alevism is (Sökefeld 2008, 4).

The negative definition of Alevism can help to understand Alevis to a certain extent. In this regard, it is relevant to mention that Alevis do not follow main pillars of Islam. They do not pray five times a day, do not fast during Ramadan, do not go to Hajj (pilgrimage), or do not visit mosques to pray (Zırh 2012, 52-4). Instead, they conduct a cem ritual where women and
men can come together. These cems are guided by dedes who are the religious leaders of the Alevi community (Sökefeld and Schwalgin 2000, 10). One main difference from Sunnism is that Alevi women do not veil (Zırh 2012, 54).

In this chapter, I will present a history of Alevism by using two scholar’s perspectives. The first perspective belongs to Dressler who refers to “transformations of Alevism” in the twentieth century as “…first, secularization understood as a decline of religious beliefs and practice; second a turn to leftist ideologies; and third, a cultural and religious orientation” (2008, 284). The second perspective belongs to Zırh who uses the concepts of “invisibility, hypervisibility and visibility” in explaining the position of Alevis in the history of the Turkish Republic (Zırh 2012, 123). The transformations of the Alevi identity and Alevis’ strategies of invisibility, hypervisibility and visibility are shaped by the changing social and political context in Turkey, and the internal migration of Alevis from rural to urban areas and their international migration to Europe. These developments have been decisive for the ways the Alevi identity has been transformed.

3.2) Transformations of Alevism

3.2.1) The first transformation of Alevism

Alevi who were discriminated and persecuted during the Ottoman Empire adopted the strategy of invisibility (Sökefeld 2008, 42; Zırh 2012, 131). The establishment of the Turkish Republic (1923) as a secular nation-state started a secularization process in which all religious centers and shrines of unofficial Islam were banned in 1925. This secularization process also affected Alevis’ religious practices since it banned Alevis’ religious centers (Dressler 2008, 284). Despite this, Alevis supported the secular state and even became supporters of secularism since they believed the new state would give them the same opportunities and equality as Sunni Muslims (Göner 2005, 111). Therefore, they “…voluntarily accepted their invisibility for the sake of the republican ideals that promised equality in anonymity” (Zırh 2012, 138). As a result of the secularization process, Alevis adopted “the republican cloak of invisibility” through republican symbols and became affiliated with secularism (Zırh 2012, 139).

3.2.2) The second transformation of Alevism

The transition to a multi-party system and the rapid urbanization from the 1950s changed the political and social context of Turkey. The Democrat Party which came to power in 1950
started to apply Sunni Islam oriented policies. The consequent rise of political Islam was seen as a threat by Alevis and affected their relations with the right-wing parties in the long-run (Özmen 2011, 78, Göner 2005, 115). At the same time, the migration of Alevis from rural-to-urban areas caused a disconnection from traditional Alevism due to the weakening of relations between dedes and their followers (Dressler 2008, 285). Thus, the religious practices of the Alevis gradually declined in the urban areas in the 1960s and 1970s (Sökefeld and Scwalgin 2000, 11).

The rise of political Islam was cut by the 1960 military intervention. Alevis viewed this intervention as a rescuer of secularism. However, the coalition government’s proposal to represent Alevism under the Directorate of Religious Affairs caused Alevis’ hypervisibilization because existing prejudices against them were ignited by the criticisms of Sunni nationalist circles towards the proposal (Zırh 2012, 141). Thereupon, Alevi youngsters published two declarations stating that Alevis are affiliated with republican secularism and they demanded the end of discrimination against Alevis (Özmen 2011, 79). These two declarations marked the beginning of the first Alevi revival in the 1960s. The first Alevi associations and Alevi journals were established. An Alevi Party, the Union Party21 was established in 1966 (Zırh 2012, 142). However, this revival did not aim at making “Alevism visible as a particular belief community” since both declarations and the Union Party emphasized Alevis’ longing for republican secularism (Zırh 2012, 143).

During the 1960s, an ideological polarization began to appear between rightist and leftist movements. Alevis in this context tended to lean towards the left. Progressivist Alevi youngsters denied all religious practices of Alevism and disconnected themselves from traditional Alevism (Sökefeld and Scwalgin 2000, 11; Dressler 2008, 285). In the meantime, the Union Party faced two main fractions: “the older rural background traditionalist and the younger, urban socialized progressivist Alevis” (Zırh 2012, 144). The progressivist Alevis gained influence over the traditional Alevis in the party, and reoriented the party towards socialist left (Zırh 2012, 144-6). All these developments transformed the Alevi identity from being attached to republican secularism to leftism throughout the 1970s (Dressler 2008, 284). However, this transformation did not aim at making Alevism visible as a cultural and religious identity. Instead, Alevis adopted another kind of invisibility under the leftist movements (Zırh 2012, 147).

21 Birlik Partisi.
Towards the end of the 1970s, Alevis became highly hypervisible in Turkey when they were stigmatized as Kızılbaş\textsuperscript{22} Kurds, and communists (Dressler 2008, 285). Several attacks occurred in the cities of Sivas, Malatya, Çorum and Maraş (Sökefeld and Schwalgin 2000, 11). Especially with the Maraş Massacre in 1978, a vast amount of Alevis migrated to Germany and other European countries as political refugees (Sökefeld 2008, 40; Zırh 2012, 149).

3.2.3) The third transformation of Alevism

The 1980 military intervention ended the conflicts between leftist and rightist movements. The Turkish-Islamic synthesis\textsuperscript{23} was applied in the forms of mandatory religious courses to the primary schools, increased role of the Directorate of Religious Affairs, and building Sunni mosques in Alevi villages (Dressler 2008, 286; Özmen 2011, 83). The Turkish government extended the Turkish-Islamic synthesis by sending imams and Turkish language teachers to European countries (Zırh 2012, 168). As a result of the suppression and the extensive emphasis on religion, Alevis started to emphasize their cultural and religious identity in both Turkey and Germany. Therefore, the Alevi identity started to transform towards a cultural and religious identity (Dressler 2008, 286).

The Alevi movement that aimed at making Alevism visible in the public realm started in Germany as a result of the multiculturalist policies (Sökefeld 2008, 54-5). The Alevi Culture Group, founded in Hamburg in 1988, organized many activities on Alevism and invited Alevi intellectuals and dedes to Germany (Sökefeld 2008, 221). These developments cultivated in the formation of the Alevi declaration (1989) and the Alevi Culture Week, which marked the beginning of the Alevi movement. The Alevi declaration and the Alevi Culture Week also signified the Alevi movement’s transnational political practices since they mostly addressed Alevis’ problems and demanded the recognition of the Alevi identity in both Turkey and Germany (Sökefeld 2008, 39-58). From there, the movement developed and strengthened towards Alevis in other European countries. Alevis in Germany helped Alevis in other European countries such as the Netherlands, Switzerland, Austria, France as well as Turkey to establish their own associations forming a transnational networking web among Alevis (Şahin 2005, 473). Therefore, these developments started the Alevi movement since Alevis in

\textsuperscript{22} Kızılbaş is a term to refer to Alevis. It is mostly used to denigrate Alevis as heretics (Shankland 2003, 19).

\textsuperscript{23} The Turkish-Islamic synthesis emphasizes on the Turkishness and its inseparable component of Sunni Islam. The synthesis was applied officially in governance after the 1980 military intervention (Vorhoff 1998, 231).
Germany adopted the visibility strategy to make Alevis visible in the public realm (Sökefeld 2008, 61; Zırh 2012, 180).

The visibility strategy expanded to the Alevis in Turkey after a while. The internal political environment was also suitable for Alevis since the Turkish government in the 1990s wanted to promote secularism in order to control the rise of political Islam and aligned with Alevis (Koçan and Öncü 2004, 78). This political context led Alevis to establish new associations, to publish new journals and newspapers, to build cemevis24 and to organize culture weeks, festivals and public cems (Koçan and Öncü 2004, 478; Göner 2005, 119).

The Sivas incident in which 33 Alevis were burnt to death during the Pir Sultan Abdal Cultural Festival in 1993 strengthened the Alevi movement (Zırh 2012, 174). A vast amount of demonstrations were held in European countries and 100 new Alevi associations were founded after the incident. In 1994, Alevis in Europe organized under a transnational umbrella association of European Alevi Unions Federation25 (Özyürek 2009, 240). Another incident happened in the Gazi neighborhood of Istanbul where 19 Alevi were killed in 1995. These two incidents created a transnational solidarity among Alevis, and strengthened the visibility strategy (Sökefeld 2008, 222; Zırh 2012, 174). Achieving recognition of Alevism in Turkey and Germany gained more importance for Alevis.

3.3) The European Alevi Unions Federation and the European Union

The European Alevi Unions Federation conducted various activities in order to contest non-recognition and misrecognition of Alevism in Turkey and Germany (Sökefeld 2008, 35). They emphasized discriminative policies of Turkish authorities and Alevis’ problems in Turkey. The EAUF undertook the role of leadership for Alevis in Europe and Turkey by providing economic assistance to other Alevis to build cemevis, supporting them to organize as Alevis, and shaping Alevis’ demands towards the Turkish government (Özyürek 2009, 240). The EAUF also initiated many projects towards Alevi youth in Germany, communication between immigrant groups, and Alevi religious instruction in German schools for the recognition of Alevism as a separate belief community (Sökefeld 2008, 86-7). In order to do this, the EAUF established contacts with the German authorities and created a discourse on Alevism “…as an alternative to the threat of Islamic fundamentalism” (Dressler 2008, 298). Although, progressivist Alevis such as European Alevis who adopted the visibility

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24 Cemevis are Alevis’ places of worship.
25 Avrupa Alevi Birlikleri Federasyonu/AABF. The EAUF will be used throughout the thesis.
strategy usually define Alevism outside Islam and more as a culture, philosophy or lifestyle, they stressed the religious dimension of Alevism in order to achieve legal recognition in the European multicultural framework (Dressler 2008, 297-8; Soner and Toktaş 2011, 424).

After Turkey gained official candidate status at the European Union’s Helsinki Summit in 1999, the EAUF took the opportunity to exert the struggle for Alevis’ recognition into Turkey’s EU accession process (Sökefeld 2008, 233; Ulusoy 2011, 407). In 1999, the EAUF gave a symposium on the Alevi reality to the European Parliament and succeeded to introduce Alevis’ demands into the European Commission’s Progressive Reports as a condition for Turkey’s EU membership (Soner and Toktaş 2011, 422). The reports mainly touched upon freedom of religion in Turkey, compulsory religious courses, cemevis as places for worship and difficulties Alevis face in the naming of Alevi associations (Zırh 2012, 314-5). Meanwhile, Alevism was recognized as a separate belief and Alevis received the right to teach Alevism in schools in Berlin in 2002 (Özyürek 2009, 240). The Confederation of European Alevi Unions was founded in 2002 and national Alevi federations in European countries gathered under the confederation (Sökefeld 2008, 233).

3.4) The Justice and Development Party and Alevis

There are two different groups among Alevis: “the progressivist Alevis and the traditional Alevis” (Zırh 2012, 58). The progressivist Alevis such as the European Alevis and the Pir Sultan Abdal Cultural Association26 views Alevism outside Islam while the traditional Alevis such as the Cem Foundation define it as the true version of Islam (Soner and Toktaş 2011, 423-4; Özkul 2015, 83). Both groups criticize each other as the traditional Alevis criticize the progressivist Alevis for being former Marxists and atheists when the progressivist Alevis criticize traditional Alevi for assimilating Alevism into Sunnism (Zırh 2012, 185-190).

During the first period of the AKP (2002-2007), the government did not give necessary attention to the Alevi issue despite the criticisms of the EU Commission reports (Borovalı and Boyraz 2014, 481). The Alevi diaspora published a “report about the Alevites in Turkey and in the Countries of the EU” in German and English in 2003 where they demanded official recognition of Alevism as a separate faith community in both Turkey and European countries, equal rights for Alevis, the abolishment of mandatory religious courses in Turkey, the end of construction of mosques in Alevi villages, the recognition of cemevis as Alevis’ worship

26 Pir Sultan Abdal Cultural Association (Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Derneği-PSAKD) is an Alevi association located in Ankara that has more than 75 branches. For more information see http://pirsultan.net/
places and the punishment for the discrimination against Alevi in Turkey (Sökefeld 2008, 234).

