

# Talking Bodies

## A Spatial Analysis of the Veiled Body and Female Corporeality

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines Muslim female veiled bodies in public space and the various ways in which space and bodies intersect. Through a feminist appropriation of Henri Lefebvre's spatio-temporality, especially his analytical category of lived space, a theoretical framework is developed: a spatio-corporeal feminist perspective. Spatial theory and feminist theory are combined with fieldwork. The thesis argues that the veiled body is not other, rather, who is other in public space is not pre-given. The method employed is autoethnography, and by means of feminist phenomenology the researcher's own embodiment is examined. Also, the thesis argues that the amalgamation of theoretical and evocative writing enriches the analysis and contributes to a situated feminist study.



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## **1.0 Introduction**

Veiled bodies in public space in Norway have for some time received tremendous attention. Veiled Muslim women seem to be framed as either religious extremists expressing anti-Norwegian attitude or as brainwashed oppressed women. The female veiled body presents an embodiment that is subject to heated debate and stereotyping. In Norway one is free to veil in public spaces. However this is not without certain social restrictions, manifested as social policing. In social space bodies regulate and control each other's behavior, as does space. How does this influence veiled bodies enactment in space?

This thesis invokes spatial theory and feminist theory so as to analyze veiled female Muslim bodies in space and the ways in which spaces and bodies interact to produce gendered spaces. The thesis also engages the veiled body from a phenomenological perspective, meaning that the researcher veils her own body during periods of the fieldwork. The thesis explores the meaning embedded in intimate lived spaces and displays how the veiled female body is not an other body. Epistemologically, this thesis contributes to make transparent the subjective, vulnerable researcher-observer and shows how knowledge is always situated and embodied.

### **1.1 Primary Research Question**

The overarching research question of this study is as follows:

*What are the various ways in which bodies and space intersect – in particular, Muslim female veiled bodies, my own embodiment, and that of Grønland torg?*

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the theoretical insights of Henri Lefebvre, Elizabeth Grosz, and Simone de Beauvoir so as to en flesh the various ways in which bodies and space intersect. Further, I am probing the functioning of a corporal feminism so as to highlight particular feminist concerns, such as the production of gendered space, and the movements of veiled women's bodies. Also, I explore the intersection between space and bodies in relation to my own embodiment, veiled and unveiled.

## **1.2 Aim and scope**

In order to do a spatial analysis a space had to be defined, and the space of Grønland torg was chosen. During the course of one month, two weeks in December and two weeks in January, I observed the bodies inhabiting the space of Grønland torg. My special interest was of course veiled bodies, and further I also veiled my own body for some of the observation. I did not communicate with the people I observed, although some people confronted me, but undertook observation related to how the bodies in this space moved and interacted with their surroundings. This project does not aim at analyzing the concept of the veiled body per se; rather it explores the spatial interactions of veiled and un-veiled bodies in a particular space at a particular time. The study attempts to explore a theoretical merging of spatial and feminist theory, and thus analyzes the veiled body through a spatio-corporeal feminist lens.

In this project “veiled body” is understood primarily as women wearing the hijab and abaya. When I refer to my body as veiled, this is understood as that; hijab and abaya. I refer to women wearing the niqab as niqabi veiled bodies.

## **1.3 Theory and method**

This project is informed by spatial theory and feminist theory and attempts to develop a framework through which these theories meaningfully interact so as to engage a spatio-corporeal feminism. The method to be employed is autoethnography. The role of the autoethnographic researcher is key in this study as the narratives that are subject to analysis emerged as a product of my body being in a particular space at a particular time.

## **1.4 Data**

The data analyzed in the analytical section of this thesis consists of what I have chosen to call narratives, drawn from my field notes during the periods of observation. The narratives came about during, and shortly after, the fieldwork was conducted. This was done as an attempt to try to capture as many of the nuances and flows that created the field notes in the first place. Obviously, it is not possible to take the reader back into the lived space of Grønland torg as I experienced it during the month I was there, but hopefully the narratives will provide some sort of feeling of how it was.