Due to all these pressures, the AKP initiated the “Alevi openings” in 2008. Several Alevi workshops were held in 2009 and 2010 to discuss Alevi’s demands (Özkul 2015, 83-4). The Alevi openings were approached with skepticism by many Alevi since the AKP did not invite the European Alevi organizations to the workshops. The final report confirmed this skepticism since it defined Alevism as a part of Islam, viewed the Directorate of Religious Affairs a necessary institution, and choose not to recognize cemevis as official worship places (Özkul 2015, 85). Alevism has started to take place in schoolbooks, yet as “mystical interpretation of Islam” (Çarkoğlu and Bilgili 2011, 359). Therefore, the openings did not serve to recognize Alevi identity as a separate faith community (Soner and Toktaş 2011, 430).

During the Syrian civil war (2011), the negative discourse of the AKP against Alawites in Syria and claims that Alevi in Turkey support the Assad regime put Turkey’s Alevi in a vulnerable situation. This situation led to the standstill of the Alevi openings (Özkul 2015, 91). The Gezi Park protests (May-July 2013) caused further politicization of Alevi identity as the other because the majority of the people who were killed in the protests were Alevi although it was not an Alevi uprising.

The Alevi issue was also brought up by “Mosque-Cemevi Project” (Camı-Cemevi Projesi) in 2013. “Camı-Cemevi Projesi” aimed at building a mosque and a cemevi in a joint place in Ankara. The actors of the project are both controversial figures: Fethullah Gülen, the leader of the Islamic Gülen Movement and Izzettin Doğan, who is the chair of the Cem Foundation. Both parties claim that this is a peace project aimed at solving problems between Alevi and Sunnis by bringing them together (Zaman, 7 September 2013). However, the Alevi diaspora and state-critical Alevi criticized the project for being another way of assimilating Alevism into Sunnism (Milliyet, 4 September 2013).

In August 2014, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was elected President and Ahmet Davutoğlu became the Prime Minister. Right now, Turkey is waiting for the general elections that will be held on June 7, 2015. The Confederation of European Alevi Unions has announced that they will be supporting People’s Democratic Party (HDP) in this election (Demokrat Haber, 15 March 2015). Turgut Öker who is the chair of the Confederation of European Alevi Unions quit his

27 Halkların Demokratik Partisi.
chairmanship to be a candidate for the HDP (Demokrat Haber, 29 March 2015). In response to Alevi’s support for the HDP, Erdoğan in a speech in Germany blamed Alevis in Europe for having “Alevism without Ali “(Alisiz Alevilik)” and stated that if “Alevism is considered a religion; I will never be there” (Radikal, 10 May 2015). President’s words represents the general Turkish political discourse which defines Alevism within Islam, and shows that the AKP will only have contact with state-friendly Alevis, not the critical ones.

3.5) Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I have presented the difficulty of defining Alevism and the history of Alevism through two perspectives: the transformations of the Alevi identity and Alevis’ positions of visibility, hypervisibility and invisibility. I have introduced the Alevi movement, the Alevi diaspora and transnational practices of European Alevi. Then, I presented the AKP’s Alevi openings and the recent developments related to the Alevi issue. So, this chapter provided background information for the following chapter on the Federation of Alevi Unions in Sweden and the Alevi Cultural Centers in Sweden.
Chapter 4. Alevi cultural centers and the Federation of Alevi Unions in Sweden

4.1) Introduction

Alevis in Sweden started to organize in Stockholm under an association called “Cultural Center for Alevis in Sweden”\(^{28}\) in 1995 (Person 6, Personal interview, November 10, 2013; SST 2014, 3). The Gothenburg AKM, the Dalarna AKM and the Malmö AKM were established in 2007. These four Alevi Cultural Centers gathered and formed the Federation of Alevi Unions in Sweden in 2008. The Halmstad AKM was established in 2012. The Uppsala AKM was established in 2013. The Örebro AKM was also established in 2013 and as specified in Alevis’ application to the Swedish Commission for Government Support to Faith Communities (SST), plan to become affiliated with the ARF in Sweden in 2015 (SST 2014, 3). The ARF and the AKMs registered as a faith community at Kammarkollegiet\(^{29}\) in 2012. In September 2014, they made another application to the Ministry of Culture to be able to receive economic assistance from the Swedish government.\(^{30}\) The SST evaluated Alevis’ application and concluded that the ARF is on a good way, but still has some way to go in November 2014. The ARF responded the evaluation, and presented more detailed information on their national organizational structure in Sweden, economic stability and the religious dimension of Alevism. The application is remitted to SST for a new opinion to be submitted to the Ministry of Culture on May 20\(^{th}\) 2015.\(^{31}\)

According to the co-chair of the ARF’s estimations, approximately 12000 Alevi immigrants from Turkey live in Sweden and they are scattered throughout the country (Person 7, Telephone interview, October 24, 2014). However, there exists no statistics on the numbers of Alevis in Sweden. Ethnically, they are Turkish and Kurdish. The majority of the people I interviewed stated that there are mostly Kurdish Alevis from Turkey. Apart from these estimations, we know that the ARF submitted an application to SST with 2277 registered members (SST 2014, 5). In Alevis’ response to the SST’s evaluation in December 2014, Alevis stated that they have registered 3064 members.

In this chapter, I will present each AKM and the ARF. I will present obstacles the ARF and the AKMs are facing in their organizing processes and the solutions they develop to overcome

\(^{28}\) Kulturcentrum for Aleviterna i Sverige.

\(^{29}\) Kammarkollegiet is an organization that exercises public authority and operates commercial undertakings in Sweden. Religious communities and its organizational units can also register at Kammarkollegiet in order to get their community’s name under protection. For more information see http://www.kammarkollegiet.se

\(^{30}\) This information was given by Max Stockman, Desk Officer and Coordinator for contact with Muslim and Christian Orthodox Communities at the SST, in February 25, 2015.

\(^{31}\) This information was given by Kent Eriksson, Desk Officer at the Ministry of Culture in an e-mail message, May 7, 2015.
them. I will describe the relations the ARF and the AKMs have with the Confederation of European Alevi Unions, Alevi associations in Turkey, Swedish institutions and political parties, and other migrants associations from Turkey in Sweden. I get most of my understanding from the ethnographic fieldwork conducted with the G-AKM, the S-AKM and the ARF. Therefore, although presenting an overview of the organization of Alevis in Sweden, this chapter also presents parts of the findings of the project.

4.2) The Alevi cultural centers in Sweden and the Federation of Alevi Unions in Sweden

There are currently seven Alevi Cultural Centers in Sweden located in Stockholm, Uppsala, Halmstad, Gothenburg, Dalarna, Malmö and Örebro. Except for the Örebro AKM, all AKMs are connected to the Federation of Alevi Unions in Sweden. The Federation of Alevi Unions in Sweden is affiliated with the Confederation of European Alevi Unions, which is an umbrella organization for the national Alevi federations in European countries. The ARF initiated a co-chaired system in Sweden in 2014. The chair of the ARF whom I interviewed is currently sharing her chairmanship duties with an administrative member from the D-AKM. The co-chair of the ARF is also a board member of the administrative body of the Confederation of European Alevi Unions and the chair of the Union of European Alevi Women.

4.2.1) The Stockholm Alevi Cultural Center (the S-AKM)

Since the founding of the first Alevi Cultural center in Stockholm in 1995, Alevis in Stockholm have experienced active and passive periods of the association (Person 6, Personal interview, November 10, 2013). During my fieldwork in 2013, the S-AKM had recently moved into their new local center in Turebergs Alle 4 Sollentuna, Stockholm. The local center is commonly used with the ARF and Yarsanlar. The S-AKM has a facebook group.32

In the S-AKM, there are Kurdish Alevis, Turkish Alevis, Armenians, and Assyrians (Person 6, Personal interview, November 10, 2013). Alevis in Stockholm generally come from the cities of Erzincan, Sivas, Dersim and Çorum in Turkey. The S-AKM’s administration consists of eleven people. In addition, the audit commission of the S-AKM consists of four people (Person 6, Personal interview, November 10, 2013).

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32 The S-AKM’s Facebook group address is https://www.facebook.com/groups/369601296520084/
Since its establishment, the S-AKM has been conducting a variety of activities (Person 6, Personal interview, November 10, 2013; Person 7, Personal Interview, November 11, 2013). Among these are courses of saz playing and semah dance. The chair of the S-AKM estimated that 15-20 people have learnt how to play saz in these courses. A drama course has been offered for 6 months to children aged 7-11 in order for them to improve their Turkish language. The S-AKM has organized seminars and called academicians, authors and dedes to talk about Alevism. They have invited people from the Turkish consulate to give information on military service, divorce and inheritance and they have hosted seminars on domestic violence, child education, healthy nutrition, and breast cancer. The S-AKM has organized concerts in Stockholm as well. One of these was given by the popular Alevi musician, Ali Ekber Çicek. In November 2013, during my fieldwork, the ARF and the S-AKM had just moved into their new local center. Since that time, the S-AKM has been active and conducted a number of activities like cem rituals, Sunday breakfasts, commemorations, and an Ashura celebration. Representatives have been presenting Alevis and Alevism in the Swedish Assembly, and the ARF and the S-AKM hosted an administrative board meeting for the European Alevi Youth Union.

4.2.2) The Gothenburg Alevi Cultural Center (The G-AKM)

The G-AKM was established in 2007 and has a local center in Södra Hildedalsgatan 11, Gothenburg. The G-AKM has a blogspot and a Facebook group where they announce their activities. According to the representative of the G-AKM, it has a wide range of members with different backgrounds, such as Arabs, Sunni Kurds, Kurdish Alevis, Assyrians, Turkish Alevis, and Turkish Sunnis and it welcomes everyone as long as they are “democrats” (Person 1, Personal interview, October 28, 2013). Members in the G-AKM generally come from Malatya, Dersim, Adıyaman and Sivas. There are nine members in the G-AKM’s administration (Person 1, Personal interview, October 28, 2013).

When I conducted the ethnographic fieldwork in 2013, the G-AKM had regular activities and board meetings. However, the G-AKM is not actively functioning right now since they are waiting to choose a new administrative body. I was informed by the previous administrative member of the G-AKM that some disagreements among the Alevi community in Gothenburg affected the G-AKM’s functioning (Person 11, Personal interview, August 24, 2014). The G-AKM’s blogspot address is http://goteborgalevikulturmerkezi.blogspot.se/?view=classic

33 The G-AKM’s blogspot address is http://goteborgalevikulturmerkezi.blogspot.se/?view=classic

34 The G-AKM’s address of Facebook group is https://www.facebook.com/groups/206094202872648/
AKM has moved into a smaller room in the local center due to economic challenges and they are currently sharing the local center with the Azerbaijani Association in Gothenburg.

When the G-AKM was regularly functioning, it organized many activities (Person 1, Personal interview, October 28, 2013). On a regular basis, they organized cinema days, breakfasts as well as gatherings among the Alevi community, and they offered weekly courses in cooking, sewing, the English language, and courses on women and health. They organized concerts with famous Alevi singers, commemorations, and seminars on Alevism and issues related to migration, integration and Swedish society.

4.2.3) The Dalarna Alevi Cultural Center (the D-AKM)

The D-AKM was established in 2007 after suggestion by a Sunni friend of some Alevis in Dalarna as a way of preserving Alevi culture (Person 5, Personal interview, November 9, 2013). According to the estimations, there are between 500-800 Alevis who live in Dalarna region. In the D-AKM, there are between 100-150 members, dominantly Kurdish Alevis. The local origin of members is quite mixed. There are 16 people in the administrative body. The D-AKM has meetings within the AKM either monthly or every two months. Since Dalarna is a scattered region, it is difficult for people to gather frequently (Person 5, Personal interview, November 9, 2013). The D-AKM usually conducts their activities in Borlänge but do not have their own local center, due to the geographical distance between cities in Dalarna region (Person 5, Personal interview, November 9, 2013). Despite this, the D-AKM was referred to as well-organized (Person 7, Telephone interview, October 26, 2014). The D-AKM has a Facebook page.35

After the establishment demands for assistance and activities related to Alevi belief increased (Person 5, Personal interview, November 9, 2013). The D-AKM has brought dedes for Alevi funerals in the area and they have demanded a cemetery for Alevis. In addition, they have organized the performance of a cem ritual and semah dance, concerts, culture night, commemorations, picnic, Ashura celebrations and seminars on Alevism (Person 5, Personal interview, November 9, 2013).

4.2.4) The Malmö Alevi Cultural Center (the M-AKM)

35 The D-AKM’s Facebook page address is https://www.facebook.com/groups/569610179731456/
The M-AKM was established in 2007; however it is currently not providing activities due to internal conflicts (Person 4, Personal interview, November 1, 2013). It has a local center in Lantmanngatan 59 B Malmö. Although the M-AKM does not have a schedule, they have organized concerts, saz courses, and Swedish courses for newcomers and commemorations (Person 4, Personal interview, November 1, 2013).

The chair is an administrative member of the Confederation of European Alevi Unions and co-chairman in “European Peace and Democratic Assembly”. In the M-AKM, there are dominantly Kurdish Alevis along with Turkish Alevis, Circassians and Laz as members. Alevis in Malmö generally come from Dersim, Maraş and Malatya.

In April 2014, the name of the Malmö Alevi Cultural Center changed to “Skåne Alevi Cultural Center” for the acceptance of prospective projects by Skåne region not just by Malmö municipality (Person 7, Telephone interview, October 26, 2014).

**4.2.5) The Uppsala Alevi Cultural Center (the U-AKM)**

Alevis in Uppsala started to organize in 1998. They established a separate Alevi Cultural Center; however it was closed down due to disagreements within the Alevi Community in Uppsala (Person 6, Personal interview, November 10, 2013). The U-AKM was re-established in November 2013 and has no local center yet. The U-AKM has a Facebook group.

According to estimations, approximately 5000 Alevi people live in and around Uppsala. They mostly come from Elbistan and Maraş (Person 7, Personal interview, November 11, 2013). The U-AKM has no local center where they can conduct regular activities. Despite this, they are conducting activities on occasions, such as concerts, Ashura celebrations, and seminars on Alevism.

**4.2.6) The Halmstad Alevi Cultural Center (the H-AKM)**

The H-AKM was established in 2012, has a Facebook group, but has no local center yet. At the time of my fieldwork, they were looking for a local center in a part of Halmstad where many Alevis live. Therefore the H-AKM is conducting activities like cem rituals, concerts and seminar on occasions (Person 7, Telephone interview, October 26, 2014).

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36 Avrupa Barış ve Demokratik Meclisi. The Assembly is a recent formation initiated by the Confederation of European Alevi Unions in order to create a democratic platform with the Laz, Assyrians, Yezidis, Kurds and Circassians for the democratization of Turkey (Person 4, Personal interview, November 1, 2013).

37 The U-AKM’s Facebook group address is https://www.facebook.com/groups/378643908934425/

38 The H-AKM’s Facebook group address is https://www.facebook.com/groups/274666875951564/
According to estimations, 300-350 Alevis live in Halland region and the H-AKM has 100 members. Alevis in Halmstad generally come from Dersim, Maraş, and Gaziantep. There are 8 members in Halmstad AKM’s administration (Person 2, Personal interview, October 30, 2013; Person 3, Personal interview, October 30, 2013).

4.2.7) The Örebro Alevi Cultural Center (the Ö-AKM)

In the general meeting and in the interview with the co-chair of the ARF I was informed that Alevis in Örebro were in the process of organizing (Person 7, Personal interview, November 11, 2013). The Ö-AKM was established in 2013 and is expected to be connected to the ARF in 2015 (SST 2014, 3). The ARF is in contact with the Ö-AKM, which wants to undergo a period of organization before they get connected to the ARF (Person 7, Telephone interview, October 26, 2014).

Alevis in Örebro mostly come from Maraş and they are mostly Kurdish Alevis (Person 7, Telephone interview, October 26, 2014). The Ö-AKM has a Facebook page.39

4.2.8) The Federation of Alevi Unions in Sweden (ARF)

The Federation of Alevi Unions in Sweden was founded in 2008 with the Alevi Cultural Centers in Stockholm, Malmö, Dalarna and Gothenburg. The ARF has a website40 and a Facebook page41 where they announce their activities. The ARF shares the local center with the S-AKM and Yarsanlar in Turebergs Alle 4, Sollentuna, Stockholm.

The ARF is composed of four different bodies. The highest decision-making body is the congress, which meets every year. The AKMs send their representatives to the congress. The congress chooses the board members of the ARF for two years. The board plans activities and handles the economy and they meet three times a year. The board chooses the executive committee, which consists of a chairman, a cashier and two secretaries. They take care of the daily work and represent the organization externally. The congress also chooses an audit committee whose role is to follow up legal work and the economy of the ARF. They are also involved in finding solutions for internal conflicts (SST 2014, 4). The ARF has nine permanent and four reserve members in the administrative body and it goes up to 15 people along with the audit commission (Person 7, Personal interview, November 11, 2013).

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39 The Ö-AKM’s Facebook page address is https://www.facebook.com/groups/703363529678157/
40 The ARF’s website is http://www.alevi.se/
41 The ARF’s Facebook page address is https://www.facebook.com/pages/Alevitiska-Riksf%C3%B6rbundet-Isvec-Alevi-Federasyonu/287182251331482
The ARF and the AKMs meet two or three times a year. In these general meetings, they basically talk about issues of organization, economic conditions, economic and social activities, payment of fees, introduction and representation of Alevism, communication between the AKMs and between the AKMs and the ARF, organization of Alevi women and Alevi youth, networking with other associations in Sweden, and so on. Such topics were discussed in the general meeting I partly attended in November, 2013. In May 2014, a new administrative body of the ARF was elected and the chairing responsibilities were shared between the previous chair of the ARF I and an administrative member from the D-AKM.

4.3) Obstacles and solutions

4.3.1) Financial difficulties

In the interviews, the ARF and the AKMs often referred to the financial difficulties they face and possible solutions to overcome these difficulties. The co-chair of the ARF stated that the ARF is a poor national federation and that it is difficult for them to pay their fees to the Confederation of European Alevi Unions (Person 7, Personal interview, November 11, 2013). The AKMs’ economic conditions and gathering membership fees were one of the main discussion topics in the general meeting in November 2013 that I partly attended. Each member needs to pay their fees to their AKMs so that the AKMs can pay their fees to the ARF. In the second phase of my ethnographic fieldwork, it became clear that the S-AKM and the G-AKM have been having difficulties in paying the local centers’ rent. The G-AKM moved into a smaller room in the same center because they could not afford the big room’s rent (Person 1, Personal interview, August 24, 2014). The ARF and the S-AKM also face the danger of losing the local center they use in common due to the economic challenges (Person 7, Telephone interview, August 24, 2014).

In order to overcome these difficulties, the ARF and the AKMs need to produce new projects and organize activities on regular basis so that they can receive economic assistance from Swedish institutions. One important economic resource is the Workers’ Educational Association of Sweden (ABF)\(^2\) which can give economic support to the AKMs in case of activities. Another solution for the ARF and the AKMs is to receive economic assistance from the Swedish government. In the first phase of my ethnographic fieldwork, they were running a campaign that aimed to gather 3000 signs as registered fee-paying members to

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\(^2\) ABF is an independent organization that provides support to projects with educational reasons throughout Sweden. For more information see http://www.abf.se/
receive financial assistance from the Swedish government. In September 2014 they submitted their application to receive support as a faith community.

4.3.2) Representation and introduction of Alevism to Sweden

Alevis also face difficulties in introducing and representing themselves to Swedish institutions, authorities and to the Swedish society. The chair of the S-AKM stated that Alevis organized in Sweden in 1995 and since then they have not managed to introduce Alevism to Swedish institutions and the Swedish people (Person 6, Personal interview, November 10, 2013). The ARF has no information material describing Alevism and Alevi associations in Sweden. The ARF and the AKMs have been discussing the importance of introducing Alevism to the Swedish society. One reason is that there are mistakes such as “98 percent of Turkey’s population is Muslim” in Swedish schoolbooks (Person 7, Telephone interview, October 24, 2014). If they will receive economic assistance as a faith community from the government, the ARF aims to apply for amendments in schoolbooks in order to get other belief groups in Turkey included (Person 7, Telephone interview, October 24, 2014).

The ARF conducted a reception in the Swedish parliament to introduce and present Alevis and their associations to Swedish deputies in March 2014. The seminar was co-organized with the “Committee of Supporting Human Rights in Turkey”. The Alevi journalist and author, Turan Eser, and the chair of the Confederation of European Alevi Unions met parliament members from the Swedish political parties and gave a presentation on the suppression, discrimination of Alevis and the infringement of Alevis’ rights in Turkey.

4.3.3) Reaching out to Alevis and mobilizing them

There is no dense Alevi population residing in Sweden and this causes problems for Alevis’ organization, such as difficulties in recruiting administrative staff and representatives (Person 7, Telephone interview, October 26, 2014; Person 1, Personal interview August 24, 2014). The ARF and the AKMs have been trying to reach out to Alevis and to make them members of the associations. Different ideas of what Alevism is and varying degrees of connection to an Alevi identity among Alevis in Sweden constitute challenges for the recruitment and mobilization of new members and representatives. Some of my informants stated that some

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43 Türkiye’de İnsan Haklarını Destekleme Komitesi.
44 For information about the content of the presentation see http://www.bestanuce1.com/92293/issvec-parlamentosunda-alevi-konferans1&dil=tr
Alevis put their ethnic identities in front of their Aleviness and give no importance to their Aleviness; some Alevis prefer to organize under Kurdish and leftist associations; and some Alevis want the AKMs to conduct more activities of Alevi beliefs (Person 11, Personal interview, August 24, 2014; Person 1, Personal interview, August 24, 2014).

The majority of my informants referred to the strength of the Kurdish movement in Sweden as a challenge for the organization of Alevis in Sweden. When they referred to the Kurdish movement they meant Kurdish associations supporting Kurdistan Workers’ Party. The Kurdish movement, they said, is powerful at least in parts of Sweden and better at mobilizing Alevis under their associations. These Kurdish movement’s associations was criticized for not helping Alevi and other Kurdish associations to organize. They all pointed out that the Kurdish movement managed to introduce their struggles to the Swedish society and to the Swedish authorities, and that the Alevi movement has not managed to do that yet. The interviewees also emphasized that the crucial thing is to break the prejudices among all groups, and form a strong opposition together with other Turkey-related groups in order to work together for the democratization of Turkey.

4.3.4) Communication and the frequency of meetings

The frequency of the meetings and effective communication among the AKMs in Sweden and also within each AKM are important for the organization of Alevis. There have been a lack of efficient communication and lack of meetings among the AKMs and between the AKMs and the ARF as well (Person 7, Personal interview, November 11, 2013). Economic burden in organizing general meetings, the geographical distance between Swedish cities, the clash of different individual programs and the members’ daily lives are reasons for this. The lack of local centers is another reason why the AKMs cannot provide the continuity of meetings.

The use of Internet has been one efficient solution to the challenge of communication and meetings. Many use social media effectively to communicate since they cannot always meet face to face. They conduct meetings on Skype and use emails to communicate with each other. Most AKMs have Facebook pages where they can announce activities. Another solution has also been discussed: Cities geographically close to each other such as Malmö, Halmstad, and Gothenburg, and Dalarna, Uppsala and Stockholm, could form groups and meet regularly in order to increase the solidarity between the AKMs (Person 7, Personal

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45 Kürdistan İşçi Partisi / Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê.
interview, November 11, 2013). However this has not been put it into practice since the ARF in Sweden has no economic resources to support travel expenses (Person 7, Telephone interview, October 26, 2014).