## **1.5 Structure**

The thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter two provides the contextual backdrop of this thesis and situates the study. Here I also explore the concept of agency, primary discourses, two dominant hijab-narratives, and ultimately the Norwegian scene is set. Chapter three constitutes the theoretical framework of this project. Spatial theory is outlined as it pertains to, among other things, power and time, and Henri Lefebvre's ideas are introduced and explained. Further, feminist theory on the body is given, key interlocutors being Merleau-Ponty and Simone de Beauvoir, the latter as engaged by Toril Moi. Finally, spatial theory and feminist theory is merged in an attempt to explore a spatio-corporeal feminist theoretical framework. In chapter four I outline the autoethnographical method that is employed in this project. I outline several feminist commitments regarding methodology and implications for doing embodied research, and provide some ethical reflections. Chapter five constitutes the analytical section of this thesis. The chapter is subdivided into three main sections. Each section engages narratives and highlights particular theoretical and methodological insights. Section 5.1 focuses on Grønland torg through the portal of the Lefebvrian spatial triad. Section 5.2 explores the implications of the embodied autoethnographic researcher, and section 5.3 analyzes the veiled body through a spatio-corporeal feminist perspective. In chapter six I provide some concluding remarks and summarize the insights that can be gleaned from the analysis.

## **1.6 Previous research and thesis contribution**

As is explored in chapter two, much work has been done on the veiled body and the embodied lived experiences of Muslim veiled women (see e.g Brenner 1996; Göle 1996; Dwyer 1999; Secor 2002). Of late, veiling as an embodied spatial practice has also been engaged by scholars (Gökariksel 2009), and the veil has extensively been investigated as a multifaceted and complex garment (e.g. McLeod 1991; Ahmed 1992; Brenner 1996; El-Guindi 1999; White 1999; Mahmood 2005; Moors & Tarlo 2007). However, spatial analyses of the veiled body and female corporeality are few in number, as is embodied hidden observation, in which the researcher veils her own body during the fieldwork. In a Norwegian context I have not succeeded in finding any such studies. In her doctoral dissertation "Calling Bodies in Lived Space – Spatial Explorations on the Concept of Calling in a Public Urban Space" (2016) Kaia D. M. S. Rønsdal engages a public urban space in Oslo, Jernbane torget, through spatial

analysis. This study is exemplary as it emphasizes the aspect of lived space, the researcher subject, and opens up public spaces as something *more*. Rønsdal combines ethical theory, space theory, and fieldwork, and her study presents an interdisciplinary contribution to diaconal science. The aim of Rønsdal's study is to challenge and contribute to traditional ideas about the concept of calling and to enrich the discussion by engaging spatial theory. The bodies in focus in this study are substance users. My project is distinct from Rønsdal's in that I specifically explore female veiled bodies and invoke feminist theory. I am also interested in bringing to the fore how spaces are gendered.

This study provides new insights on veiled female corporeality from a spatial perspective in a Norwegian context. It also explores the blurry lines between emotive/affective writing and academic tone and analysis. This project argues, and shows, that an open and vulnerable research subject can enrich and complement the analysis. More, this project displays how veiled bodies in public space in Norway is not other, rather who is other in public space is not pre-given. The fact that otherness is not pre-given implies that difference can be affirmed rather than erased, and that diversity in space is enriching rather than threatening. This study is theoretically innovative as it proposes a merging of spatial theory, corporeal feminism, and feminist phenomenology in the attempt to undertake an embodied and situated analysis of the veiled female body. By explicitly exploring the lived spaces in public space the thesis reveals how gender dynamics in space are highly complex.

Methodically, the thesis presents an original contribution to the body of studies grappling with veiling, both in a Norwegian context and internationally. The thesis draws resources from the embodied researcher and explores how corporeality informs academic writing.

## **2.0 Situating the study: Primary discourses and the Norwegian context**

In this chapter I establish the contextual backdrop of this thesis. I present and discuss previous research on the veiled body and how it has been and still is represented by the media. I also explore the various discourses policing and politicizing the veiled body, how veiling informs subjectivity, and, finally, the Norwegian scene. The concept of agency is explored in tandem with two dominant hijab-narratives that contribute to create stereotypes of Muslim veiled women. The purpose of the themes highlighted in this chapter is to provide a solid context for the analytical section of this thesis and also to nuance the ways in which veiling is understood.