4.3.5) Organization of Alevi women in Sweden

Within the ARF there is a project of organizing Alevi women in Sweden. The aim is to set up a women committee in each AKM and there are plans of organizing a meeting for Alevi women from Denmark and Sweden in Malmö in 2015 (Person 7, Telephone interview, October 26, 2014). The need for Alevi women’s organization in Europe and in Sweden was emphasized by many of my informants (Person 7, Personal interview, November 11, 2013; Person 7, Telephone interview, October 26, 2014; Person 1, Personal interview, October 28, 2013; Person 1, Personal interview, August 24, 2014). Alevi women need to organize because they carry double stigmas; being Alevi and women at the same time. Although Alevi doctrine favors equality between men and women, Alevi women still remain in the background (Person 1, Personal interview, August 24, 2014). Alevi women are afraid of Sunnis coming from Turkey to Europe. In order to overcome these fears, Alevi women need to be empowered and to be part of the administrative bodies in the organization (Person 7, Personal interview, November 11, 2013). Furthermore, Alevi women are the carriers and transmitters of Alevi religion and culture. They should be able to teach Alevism to their children (Person 7, Telephone interview, October 26, 2014). On the other hand, organizing women and youth branches can be beneficial for the organization of Alevis since it is a criterion for economic support in Sweden.

4.3.6) Organization of Alevi youth in Sweden

Organization of Alevi youth in Sweden is also important for the organization of Alevis. The interviewees mostly stressed the importance of introducing Alevi beliefs to the young and to the children to teach them about their identity. They also emphasized the importance of education and the necessity of providing activities for them such as Turkish, mathematics and English courses (Person 2, Personal interview, October 30, 2013; Person 8, Personal interview, November 11, 2013). The chair of the D-AKM pointed out that one of their aims is to create an Alevi youth movement; however Alevi youngsters are for the time being passive in Sweden.
4.4) The relations of the Alevi cultural centers and the Federation of Alevi Unions in Sweden

In this part, I will present the relations of the ARF and the AKMs with the Confederation of Alevi Unions in Sweden and any Alevi associations in Turkey, Swedish institutions and political parties, and other migrant associations from Turkey in Sweden.

4.4.1) Their relations to the Confederation of European Unions and Turkey

The AKMs and the ARF are formally connected to the Confederation of European Alevi Unions. In this organizational structure, Alevi Cultural Centers form the smallest units. These Alevi Cultural Centers are affiliated with their national federations. There are currently nine national Alevi federations in Germany, Austria, France, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Belgium, The United Kingdom, Denmark, and Sweden. There are also Alevi cultural centers that have not yet institutionalized as federations in Norway, Romania and Italy. The national Alevi federations are connected to the Confederation of European Alevi Unions that was founded in 2002 as an umbrella association (Sökefeld 2008, 233).

The Confederation of European Alevi Unions acts as a decision-making mechanism for its smaller units. In this organizational structure, the national Alevi federations and the Alevi Cultural Centers are required to follow the Confederation’s decisions for organizational networks. Therefore, the national Alevi federations and the Alevi Cultural Centers have no direct, formal organizational networks with Alevi associations in Turkey, but through the Confederation. The Confederation cooperates with the Alevi-Bektaşî Federation in Turkey. However, this does not mean that the AKMs do not have any contact with Alevi organizations in Turkey at all. The S-AKM has engaged in Alevi organizational work in Turkey by organizing concerts and activities to donate money for the construction of a building for disabled people in Dersim. The S-AKM has, through the Confederation, contributed to the construction of cemevis in Sivas and Erzincan (Person 6, Personal interview, November 10, 2013). The G-AKM has, along with the ABF, cooperated with the Hacı Bektash Veli Foundation in Sivas for an education project (Person 1, Personal interview, August 24, 2014).

The ARF has close relations with the Federation of Alevi Unions in Denmark, which has been recognized by the Danish authorities as a separate belief community. The ARF benefits from the organizational experience of the Federation of Alevi Unions in Denmark. They have

46 Alevi-Bektaşî Federation is an umbrella organization for more than 100 Alevi associations in Turkey. For more information see http://www.alevifederasyonu.org.tr/index.php.
organized common meetings on topics like European Alevi Women and Alevi Youth (Person 7, Personal interview, November 11, 2013).

The Ö-AKM was founded in 2013 and has not been affiliated with the Federation of Alevi Unions in Sweden yet. Except for the Ö-AKM, all other AKMs are connected to their national Alevi federation under the Confederation of European Alevi Unions.

4.4.2) Their relations with Swedish institutions and political parties

All AKMs work in solidarity with the Workers’ Educational Association of Sweden (ABF). When the AKMs conduct activities, they inform the ABF in their municipalities in order to rent a local center (in case if the AKM does not have already) and receive economic assistance from the ABF.

The AKMs, on organizational base, do not support a specific political ideology; however they have contacts with the Swedish Social Democratic Party (Socialdemokraterna), the Left Party (Vänsterpartiet) and the Green Party (Miljöpartiet de Gröna). Some of the informants are members of these political parties.

The ARF has so far met the Swedish Social Democratic Party, the Left Party and the Green Party in order to present Alevis and Alevism. The AKMs also have direct contact with these parties, and call on them when organizing events like election information, May 1st manifestations, and seminars on Alevism.

4.4.3) Their relations to other migrant associations from Turkey in Sweden

The ARF and the S-AKM have formed a collaborative work platform with two leftist groups in Stockholm. These groups, “the Solidarity Group” and “The Art and Culture Association” are affiliated with the Federation of Turkish Workers’ Associations in Sweden.47 Some of the members in these groups are also members of the S-AKM. The name of this platform is Joint Working Platform for Democracy and Human Rights.48 They have a Facebook page with the same name.49 This platform conducts various common activities, mostly political. They have protested against the September 12, 1980 military intervention in Turkey and against political arrests. They called the lawyers of some of the well-known political prisoners who were executed during the intervention to Sweden. They also organized meetings to discuss

47 Turkiska Riksförbundet/ İsveç Türk İşçi Dernekleri Federasyonu.
48 İsveç Ortak Çalışma Demokrasi ve İnsan Hakları Platformu.
49 This platform’s Facebook page address is https://www.facebook.com/pages/Isve%C3%A7-Ortak-%C3%B6%C5%9Fina-Demokrasi-Ve-Insan-Haklari-Platformu/1455971171209293
constitutional changes in Turkey and how they can help political refugees from Turkey. They also organized seminars and panels, called deputies and labor unions, and cultural nights for the commemoration of Nazım Hikmet, who was an important leftist activist in Turkey’s Communist Party and a well-known poet (Person 7, Personal interview, November 11, 2013; Person 6, Personal interview, November 10, 2013).

Both the ARF and the chairs of the AKMs stressed the importance of having contact with others groups alienated in Turkey in order to cooperate and stay strong together in their relations with the Turkish state and the Swedish authorities and society (Person 7, Personal interview, November 11, 2013; Person 6, Personal interview, November 10, 2013). The G-AKM has close relations with the Kurdish association and the Assyrian community in Gothenburg. They gather to conduct political and cultural activities such as seminars on political developments in Turkey as well as commemorations of massacres against minorities in Turkey. They also invite each other to seminars and panels. During the first participant observation in G-AKM, the chair of the Kurdish association was also a participant. In the second participant observation, the priest of the Syrian Orthodox Church in Gothenburg also joined to the activity. In the phone interview with the priest, he mentioned that the Syrian Orthodox Church formed a platform with the Kurdish Association and the G-AKM in order to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide on April 24th 2015.

4.5) Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I have presented the ARF and the AKMs in Sweden by focusing on obstacles and solutions as well as their organizational relations. However, their aims also constitute an important part of their existence. The ARF wants to achieve some prospective projects after receiving economic assistance from the government. They think of hiring 2 or 3 professional people who can travel and coordinate the AKMs, increase memberships or help Alevis in need (Person 7, Telephone interview, October 26, 2014). They also have a cemevi project in Uppsala where they estimate high amount of Alevis live. Creating a funeral fund for Alevis and bringing dedes to Sweden to take care of Alevis bodies after death forms another project. In countries like Germany and Norway, Alevis created funeral funds since the funeral issue gained importance among Alevis in Europe (Zırh 2012, 256-58). There might also be a seminar in Stockholm University in order to introduce Alevis in Sweden. In the next chapter, I will present the theoretical framework and analyze the organization of Alevis in Sweden.
Chapter 5 Analysis on the organization of Alevis in Sweden in the light of theory of Incorporation Regimes

5.1) Introduction

In this chapter, I analyze how Alevis are organizing in Sweden in light of the theoretical framework of incorporation regimes. This concept was introduced by Yasemin Nuhoğlu Soysal in her book, “Limits of Citizenship: Migrants and Postnational Membership in Europe” (1994). In that book, she gives a comparative analysis of the incorporation regimes of countries like Denmark, Britain, Netherlands, Austria, Sweden, France, Germany, Belgium and Switzerland in order to demonstrate differences between host polities in European countries (Soysal 1994). One of her main arguments is that incorporation regimes of host polities shape and influence organizational patterns, participation and activity of migrants.

Every country has their own institutions, strategies, rules, organizational structures and policies to incorporate migrants and these affect the organizational patterns and participation of migrants (Soysal 1994, 32). Migrant organizations set “…their goals, strategies, functions, and level of operation…”according to the incorporation regimes (Soysal 1994, 86). She argues that this explains why migrant organizations have different ways of organizing in different countries.

Another researcher who has benefited from Soysal’s concept of incorporation regimes in his study of migrant organizations in Sweden is Martin Bak Jørgensen. In his PhD thesis (2009) “National and Transnational Identities: Turkish Identity in Denmark, Sweden and Germany”, he conducts a comparative analysis of political and discursive opportunity structures in Denmark, Sweden and Germany. He focuses on the Turkish minority in the three countries and how their organizing processes and the construction of collective identities are affected by the host countries’ political and discursive opportunity structures (Jørgensen 2009, 10-1). The sociological concept of opportunity structures is referred by Jørgensen as “…structural and political opportunities and limitations regarding rights, obligations and membership” for migrants’ organizing processes and the collective identity (2009, 12). He divides opportunity structures as political opportunity structures and discursive opportunity structures (Jørgensen 2009, 53-4). Political opportunity structures refer to the opportunities provided by political institutions such as integration and welfare policies (Jørgensen 2009, 54). Discursive opportunity structures refer to “…the public discourse and political agenda” (Jørgensen 2009,
54). As such, political and discursive opportunity structures are central parts of every incorporation regime.

Soysal presents different models of incorporation regimes; the corporatist model, the liberal model, the statist model and the fragmental model. In this chapter, I will mainly focus on the corporatist model and its characteristics as it represents the Swedish incorporation regime, and I will analyze to what extent the components of the corporatist model affect Alevis’ organizing processes in Sweden.

As an incorporation regime, Germany exemplifies a hybrid model characterized by Soysal as corporatist-statist. The organization of Alevis in Germany has been decisive for the ways in which Alevis have organized in other European countries including Sweden. Therefore, this chapter will also present the strategies through which Alevis in Germany has achieved recognition within this specific German incorporation regime.

5.2) Incorporation regimes

5.2.1) The liberal incorporation regime

The liberal incorporation regime, as in Britain and Switzerland, incorporate migrants as individuals (Soysal 1994, 38). It does not produce policies focused on collective identities in ways that the corporatist incorporation regime does. In this regard, individuals and their interests are emphasized, not the collective groups.

Soysal argues that “In the liberal context, existing opportunity structures, especially labor market and education, along with legal strategies to facilitate equal participation of individual migrants becomes the means of incorporation” (1994, 80). The aim of the incorporation is to create equal opportunities for individual migrants so that they can integrate into the host countries’ institutions, and participate in the labor market and in education as other residents. In this sense, participation in the labor market and in education play an important role for the incorporation of individual migrants since their position in the host country are determined by this participation (Soysal 1994, 52-5).