### **2.1 The image of the veiled body**

The image of the veiled body is one of emotive and controversial nature. The veil has of late become the supreme item over which western society fight the war for Muslim women's liberation and empowerment, though the western fixation on the veil can be dated back to the colonial era (Ahmed 1992). There is a vast body of academic literature grappling with the complexity of the veil (see, for example, Mernissi 1991; el-Guindi 1999; Roald 2001; Hoel and Shaikh 2007), and scholars have thoroughly engaged in the multifarious lived experiences of veiled Muslim women, constituting a diverse scope of empirical studies (see, for example Brenner 1996; Secor 2002; Mahmood 2005; Tarlo 2007; Hamzeh 2011). The multifarious symbol of the veiled body can, amongst other things, be read as wealth, oppression, modesty, exclusion, defiance, rejection of Westernisation, or as a fashion statement (Knott 2005, 57). Notwithstanding these scholars' endeavors to show the multiple ways in which the veil can be understood in contemporary contexts, degrading and subtly orientalist attitudes towards hijab-wearing women can be traced throughout the public debate (Mahmood 2005, 7; Wadud 2006, 222) and the various discourses in which these attitudes are formed are in some areas hegemonic in generating norms and values. Paradoxically, veiled Muslim women are assigned two seemingly contradictory roles, which depend on whether the veil is perceived as a symbol of women's oppression, or as an instrument of resistance; a victim of religious patriarchy, or a threat to Western modernity and human rights (Phipps 2014, 53). According to Bilge, this categorical classification of the veiled body has turned "the" veiled Muslim woman into "an allegory for undesirable cultural difference" (Bilge 2010, 10) and both depictions fail to consider the reasons for veiling commonly given by Muslim women

themselves.<sup>1</sup> In the following I highlight various central discourses present in the framing of Muslim veiled women.

### **2.1.1 Discourses framing the veiled Muslim body**

In western secular discourses the veiled body is commonly postulated as an expression of how patrilineal societies exercise control over women, an idea reinforced and internalized by both external critics (e.g. Storhaug 2015) and internal voices (e.g. Manji 2003). Accordingly, the veiled body has become the ultimate epitome of women's oppression, extremism, and archaic gender dynamics (Ahmed 1992, 152; Bilge 2010, 10; Phipps 2014, 53). The veiled body has also come to symbolize subjugation, where Muslim women are kept in physical, mental, and social bondage. Within the wider discourse of Islamophobia there seems to be a hidden, gendered discourse, identified by Hamzeh as hijabophobia (Hamzeh 2011, 484). According to Hamzeh, this underlying discourse is "complicit in essentializing constructions of Muslim women and mainly those who are visible with the headscarf they are wearing" (Hamzeh 2011, 484). In addition to the discourse of hijabophobia scholars have identified racism and sexism as central discourses framing perceptions about Muslim veiled women (Abu-Lughod 2002; Ezekiel 2006, 268; Schmidt 2015, 179-80). Subsequently, Muslim veiled women of color face a "quadruple jeopardy": Islamophobia, racism, sexism, and hijabophobia. This intersection of discourses may be referred to as constituting a western ethnocentric gaze, a gaze that informs and frames the perception of the veil as a means to suppress, and Muslim veiled women as oppressed. The western ethnocentric gaze perceives the veil as denoting passivity, hence lack of agency, and "the" Muslim woman as an oppressed victim in need of saving (Hoel 2013, 81). Excluded from the western veiling discourse, where de-veiling equals liberation and empowerment, are the very protagonists of the debate, Muslim veiled women.<sup>2</sup>

An interesting aspect of the various ways in which different policing discourses intersect is the atypical political alliances they seem to establish. As argued by Phipps, these political alliances is a picture of the compound nature of "contemporary debates about gender, 'culture' and the politics of women's bodies in relation to Islam in particular" (Phipps 2014,

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<sup>1</sup> I explore this theme further in section 2.2.

<sup>2</sup> Apart from discourses such as secular patriarchy and mainstream feminism (Macdonald 2006; McRobbie 2009,2011), Islamic patriarchy is partaking in the ideological war upon "the" Muslim woman's body (Medina 2014, 876-7). Under Islamic patriarchy the female body is either pure or impure, and because the female body is understood as seductive Muslim women must veil. As such, the female body is familial and community property, and further, the men's honor is embodied in women's modesty, veiling (Khan 2014, 8).

52).<sup>3</sup> One such peculiar political-ideological coalition could be detected in the French hijab debate where veiled, “brainwashed”, Muslim girls were recognized as a threat to the French *laïcité*, both by right-wing politicians and within secular feminist discourse (Bilge 2010, 15).

The various ways in which the abovementioned discourses produce and regulate embodied religiosity are simultaneously painting two dominant narratives of Muslim veiled women: either as oppressed, or as aggressors (Bilge 2010, 10). In both these narratives, religious reasons for wearing the veil are neglected or undermined. Both narratives portray Muslim veiled women as a threat to modern, liberal, secular society in that they are corrupting secular understandings of freedom, equality, and agency (Phipps 2014, 54). In the following section these two hijab narratives are outlined.

## **2.2 Agency – two dominant hijab-narratives**

The veiled body commonly signifies two seemingly contradictory roles, either as oppressed and victimized or as radical and dangerous. To further explore this contradiction attention must be paid to prevailing understandings of agency. In her article, “Beyond Subordination vs. Resistance: An Intersectional Approach to the Agency of Veiled Muslim Women” (2010), Sirma Bilge explores how a certain definition of agency has come to determine Western imaginings of Muslim veiled women. The definition of agency as the capacity to freely act “is a deeply liberal concept in its philosophical sense, closely linked to the *transcendental humanist subject*, a rational, free-willed, choosing agent” (Bilge 2010, 12, her emphasis). This perception of agency holds an authoritative position, as it was key in the emancipatory politics of anti-racist, feminist, and anti-colonialist movements (Bilge 2010, 12). Bilge points out two dominant narratives about the veil: Subordination and the false consciousness thesis, and the resistance and subversion thesis (Bilge 2010, 14, 18). Although these two interpretations of the veil appear diametrically opposed, the former portraying the veil as a

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<sup>3</sup> Phipps also points out the lack of attention paid to historical, cultural, and ideological context when engaging with the veil (see also Mohanty 1988, 75), and that there has been a disproportionate emphasis on the veil as compared to other major issues of significance (2014, 68). The latter also remarked by Leila Ahmed in *Women and Gender in Islam – Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (1992), and Amina Wadud in *Inside the Gender Jihad: Women’s Reform in Islam* (2006, 219).

symbol of women's oppression and the latter making it an instrument of resistance, they share the conception of agency as tied to the humanist ideal of an autonomous subject.<sup>4</sup>

The subordination and the false consciousness thesis signifies the veil as oppressive, which indeed is a self-fulfilling prophecy inasmuch as it is fortified by the deprivation of veiled women's agency (Bilge 2010, 15). One obvious objection to this thesis is its construction as impossible to falsify; if a Muslim woman claims that she wants to wear the veil then she is perceived as a product of her subjugation. In other words, unless you conform to western values you are not making an autonomous choice. Within this framework, the choice of veiling becomes an oxymoron: "Veiling cannot involve a choice since it signifies renouncing one's personal autonomy" (Bilge 2010, 17). As for the resistance and subversion thesis, although elaborated by postcolonial scholars as a reaction to the denying of veiled women's agency, it fails to recognize religious motivations for veiling, reducing it to its functions, what Bilge calls instrumentalist reductionism (Bilge 2010, 20). Phipps argues that the tendency to romanticize and praise veiling as an act of resistance is particularly present in academia and the activist and political Left (2014, 53, 61). Moreover, she is skeptical to what she perceives as a problematic development within feminism itself: "a focus on women's agency and identity at the expense of examining framing structures" (2014, 3). Saba Mahmood pinpoints the inaccuracy of reducing agency to resistance through her ethnographic account of an urban women's mosque movement in Cairo (Mahmood 2005), in which she critiques the portrayal of Muslim women as passive victims. According to Mahmood, liberal and poststructuralist feminist scholarship's normative assumptions about agency, performativity, and resistance constitute an unsuitable lens through which to understand Muslim women in non-liberal contexts (2005, 153). Examined through a lens informed by western feminism's appraisal of active agency, articulated in subversive acts, supposedly passive and submissive conduct is inevitably interpreted as oppressive. Contrary to this, Mahmood proposes other modalities of agency and the various ways in which the women in her study found religion to be empowering. Her work stresses the role of the body and that piety is an embodied practice. In the context of her fieldwork agency refers to "a particular work of ethical self-cultivation by way of bodily habituation" (in Jouili 2011, 49). For example, veiling could signify an embodied cultivation of the Islamic virtue of modesty (Mahmood 2005, 157).

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<sup>4</sup> In the narratives presented in the analytical section of this thesis these two narratives become embodied by people who confronted me when I was wearing the hijab and abaya. This will be highlighted in chapter 5, section 5.2.

The lack of recognition towards religious motivations is what brings Bilge to urge feminist scholars to rethink their analytical tools and assumptions about religious agency and subjectivity, and propose an alternative understanding of agency that is more capable of making sense of Muslim women's lived experiences. By engaging in poststructuralist critique of the humanist subject, examining the relation between subject and power, and invoking Foucault's theory of power, Bilge outlines a definition of agency:

[...] if subjects are both constituted and constituting, and are not prior to social actions and discourses, then agency in the context of submission (to the divine) can be thought of as constituted within the act of 'taking the veil' without translating pious motives into something extra-religious (Bilge 2010, 23).