In liberal polities, there are no state-sponsored intermediate formal structures that provide the incorporation of migrants and their interests. It symbolizes a decentralized authority, giving an active role to the local authorities “…in developing and implementing policy concerning
citizens’ social welfare” (Soysal 1994, 38). This situation also leads to an increase in private and voluntary associations.

In such liberal states, most migrant organizations function on the local level and conduct activities on social service and advice rather than conducting activities on interest representation as in the corporatist model (Soysal 1994, 87). Thus, migrant organizations are not encouraged to establish national federations based on ethnic identities. At the societal level, liberal states incorporate migrants as individuals through local voluntary associations (Soysal 1994, 38).

Soysal gives example of two countries with liberal incorporation regimes: Switzerland and Britain. In Switzerland, the migrant policy is focused on integration. Integration is expected to occur on the individual level through individual migrant’s participation in occupational and market structures. In this sense, Swiss policy does not have an active role in incorporating migrants (Soysal 1994, 53). The state does not encourage any ethnic or religious collective identities or organizations since it believes it can prevent individual migrants from integrating into the Swiss society (Soysal 1994, 101). Therefore, it does not expect the collective incorporation of migrants and does not provide any state support to migrant organizations (Soysal 1994, 54).

Britain also centers on the liberal incorporation regime, emphasizing individual migrants and a decentralized authority. Britain’s migrant policy is focused on racial equality and equal opportunities for individual migrants, stressing no discrimination of individuals in education, housing and employment (Soysal 1994, 54-5).

5.2.2) The statist incorporation regime

The statist incorporation regime, as in the case of France, is a centralized one unlike decentralized liberal regimes. The statist model incorporates migrants as individuals like in the liberal regime, but the central state is much more involved in migrant affairs (Soysal 1994, 39). In this sense, the incorporation of migrants occurs at state and national levels (Soysal 1994, 39).

The aim of the statist pattern is to provide equal standing for individual migrants with other citizens, so that they can have access to the same institutions as other citizens have. In the statist model as in the liberal model, there are no formalized intermediary structures that provide incorporation of migrants as collective identities. The state organizes and intervenes
in most social functions in this model. In this sense, “[t]he central state takes a more interventionist position to strengthen the opportunity structures of migrants” (Soysal 1994, 80).

Migrant organizations are politicized in the statist model. They organize as advocacy or action groups in opposition to the state (Soysal 1994, 87). The organizational activities of migrants are mostly based on national political issues in order to attract the attention of public authorities’ (Soysal 1994, 87-106). Soysal emphasizes that their aim is not to gain recognition but to “…redefine and reestablish political categories at the national level” (1994, 87).

France exemplifies this model: a centralized state which incorporates migrants as individuals. As Soysal explains, central state agencies are responsible for organizing and managing the incorporation of migrants. In this model, intermediary structures are discouraged and the state has much more control and even intervention in migrant affairs (Soysal 1994, 75). The incorporation in France “… assumes uniformly equal individuals vis-à-vis the state”; therefore providing equal standing to individual migrants gains importance for the incorporation (Soysal 1994, 58).

In France, the main central agency responsible for migrant policy is the Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration. They deal with policies on integration and status of migrants. French integration policies aim for migrants to individually gain access to the institutions of the French society. To achieve this, migrant policies focus on ensuring equality between individual migrants. The state does not encourage incorporation of migrants as collective identities and there are no legally recognized ethnic or religious minorities. This stems from the fact that the secular and republican French system emphasizes uniformity between all individuals (Soysal 1994, 59).

5.2.3) The fragmental incorporation regime

The fragmental incorporation regime, as argued by Soysal is generally seen in oil exporting Gulf States. In this corporation regime, the state has a limited position in the organization of migrants. Migrants are incorporated partially through their participation in the labor markets (Soysal 1994, 39-40).

5.2.4) The Corporatist Incorporation Regime
Soysal gives a detailed analysis on the corporatist patterns which countries like Sweden and the Netherlands have. In the corporatist model, migrants are incorporated into the host countries’ polities as collective groups. In other words, migrants as individuals need to be a part of wider collective groups to be incorporated into the host societies’ institutions (Soysal 1994, 37-8). As pointed out by Soysal, “…it is only through their official corporate identity and standing that migrants gain access to rights and public services” (1994, 4).

The corporatist regime defines migrants according to collective identities such as “occupational, ethnic, religious or gender identity” (Soysal 1994, 37). The emphasis, in the model, is basically on ethnic minority identities. Defining migrants by their collective ethnic identity also determines their position in relation to the state. In this sense, as regarded as corporate groups, migrants’ status becomes clear in front of the state (Soysal 1994, 46).

Countries that have the corporatist model give importance to “…public interest and the welfare of social groups” (Soysal 1994, 36). The aim of this model is to provide equality between each corporate group; therefore the model produces highly comprehensive policies to incorporate migrants (Soysal1994, 37-8). In this regard, Soysal gives example of Sweden’s elaborative immigration policy that is based on three objectives “…equality between immigrants and Swedes, freedom of cultural choice for immigrants, and cooperation and solidarity between the native e Swedish majority and various ethnic minorities” (1994, 47).

In the corporatist model, the incorporation of migrants is highly organized and centralized, and follows a vertical line. Initially, there are state-sponsored intermediate institutions between the central state and migrant organizations to provide the incorporation of migrants. Migrant organizations need to participate in these intermediate organizations collectively in order to be incorporated (Soysal 1994, 38). As Soysal put it, the corporatist model “…produce a set of formal organizational structures and intermediary institutions that – offer centralized channels for the collective participation of migrants” (Soysal 1994, 65).

The centralized nature of the incorporation regime can also be seen in the corporatist state’s organization of a detailed funding system for migrant organizations. They provide funding to these migrant organizations through the central state and local authorities (Soysal 1994, 47-8). This detailed funding system constitutes a one of the important aspects of the corporatist model since it motivates migrants to form their organizational structure in the way of the corporatist model suggests. In this sense, this elaborate funding system can be viewed as one
of the important tools which encourage migrants to organize in accordance with the corporatist model.

5.2.5) The corporatist-statist incorporation regime and Alevis in Germany

Germany is an example of a corporatist-statist incorporation regime. This means that Germany’s incorporation regime carries several characteristics of a corporatist regime and at the same time has a centralized public sphere (Soysal 1994, 39). There are no direct references to ethnic minorities as can be found in a corporatist incorporation regime. In this regard, migrants are not encouraged to participate in the system as collective identities (Soysal 1994, 61).

A corporatist pattern in Germany can be seen “…in the organization of social services to migrants” (Soysal 1994, 61-2). Soysal argues that centralized semi-public institutions such as churches, welfare institutions, or trade unions take responsibility in the incorporation of migrants. These institutions have financial and organizational links to the state (Soysal 1994, 62-77). She also points out that “[a]lthough German integration policy is not centrally defined or coordinated, its instruments are centrally organized” and that there is a federal budget for language and vocational education, social services and public information (1994, 62). Semi-public institutions receive this funding in order to provide social and educational services to migrant groups (Soysal 1994, 63). In Germany, migrant organizations are not part of the incorporation policy as they are in corporatist models of incorporation. Migrant organizations are not institutionally represented in Germany although German system acknowledges cultural differences (Sökefeld 2008, 183).

Apart from some general principles at the federal level, every local state can have different migrant policies on education and culture (Soysal 1994, 62-3). For instance, Soysal states that Berlin and Hamburg have applied more participatory policies towards migrants by providing funding to their cultural, youth and women related activities (Soysal 108-109). Furthermore, some local states formed advisory councils in which migrant organizations can represent themselves (Soysal 1994, 78).

In his study of Alevi organisations in Germany, Sökefeld stresses what he calls “‘the paradigm of cultural difference’” (2008, 179). In other words, as he argues, Germany incorporates migrants as cultural others and “through a discourse of exclusion” (Sökefeld 2008, 179). Focusing on “us and them” in the public discourse on migration he claims that
migrants are characterized as culturally different, not good at learning German and mostly engaged with homeland policies and therefore are unable to integrate in Germany (Sökefeld 2008, 180). He adds that Germany views migrants as foreigners rather than seeing them as immigrants (Sökefeld 2008, 81-202).

According to Sökefeld, most migrant organizations in Germany do not have national federations and they tend to engage with homeland policies due to the exclusivist mode of incorporation in Germany (2008, 180-1). The AABF used two main strategies for their recognition within the framework of the German institutional and discursive environment (Sökefeld 2008, 183-5). Since the Alevi declaration, Alevis have adopted a discourse on their difference to Sunni Islam and their similarity to German culture (Sökefeld 2008, 183). In this sense, equality between Alevi men and women, and Alevi women’s not veiling were emphasized. They have emphasized on the relation of Alevism to the “…universal values of modernity: humanism, tolerance and democracy” (Sökefeld 2008, 186). They have also stressed the importance of human rights, equality and freedom.

The second strategy of Alevis’ organization in Germany can be seen in their efforts towards institutional integration (Sökefeld 2008, 186). Sökefeld explains institutional integration as “…the establishment of cooperative relations between Alevi associations and various German civil and governmental institutions” (2008, 186). Alevis have tried to achieve the institutional integration with municipal institutions, federal states and federal government. In this regard, Alevis benefited from federally and locally funded projects that aimed at integration of migrants (Sökefeld 2008, 187-189). The AABF also “… applied for the legal status of a “corporation under public law”…” (Sökefeld 2008, 189). In Germany, only the Protestant and Catholic Churches have this status which is the highest status a non-state institution can acquire (Sökefeld 2008, 189). Sökefeld points out that Alevis’ “…most significant project of recognition and institutional integration is the Alevi demand for Alevi religious classes in public schools” (2008, 189). Berlin State gave permission to Alevis to teach Alevism in primary schools (Sökefeld 2008, 192).

Sökefeld also explains in detail that a migrant association needs to follow some certain rules in order to maintain its existence within the German institutional environment. For instance, their aims shall not contradict with the German constitutional order. All associations have to follow the rules of German associational law. They have to follow extra rules in order to receive for funding. In other words, Alevi associations have to act within the rules of the
German institutional environment if they want to continue their existence (Sökefeld 2008, 188). At this point, Sökefeld agrees with Soysal’s theory on the institutional environment of the host countries affect and shape the organizational activity and the participation of migrant associations.

Another point where Sökefeld agrees with Soysal’s theory comes with the recognition of Alevism as a separate religion in Germany. Although there have been debates about Alevism being culture or religion among Alevis, both sides agreed on that Alevis are a religious community because “… religion is a category of recognition in Germany” (Sökefeld 2008, 195). Culture, on the other hand, does not hold a legal status like religion. Therefore, Alevis adopted themselves according to German’s discursive and institutional environment in order to receive institutional integration and recognition (Sökefeld 2008, 196). Although there were different opinions, they agreed on religion since that was the only way to receive recognition. Sökefeld here gives a comparison between Germany and France that have different institutional and discursive models. He points out that Alevis in France cannot use the same strategy towards being a religious community because France has a strict Republican Secularism that will not accept it. Therefore the Federation of Alevi Unions in France refer to Alevism as a philosophy and culture in order to maintain their existence as an association as far as the French institutional and discursive environment allows (Sökefeld 2008, 196). In the end, Sökefeld agrees with Soysal when he puts “… the form of organization that Alevis sought was predicated on the models of the German institutional and discursive environment” (2008, 207). In their efforts towards institutional integration and recognition in Germany, Alevis have tried and adopted their strategies as far as the German institutional and discursive environment has allowed.

5.3) Analysis of the organization of Alevis within the Swedish corporatist system

Incorporation in Sweden occurs through state and local authorities. The central state agency dealing with all migrant issues is the Swedish Migration Agency under the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The Swedish Migration Agency is responsible to apply and direct the Swedish migration policy. It fulfills many tasks such as giving residence and work permits, or citizenship as well as funding migrant organizations. The ABF is a non-administrative institution that also influences migrants’ organizing processes (Jørgensen 2009, 164). The

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50Migrationsverket.
51For more information on the Swedish Migration Agency see http://www.migrationsverket.se/
ABF allocates resources such as funding or facilities to migrants on an individual and collective base (Jørgensen 2009, 237). The government authority that provides support to faith communities is the Swedish Commission for State Grants to Religious Communities (SST). Apart from central agencies, local authorities also participate in incorporating migrants. Central and local authorities are in “…constant communication and consultation…” between each other in order to discuss migrant issues and policies (Soysal 1994, 67).

The corporatist model encourages migrants to organize in specific ways. Organizing in these specific ways is also a way for migrant organizations to be able to receive subsidies. Firstly, the model encourages migrants to organize as ethnic and religious communities since the model wants to define migrants as separate collective identities. In Soysal’s words, “[r]ecognition by the state as a legitimate ethnic category, a prerequisite for access to funding and participatory mechanisms, becomes an animating goal for migrant organizations” (Soysal 1994, 87). Secondly, it encourages migrant organizations to organize on a national level with umbrella organizations along with local member organizations based on abovementioned collective identities. In this model, the migrant organizations are also expected to be the representatives of the interests of their own communities. Therefore, the model encourages migrants to conduct activities mainly on interest representation, policy formulation as well as activities on education and integration. They must also conduct activities relevant for living in Sweden (Soysal 1994, 91; Jørgensen 2009, 226). Furthermore, the model encourages migrants to establish youth and women branches by offering extra subsidies to these kinds of efforts.

Jørgensen argues that although there is divergence in the organizing processes of migrants, “the Swedish corporatist system has forced the organizations into a high degree of internal convergence with a very little room for variation” (Jørgensen 2009, 219). In other words, organizing on national level with local branches creates a unifying form of organizing for migrant organizations. Allocating subsidies according to federation size, high membership and requirement of activities on interest representation, policy formulation, education, and/or integration encourages migrant associations to be convergent or to overcome their internal conflicts in their organizing processes although they have differing political or ideological orientations (Soysal 1994, 87-91; Jørgensen 2009, 219-39).

In the following, I will look at the organization of Alevis in Sweden in light of the incorporation mechanisms ethnic/religious categorization, umbrella organizations and representation, women and youth branches, and the character of the activities expected.
5.3.1) Ethnic and religious categorization

Sweden encourages migrants to organize as collective groups based on their ethnic and religious identities (Soysal 1994, 47). As Soysal states, “‘religious and ethnic minorities are given the constitutional right to “express and develop their cultural heritage”’” (1994, 47). In this sense, migrants can benefit from mother-tongue education for their children, publish their newspapers and have their own radio and television programs (Soysal 1994, 47).

In explaining Sweden, Soysal specifically focuses on how the Swedish system gives importance to the definition of migrants as separate ethnic communities. However, even other kinds of identity categorizations are incorporated by the corporatist model in Sweden. Jørgensen, in his analysis of Swedish migrant groups, gives four main types of organization: “ethno-national organisations and federations, antidiscrimination movements, trans-ethnic umbrella organisations and religious organisations” (Jørgensen 2009, 231). Jørgensen gives examples of Turkish, Kurdish and Assyrian communities in Sweden and their ethno-national federations. Religious organizations also follow the same organizational processes like ethno-national organizations (Jørgensen 2009, 235). The religious organizations also organize under national level federations to acquire “a centralized, unifying organizational model” (Soysal 1994, 93).

There are criteria for ethnic and religious organizations to receive subsidies. The member profile must consist of mostly immigrants. The federations receive subsidies according to their size. Therefore, mobilizing as many members as possible rather than their active participation becomes a goal for migrant organizations in order to receive more subsidies (Soysal 1994, 91).

The SST report which evaluates the ARF’s application to receive funding touches upon The “Lag om stöd till trossamfund” (SFS 1999:932). §2 of the law says that government support is intended to help faith communities to conduct active and long-term religious activities in the form of religious services, spiritual care, education and pastoral care (SFS 1999:932). §3 of the law continues that government grants are only provided to faith communities which help to maintain and enhance the fundamental values that are essential to society, which are stable and which have their own independent vitality (SFS 1999:932). In this sense, the organizations must have a democratic structure in compliance with Swedish values. As also

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52 This law can be found in English in http://www.sst.a.se/inenglish.4.7f968fc211eeec933de800011945.html
specified in the report, the community should be stable, have been active for more than 5 years, have a permanent and clear organizational structure, have their own governing body in Sweden and have their own local centers (rent or own) for their activities. The community should also be economically stable, and be financed by membership fees. Lastly, the community should have their own viability and serve at least 3000 people.

In analyzing the organization of Alevis in Sweden I treat the ARF and AKMs as a religious organization because they registered as a faith community at Kammarkollegiet in 2012 and applied for support from the SST in 2014. In this sense, Alevis in Sweden has followed the same strategy as their counterparts in Germany. As stated by Sökefeld, Alevis in Germany defined themselves as a religious community in order to receive recognition and institutional integration in the society. They benefited from this strategy since religion is a category of recognition in Germany. Alevis in Sweden may also benefit from this strategy since religion and ethnicity are legally recognized categories within the corporatist model of incorporating migrants on the basis of their ethnic and/or religious identities. In their application, Alevis defined Alevism as a separate belief. On the other hand, they added Alevism is a cultural identity, philosophy and a protest movement. The ARF and the AKMs strive to define themselves as a separate faith community while they obviously also have the need to put forward cultural and political aspects of Alevism. This says a lot about Alevis in Sweden and their need of defining Alevism more than religion.

5.3.2) Umbrella organizations and representation

The corporatist model encourages migrant associations to organize under umbrella organizations at the national level. It also expects these umbrella organizations to be representatives of their migrant communities, and to be the connection between their members and Swedish institutions. In this regard, representation of community interests through migrant organizations is highly given importance by migrant communities (Soysal 1994, 48). Also, “[b]ecause each migrant group is expected to be represented by its own national organization, migrant associations with differing political orientations are compelled to organize under one umbrella federation” (Soysal 1994, 87). Forming federations at the national level is one of the criteria for migrants to receive subsidies.

The Federation of Alevi Unions in Sweden was established in 2008 and has six local Alevi associations attached to it. The ARF and the AKMs are also seen as the representatives of the Alevi community by Swedish institutions and authorities. This situation makes the
representation of Alevism crucial in order for the Alevis to be understood by Swedish institutions, authorities and the Swedish society. However, the ARF and the AKMs have difficulties in representing and introducing Alevism in Sweden. The ARF has not yet been able to produce information material to distribute. Further, the various definitions of Alevism in the application for subsidies also show that there are different voices about how to define Alevism. Therefore, it seems that locating Alevi identity among many other ethnic and religious identities in order to present Alevism within the limits of the corporatist regime seems like a challenge. These representation issues affect the organization of Alevis in Sweden.

In the corporatist model, the size of the federation and the number of the local centers attached to it, gains importance to determine the amount of the state subsidies. Therefore, incorporating the Ö-AKM to the ARF is crucial for the Alevi community to increase the number of members and to be eligible for funding from SST. In their response to SST’s evaluation, Alevis stated that they have reached to 3064 members.

5.3.3) Women and youth branches

The corporatist Swedish state also leads migrant organizations to have women and youth branches by giving funding to activities regarding women and youth issues (Soysal 1994, 92; Jørgensen 2009 220-1). Therefore, migrant communities follow these organizational trajectories in order to receive subsidies. This situation is best summarized by Jørgensen as:

The overall impact of the Swedish opportunity structures and a corporatist system generates an organizational landscape characterized by several centralised unifying organizations at national level, each with a number of member organizations at local level and additional youth and women’s organizations also at a central level (2009, 234)

This pattern is also followed by Alevis in Sweden and according to my informants attempts to form organizations of Alevi women and youth are developing. My informants referred to the necessity and importance of forming organization of Alevi women and youth for the promotion of Alevi identity (Person 7, Personal interview, November 11, 2013; Person 7, Telephone interview, October 26, 2014; Person 1, Personal interview, October 28, 2013; Person 1, Personal interview, August 24, 2014). They are in the process of forming a women committee within each AKM and they have plans of organizing a meeting for Alevi women.
from Denmark and Sweden in Malmö in 2015 (Person 7, Telephone interview, October 26, 2014). Forming these organizations would probably increase their chances of receiving subsidies.

5.3.4) Activities

One of the characteristics of the corporatist model is that it to a certain extent determines the kind of activities migrant organizations offer. In the corporatist model, migrant organizations are expected to provide activities on interest representation and policy formulation as well as education and integration (Soysal 1994, 87-91). In this model, the aims of the migrant organizations easily become to represent the interests of their own communities, to be a link between the Swedish authorities and their communities and to pursue their cultural identities (Soysal 1994, 88-9).

The ARF and the AKMs conduct a variety of religious, cultural and educational, activities. The majority of the activities are based on Alevi beliefs and culture. This also holds true for educational activities such as saz courses and dance courses. Providing these kinds of activities can support Alevis’ demand for subsidies. There are also panel discussions on issues ranging from the history of Alevism, Alevi belief and culture, migration-related issues such as integration to Sweden, migrant problems such as unemployment, insurance, the voting system, and the citizenship rights in Sweden. Further, there are seminars and panels on issues regarding women and youth such as women’s health and young people’s challenges. Through these kinds of activities, the ARF and the AKMs can receive facilities or funding in line with what the corporatist model suggests.

In accordance with the law, government support is intended to help faith communities to conduct active and long-term religious activities in the form of religious services, spiritual care, education and pastoral care (SFS 1999:932). The ARF pointed in their application to the religious activities they have conducted, but the SST did not find enough information about the regularity of these activities on the local level and could therefore not conclude on the federation’s viability (SST 2014, 2).

In terms of interest representation, the Federation of Alevi Unions in Sweden conducted a reception at the Swedish Parliament in 2014 in order to introduce Alevism and present the Alevi organizations to the Swedish deputies. Turan Eser, an Alevi journalist, gave a
presentation on the suppression, discrimination experienced by Alevis and the infringement of Alevis’ rights in Turkey.

5.4) Internal and external challenges for the organization of Alevis in Sweden

The topics Alevis often discuss in their meetings are centered on their goals for the future, future projects and plans in their organization in Sweden. They mainly discuss the economic condition of the Federation of Alevi Unions, the AKM’s social and economic conditions, mobilization of more Alevis, payment of membership fees, activities, the organization of Alevi women and youth, introduction and representation of Alevism, communication between AKMs, funding for Alevi funerals and also issues on migration, health, education and employment. All this topics are partly shaped by internal factors and also by the requirement they need to fulfill in a corporatist system in order to be able to stand as a legitimate organization. So, the organization of Alevis in Sweden partly depends on internal factors and partly on external factors. As indicated by the co-chair of the federation, the main aim of the federation is to introduce Alevism to the Swedish institutions and authorities, to gain recognition as a separate belief, and to organize more Alevis. It is pertinent to point out that these aims are largely shaped by the requirements of a corporatist regime since realizing all these aims would benefit their organization in Sweden.

The frequency of the meetings and efficient communication between the AKMs and between them and the ARF are crucial for the organization of Alevis in Sweden. This is a challenge they face depending on internal factors. There is a lack of regular activities in the AKMs, and there is also a lack of regular meetings and efficient communication between them. There are several reasons such as the economic burden of organizing general meetings, the geographical distance between Swedish cities, the clash of individual programs and the lack of local centers. They aim to solve these problems if they receive economic assistance from the SST (Person 7, Personal interview, October 26, 2014). They wish to hire 2 or 3 professional people who can travel and coordinate the communication and meetings between the AKMs and who can work with mobilizing more Alevis (Person 7, Personal interview, October 26, 2014).

The regularity of the activities on local and national level is crucial to show the organization’s viability. However, apart from the S-AKM that has a regular schedule of activities, the other AKMs face difficulties in providing regular activities for several reasons. The U-AKM has no local center yet in which they can conduct regular activities. The M-AKM has a cadre problem so they are not actively functioning right now. The H-AKM is also not regularly
functioning since they have a problem in finding a local center in one area where many Alevi live extensively. The D-AKM has no local center since Dalarna is a scattered region. This also affects the regularity of the activities. The G-AKM has a local center; however they do not have a regular schedule of activities since they are currently waiting to elect a new administrative body. This information which I received from my interviews coincides with the evaluation of the SST report on uncertainty on the continuity of activities on the local level.

The corporatist system in Sweden allocates subsidies to migrant organizations on state and local levels, and this situation encourages migrants to organize collectively to be able to receive these subsidies. The allocation of subsidies in Sweden has an impact on Alevi’s organizing processes since the ARF and the AKMs face mostly economic challenges in their organization in Sweden. The AKMs have difficulties in collecting membership fees that respectively complicates their payment to the ARF. In addition, economic problems also affect the ability of the S-AKM and the G-AKM to pay their rents for the local centers. One of the solutions for these financial problems is to receive funding and facilities from the ABF. All my interviewees refer to the ABF that provides economic assistance and local centers in case of conducting activities. This intermediary institution in the Swedish corporatist system assists Alevi to maintain their activities in their organizing processes.

As specified in §3 of the law (SFS 1999:932), a faith community should be stable and have their own independent vitality. In other terms, it should have economic viability (financed by membership fees) and serve at least 3000 members.

In their economic evaluation, SST finds that the ARF has registered almost no income during the first years of existence. There were no reported income in 2010-2012, therefore the ARF seem to have lived on unrecognized temporary contributions. In the 2012-2014 period, they have reported a very small amount of income. Therefore, SST concludes that ARF still has some way to go to be able to show economic viability (SST 2014, 4).

During the fieldwork, the criteria of 3000 members, mostly Alevi, was a challenge for the Federation of Alevi Unions in Sweden. The ARF had a campaign in order to gather 3000 fee-paying members as a preparation for the application for government support. However, they submitted an application to the Ministry of Culture with only 2277 members in 2014 (SST 2014, 5). In Alevi’s response to SST’s evaluation, they stated that they have reached to 3064 members. There are several reasons for the difficulties of mobilizing Alevi members. First of all, the population of Alevi in Sweden is low. The co-chair of ARF has been referring to
12,000 Alevi immigrants from Turkey; and a potential number of approximately 5000 Alevis living in and around Uppsala. However, there is no statistical information affirming these statements, and in any case the total number of Alevis in Sweden is low. Another challenge with Alevi membership has grown out of disagreements within the Alevi community. Most of my interviewees refer to the fact that some Alevi want to organize under Kurdish associations and some under leftist associations. Some want AKMs to conduct more activities on Alevi belief; others want it to be more social and political organization. There exist disparate and sometimes conflicting ideas on what Alevism is and what may be expected from the AKMs. This situation makes Alevi’s mobilization under the AKMs difficult and directly affects their organization within the Swedish corporatist system that requires a certain amount of members. Therefore, the criteria of 3000 membership in order to be eligible to receive subsidies influence the organization of Alevis in Sweden directly and the ARF and the AKMs are encouraged to be convergent and to overcome their internal disputes in their organizing processes. On the other hand, the corporatist system even urge organizations and communities with differing political and ideological orientations to come together to receive subsidies.

There are certain criteria for a migrant organization to be eligible to receive subsidies that are not specifically problematic for the organization of Alevis in Sweden. They are already organized nationwide with a national federation along with local member organizations. Both the ARF and the AKMs have a democratic structure. As specified in the SST report, the SST finds the ARF and the AKMs democratic since they showed in their application that they are positive, working with human rights, fighting against discrimination, working with women, children, and youth as well as for integration into Swedish society (SST 2014, 3).

5.5) The Transnational Alevi movement and the Swedish corporatist system

There are similar patterns between the organizational structure of the transnational Alevi movement and the organizational requirements by the Swedish corporatist system for migrants’ incorporation. These similar patterns manifest themselves in two aspects: in the organization of national federations and in the organization of women and youth branches on the federation level. It might be beneficial for Alevis in Sweden to acquire an organizational structure that is both shaped by Alevis’ transnational organizational pattern and the Swedish incorporation system. First of all, the Alevi Movement in Europe has a hierarchical organizational structure through the Confederation of European Alevi Unions, the national
Alevi Federations and the local Alevi Cultural Centers. In this organizational structure, the local Alevi Cultural Centers are connected to their national federations responsible to the Confederation of European Alevi Unions. On the other hand, the Swedish corporatist regime also encourages migrants to form federations at the national level along with local member organizations. This situation shows a similar pattern between the organization of the transnational Alevi movement and the Swedish corporate system. It might also benefit Alevis in Sweden since the corporatist system wants to define migrants as collective identities. Thus, a federation with a name “Alevi” and its local member organizations demonstrate the existence of a collective identity as Alevi. Secondly, there is an emergence of Alevi women and Alevi youth branches and networks throughout Europe starting from Germany. This form of organization coincides with the Swedish requirements of women and youth branches at the national level.

5.6) Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I have presented the theory of incorporation regimes and described the liberal, statist, fragmental, corporatist and corporatist-statist regimes. I have specifically touched upon Germany’s hybrid statist-corporatist regime and Alevis in Germany since the organization of Alevis is crucial to understand the organization of Alevis in Sweden. I analyzed the organization of Alevis within the Swedish corporatist system. In this sense, I introduced the criteria set by the Swedish corporatist model for migrant organizations to fulfill and how this affect and shape the organizational activity of Alevis. Furthermore, I examined internal factors shaping the organization of Alevis in Sweden.
Chapter 6 Conclusion

6.1) Summary

In this thesis, I have portrayed the organization of Alevis in Sweden. After a short summary of the chapters in this thesis, this concluding chapter will present reflections on the answers I have found and given to the research questions of the project presented in the introduction. I will also discuss some suggestions for further research on Alevis in Sweden.

In this project, I chose to apply ethnographical methods. The interviews and participant observations I conducted proved to be fruitful in order to learn about Alevis and their organization in Sweden. Chapter two describes the fieldwork and the methodological experiences I have gained through this project. However, qualitative research raises ethical considerations on insider/outsider status, the necessity to keep a neutral role and the representation of the other; that I have also discussed in chapter two.

Defining Alevism has been one of the challenging issues for many scholars on Alevism. In chapter three, I have chosen to present the history of Alevism from two angles: Dressler’s transformations of the Alevi identity through the secularization of the Turkish Republic, Alevis’ turn to leftist ideologies and their orientation as religious and cultural identity, and Zırh’s concepts of visibility, hypervisibility and invisibility. An overview of Alevi history in Turkey, the Alevi diaspora, and European transnational collaboration is important background for the understanding of Alevi organization in Sweden.

In Chapter four, I presented a landscape of Alevi associations in Sweden and I described how they are working for to build and maintain cultural centers and a national federation. I specified the obstacles they face and their strategies to overcome them. The organizational hierarchy between the Confederation of European Alevi Union, the Federation of Alevi Unions in Sweden and the cultural centers as well as their relations to Swedish institutions and political parties and other migrant associations from Turkey in Sweden has also been presented in order to contextualize the AKMs and the ARF and their organizing efforts.

In Chapter five, I analyzed the organization of Alevis in Sweden in the light of the theory of incorporation regimes from Yasemin Nuhoğlu Soysal. Starting from the assumption that incorporation regimes of host polities affect and shape the organizing processes, activity and participation of migrants is valid even for Alevis in Sweden, I analyzed the organization of Alevis in Sweden as a part of a Swedish corporatist regime, but also put forward the claim
that not only external factors like incorporation regimes, affect Alevis’ organization in Sweden. They are also affected by internal factors.

6.2) Reflections on research questions and findings

The aim of this project has been to understand how and to which degree Alevis are organized in Sweden and how their organization depends on internal and external factors. In order to reach this understanding, I conducted an ethnographic fieldwork and operationalized the aim of the project into a number of questions on their relations, their activities, their obstacles and solutions as well as their goals for the future, future projects and plans.

The first question explored the AKMs’ organizational networks with the ARF, the Confederation of European Alevi Unions and any Alevi associations in Turkey. Except for the Örebro-AKM, the other AKMs are connected to the ARF. The ARF is formally connected to the Confederation of European Alevi Unions which acts as a decision mechanism for its associations. Therefore, the AKMs and the ARF has organizational networks with other associations in Turkey through the Confederation. Still, the G-AKM along with ABF cooperated with the Haci Bektash Veli Foundation in Sivas for an education project.

The second question intended to find out the relations between the AKMs. However the AKMs do not cooperate among themselves so much, but they cooperate with the ARF so the AKMs have contact with each other through the ARF.

The third question investigated the AKMs and the ARF’s relations with the Swedish institutions and political parties as well as other migrant associations from Turkey in Sweden. The AKMs receive assistance from the ABF when they conduct activities. The ARF and the AKMs have contacts with the Swedish Social Democratic Party, the Left Party and the Green Party. The ARF and the S-AKM formed Joint Working Platform for Democracy and Human Right with two leftist groups “the Solidarity Group” and “The Art and Culture Association”. The G-AKM has close relations with the Kurdish and Assyrian associations in Gothenburg.

The fourth question explored the activities Alevis in Sweden conduct and the frequency of the activities. The AKMs and the ARF conduct a variety of activities related to Alevi beliefs and culture, educational activities, and commemorations. The frequency of the activities varies for several reasons like lack of local centers or internal conflicts.
The fifth question explored the obstacles Alevis face in their organization in Sweden and solutions they develop to overcome them. They have applied for subsidies in order to overcome financial difficulties. They strive to mobilize more Alevis who would likely to be mobilized under Kurdish or leftist associations. They strive to create a good communication network between each other and organize meetings frequently. They also strive to organize women and youth branches in their organizational structure.

The sixth question investigated the aims, future plans, and strategies the AKMs and the ARF have. Their aims and future plans mostly coincide with their obstacles and solutions. They also aim to hire 2 or 3 professional people who can coordinate the AKMs.

6.3) Suggestions for further research on Alevis in Sweden

This thesis contributes to the literature on Alevism as a first comprehensive study on Alevi organization in Sweden. Due to its groundbreaking character, all the questions I have asked give birth to new questions and form new research aims. I will only suggest some of them.

First of all, the developments of the organization of Alevis that I have described; their obstacles and solutions can be followed. Within the development of time, what will happen? Will the ARF and the AKMs be able to overcome the obstacles in their organizing process? Are there going to be new external and internal challenges? What will be the strategies for Alevis to overcome their problems?

The ARF and the AKM’s relations with migrant groups from Turkey is a topic that should be of interest. Research on relations between Alevi associations and Kurdish, Assyrian, Armenian and Sunni-Muslim associations in Sweden could shed new light on conditions for migrant groups in Sweden. Another interesting research topic could be to follow the newly established platforms and networks like the “Solidarity Group and the Art and Culture Association” and women and youth branches of the ARF and the AKMs.
Reference List


Özyürek, Esra. 2009. ““The Light of the Alevi Fire Was Lit in Germany and then Spread to Turkey”: A Transnational Debate on the Boundaries of Islam.” *Turkish Studies* 10(2): 233-253.


**Newspaper articles**


**Websites**


http://stgabriel.se/

https://www.facebook.com/groups/378643908934425/

**Government report**

Appendices

The first phase interview guide

a) Organizational Networks and Discussion Topics

1) Which one of the Alevi organizations in Turkey do you have organizational networks with? What kind of solidarity do you have in an institutional sense? Do you have any common projects?

2) If not, which organization’s understanding of Alevism does this AKM relate to? Why?

3) How is the connection between the Federation of Alevi Unions in Sweden and this AKM? How often does this AKM meet with other Alevi cultural centers in Sweden? Which topics do you usually discuss when you meet?

4) Do you discuss about the topics on religion, culture, economy, migration or managerial expertise when you meet? Do you discuss about Alevism?

5) Does this AKM have any organizational networks with the Alevi associations in Scandinavia? If yes, how often does this AKM meet with the Federation of Alevi Unions in Denmark and the Norwegian Alevi Union? Which topics do you usually discuss when you meet?

6) Has this AKM had any attempts to conduct common activities with the Federation of Alevi Unions in Denmark and the Norwegian Alevi Union?

7) Does this AKM have any organizational networks with the Federation of Alevi Unions in Germany? How often does this AKM meet with the Confederation of European Alevi Unions? Which topics do you usually discuss when you meet?

8) How often does this AKM visit the Confederation of European Alevi Unions?

9) Does this AKM have any organizational networks with the Kurdish, Assyrian or Sunni associations in your city? Or is this AKM in contact with any other migrant organizations?

10) Does this AKM have any relations with other Turkish migrant organizations? Are there any common projects or activities?

11) Which one the political parties in Turkey do you feel close to?
12) Does this AKM have any relations with the group called “Yarsanlar”? b) Members

13) How and when was this AKM established in this city? For how many years has it been active?

14) Could you estimate approximate number of Alevis living in this city?

15) How many members does this AKM have? How many people does the AKM’s administrative board have? How many active and passive members does this AKM have?

16) How many female and male members does this AKM have?

17) When did you immigrate to Sweden?

18) From which cities in Turkey do this AKM’s members usually come? Is there a mass migration from a specific city to this city in Sweden?

19) Does this AKM have Sunni members?

20) Which generation of Alevis is currently living in this city?

21) Does this AKM have any foreign members?

22) Does this AKM have young members?

23) Does this AKM mostly have Kurdish Alevis? Are there Turkish Alevis too? Or does this AKM have any members with different ethnic origins?

c) Activities

24) Does this AKM conduct any activities on Alevi faith, e.g. Cem ritual, semah dance, Ashura or Hizir fasting?

25) Does this AKM conduct any cultural activities, e.g. saz playing, Alevi ozan’s performances, or theatre?

26) Does this AKM conduct any educational activities, e.g. panels and seminars on Alevism? What do you discuss in these activities?

27) Does this AKM conduct political activities e.g. protests?
28) Does this AKM conduct activities on commemoration of the massacres?

29) Does this AKM have a “dede”? Does this AKM conduct cem rituals and have a “Cemevi” where you perform these rituals?

30) Has this AKM organize a Cem ritual in this city? If so, when?

31) Does this AKM have a “dede” settled in this city?

32) Does this AKM conduct any activities towards young people?

33) Does this AKM conduct any activities like sports, or sewing?

34) Does this AKM conduct any activities towards women?

35) Does this AKM invite any Alevi or Sunni democratic people from Turkey to give a speech? Whom does this AKM have connections with? On what topics does this AKM prefer them to make their speeches?

36) Does this AKM conduct any activities in relation to migration? Does this AKM inform members about civil rights and immigration law?

37) Does this AKM conduct any activities to introduce Alevi identity to Swedish society?

38) How often does this AKM conduct these activities?

d) Migration and Alevism

39) How interested is this AKM in issues about the city and country you live in?

40) Does this AKM have any relations with the Swedish political parties? Does this AKM have any influence on migrant policy formulation?

41) How are this AKM’s relations with Swedish society and other migrants?

42) Does this AKM have different policies on migration?

43) Do you think this AKM benefits from immigrant rights?

44) Have you made any application to be recognized as a separate faith community? If yes, when? Have you had any progress?

45) Does this AKM receive any support from the Swedish government as a faith community?

e) Identity and Alevism

46) Do you think that Alevism is experienced differently outside of Turkey? How could the development and transformation of Alevism be outside of Turkey in your opinion? Why do you think it is that way?

47) How do you see Alevisim, i.e. as an Islamic tradition, a culture or a philosophy?

48) What does it mean to be Alevi in Sweden?
49) What is the connection between Alevism and democracy, secularism and politics in your opinion?
50) How important Ali, Prophet’s Mohammed’s cousin and son-in-law, is for you?
51) How do you assess the affiliation of Alevis in Turkey with secular and Kemalist ideals?
52) To what extent do you think Alevi youth have a chance to know Alevism?
53) To what extent do you think Alevis are integrated into Sweden? Do you think being Alevi matters in the process of integration?
54) Are you affiliated with socialism?
55) Does this AKM have a by-law?

f) Additional questions for the co-chair of the ARF (2013)

1) What are your duties as the chair of the ARF?
2) Does the ARF have any organizational networks with any Alevi organizations in Turkey?
3) Does the ARF have any organizational networks with the Federation of Alevi Unions in Denmark? Does the ARF have any common projects?
4) Which topics does the ARF mainly discuss on with the Federation of Alevi Unions in Turkey?
5) How often does the ARF meet with the Confederation of European Alevi Unions?
6) Does the ARF have any relations with the Turkish Federation, Kurdish, Assyrian or Armenian associations in Sweden? Are there any common projects?
7) Does the ARF conduct any activities on immigrant rights?
8) How are the ARF’s relations with the Swedish political parties? Which topics do you mainly discuss on?
9) How are the ARF’s relations with “Yarsanlar”?
10) Could you roughly estimate how many Alevis live in Sweden?
11) When did you immigrate to Sweden?
12) How many members are in the administrative body of the ARF?
13) What are the aims and objectives of the ARF?
14) What did you discuss concerning the European Peace and Democracy Assembly? How often have you met, on what issues have you discussed?
15) Do you think the strength of the Kurdish movement has an effect on Alevi movement?
16) Do you aim at establishing a “cemevi” in Sweden and lecturing on Alevism?
17) Do you have any relations with Fethullah Gülen and Islamic groups?
The second phase interview guide

1) What kind of obstacles do you think the ARF and the AKMs face in their organization in Sweden?
2) What kind of solutions has the ARF and the AKMs developed in order to overcome these obstacles?
3) Have the ARF and the AKMs made progress with economic difficulties?
4) Have the ARF and the AKMs applied to receive state grants?
5) We have talked on the ARF’s campaign aimed at gathering 3000 member signs? What is the progress?
6) We have talked on representation and introduction of Alevis to Swedish authorities. How is that going?
7) How was the ARF’s representation of Alevism in Swedish Assembly?
8) Has the ARF prepared a brochure on Alevism to distribute?
9) What are the latest developments with the organization of Alevi women?
10) What are the latest developments with the organization of youth
11) What are the latest developments with the creation for funeral fund?
12) Have the ARF and the AKMs made progress to have a better communication?
13) What about the frequency of the meetings? How frequent do you meet?
14) We have talked on a solution which was geographically close regions can meet among themselves. What has happened?
15) How are the ARF and AKMs’ relations with other migrant organizations i.e. Kurdish, Assyrian, Armenians and Yarsanlar going?
18) How are the ARF and the AKMs’ relations with Swedish authorities going?
19) How is the progress with the Alevi website in Sweden?
20) Have you had any other general meeting between the ARF and the AKMs after the general meeting in November, 2013? If yes, what did you discuss?
21) Do you have any other plans to improve communication network between the ARF and the AKMs?
22) What are the current situations of the AKMs right now?
23) How and when did the organization of Alevis started in Sweden?
24) What are the reasons behind the organization of Alevis in Sweden?
25) What have the ARF and the AKMs done in Sweden so far?
26) What have the ARF and the AKMs achieved in Sweden so far?
27) What are the ARF and the AKMs’ plans for the future?
28) What do you think the ARF and the AKMs need to do to reach these plans?
29) What are the aims of the ARF and the AKMs?
30) How would you assess the current situation of Alevis in Sweden right now?
31) What do you think it needs to be done for a strong organization of Alevis?
32) How was the frequency of the activities this year (2014)?
33) Have the ARF and the AKMs conducted a cem ritual (2014)?
34) Have the ARF and the AKMs conducted activities of semah dance, saz playing, ashura celebrations or concerts?
35) What can you say about the relation between the Kurdish movement and the Alevi movement?
36) Do you think the strength of the Kurdish movements stands as an obstacle for the Alevi movement?
37) Does the ARF have any projects in process right now?
38) What does the ARF do for integration of Alevis in Sweden?
39) A new AKM was established in Örebro. Do you have any information about that?

Additional questions for the G-AKM

40) What has the G-AKM achieved in Sweden so far?
41) You have been conducting an educational project in cooperation with AFB for the Hacı Bektaş Veli Association in Sivas / Turkey. What are the latest developments in respect of this project?
42) How are the G-AKM’S relations and communication with the other Alevi Cultural Centers?
43) What kind of activities has the G-AKM conducted?
44) In our latest interview you had close relations with the migrant organizations in here. Has the G-AKM conducted any common activities with the Assyrian, Kurdish or Armenian associations since then?
45) Has the G-AKM have further communication with Yarsanlar?
46) Has the G-AKM have any relations with Swedish political parties?
47) How was the cem ritual of the G-AKM in November 2013?
48) Götenburg Alevi Cultural Center on November 2013?
49) How are the activities going? Has the G-AKM conducted panels or continued with the skill courses?
50) How many members does the G-AKM have currently?
51) What are the aims of the G-AKM?

**The priest interview guide**

1) Could you please inform me a little bit about the St. Gabriel Church in Gothenburg?
2) How many Assyrians live in Gothenburg approximately?
3) When and how did you have your first contact with the Gothenburg Alevi Cultural Center?
4) How is your relation with the G-AKM?
5) What kind of cooperation do you have with the G-AKM? In which matters do you cooperate with?
6) Have you conducted common activities with the G-AKM? What kind of activities were they?
7) Do you plan to have common activities with the G-AKM in the future?
8) How is the relation between Alevis and Assyrians in Gothenburg?
9) How do Assyrians see the G-AKM?
10) How do you, as the priest of the St. Gabriel Church, see the G-AKM?

**The co-chair of the ARF interview guide (2014)**

a) **Beginning and past**
1) When and how did the organization of Alevis start in Sweden?
2) Why Alevis needed to organize in Sweden? (Where from did the necessity of the organization of Alevis come about?)
3) What were the reasons behind the organization of Alevis in Sweden in the first place?
4) Have any new reasons added on the existing reasons or changed throughout this process?
5) Could you elaborate on the developments and process since the organization of Alevis started in Sweden?
6) What were the objectives of Alevis in Sweden when the Federation of Alevi Unions in Sweden was established?

b) **Present**
7) What has the ARF been doing since 2008?
8) What have Alevis been doing all across Sweden? Do the ARF and the AKMs have a project that you are currently conducting?
9) What have Alevis in Sweden achieved so far?
10) How many Alevi cultural centers currently exist as being affiliated to the ARF? Which ones?
11) How and when the Alevi cultural centers became affiliated with the ARF?
12) Could you elaborate on the current situation of the AKMs one by one?
   - Stockholm
   - Göteborg
   - Malmö
   - Dalarna
   - Halmstad
   - Uppsala
13) Has the Örebro AKM attached to the ARF? Could you inform me about their organization?
14) Has Alevism been recognized as a separate faith community in Sweden?
15) The AKMs and the ARF had a general meeting in 2014. Could you share the decisions taken in this meeting with me?
16) We had talked about the organization of Alevi women. What are the latest developments on this issue?
17) How did the need of organization of Alevi women arise? What are the underlying reasons behind this form of organization?
18) Has the ARF and the AKMs entered into the process of establishing an organization of Alevi youth in Sweden?
19) What do you think Alevis in Sweden expect from the ARF to do in general?
20) You organized a reception on Alevism in the Swedish parliament. How has the representation and introduction of Alevism to Swedish society and institutions proceeded?
21) In our last interview you informed me about the project in which the geographically close AKMs can form a group and meet for further projects. Could you put this project into practice?
22) How is the ARF and the AKMs’ 3000 signs campaign going?
23) How is the current economic situation of the ARF and the AKMs?
   c) Future
24) What are the prospective projects and plans of the ARF?
25) Which rights and positions does the ARF aim to reach for Alevis in Sweden?
26) What should be done in order to reach those plans as the AKMs and the ARF?