However, in order to elaborate a satisfying theory of agency that also appreciates socio-historical processes and the prospect of different expressions of agency, Bilge calls upon feminist intersectional theory. By doing so she is able to ground the formation of agency "within a nexus of social relations and structures (of race, class, gender) that work together to (re)produce power and privilege" (Bilge 2010, 23). This combination "would insist that there is no ontological priority of agency to context, and would turn its focus instead to specific contexts and articulated social formations from which different forms of agency and subject positions arise." (Bilge 2010, 23). When engaging in Bilge's synthesis, it is worth noting Mahmood's claim that it is preferable to analyze agency in terms of the different modalities it takes, rather than to propose *a* theory of agency (2005, 188).

According to Deeb, Mahmood's approach could be characterized as "focused on the formation of pious subjectivities and ethical selves through the cultivation of embodied dispositions, where moral reform is itself a political project of ethical self-fashioning" (Deeb 2010, 108). Jeanette S. Jouili appreciates Mahmood's efforts as her study has brought new insights into the debate among scholars who study the complex features of Muslim women's subjectivities. However, she is critical to Mahmood's insistence on virtuosity and piety as a replacement for empowerment, which ultimately lets her bypass her participants' views on gender issues (Jouili 2011, 49). Jouili is further skeptical to this approach as she detects an underlying presumption in much of the literature on pious Muslim women: "there is a specific religious life form that is 'good' for women, and others that are 'bad'" (Jouili 2011, 48). As

Bilge, she also employs Foucault in order to examine other aspects of Muslim women's turn to Islam than that of emancipation. Jouili attempts to avoid the binary lens of emancipated/submissive by analyzing her participants' answers through a Foucauldian understanding of subject formation: "particular subjects are always governed by certain power relations, but they are also self-governing in that they direct themselves according to the codes produced within these specific formations" (Jouili 2011, 53). By doing so she is able to take seriously Muslim female subjects situated in liberal contexts and therefore influenced by these contexts' norms and values: "They [her interlocutors] addressed liberal and feminist public discourse on Muslim women head on – in terms of piety *and* in terms of a different kind of empowerment, redefining the very liberal terms that they are, in a certain way, considered to be positioned squarely outside of" (Jouili 2011, 50). Her Muslim interlocutors found it difficult to have a voice in gender issues debates by virtue of their standpoints being outside of what is considered to be legitimate in modern liberal discourses. By analyzing her participants' answers beyond the standardized binary emancipated/submissive, Jouili is able to take seriously all the different ways of embodying Islam without reducing her participants' positions to the prevailing narratives of Muslim women.

In the previous section I have outlined two dominant hijab-narratives, subordination and the false consciousness thesis and the resistance and subversion thesis. These two narratives will be employed as analytical categories in parts of the analysis in section 5.2. Further I have demonstrated how these two narratives essentializes Muslim veiled women. I have explored Bilge and Mahmood's understandings of agency, and I have presented some critique of Mahmood as developed by Jouili. In the following I present the Norwegian context.

### **2.3 The Norwegian context**

Feminists such as Fatima Mernissi and Lila Abu-Lughod have convincingly argued against how the media constructs essentialist figures of Muslim veiled women (Mernissi 1996; Abu-Lughod 2002). As Abu-Lughod argues, we must be attentive to the cultural reifying tendency "to plaster neat cultural icons like the Muslim woman over messy historical and political dynamics" (2002, 783). According to Døving and Kraft, the press has power to produce knowledge about Muslims and Islam – including Muslim veiled women – and thereby influence the majority population's images and attitudes (Døving & Kraft 2013, 125). Due to Døving and Kraft's analysis I find it useful to provide a few examples that illustrate the

context of this theme in Norway so as to situate this project in a contemporary and particular context.

The Norwegian scene is bound by its modern, secular, and liberal context, and the gender equality debate is largely informed by the last fifty years of the women's rights movement. Although strong secularization theories has been nuanced and rethought (Berger 1997, 974; Davie 2002, 100) and a resacralization can be detected (Botvar 2010, 24) public space in Norway is no longer perceived or conceived as religious, as religion is often understood as something private (Botvar 2010, 23; Schmidt 2010, 203). This is not to say that religion is absent from public space in Norway, rather some forms of religion in public space are more accepted than others (Schmidt 2010, 201).<sup>5</sup> According to Bangstad, the issues of women's rights have for some time been used in the anti-Muslim politics of populist right-wing parties (Bangstad 2011, 4), and certainly there can be observed an increasing polarization in the public debate regarding the hijab.<sup>6</sup> The hijab has become a highly politicized dress. As opposed to France, however, in which the French National Assembly decided to ban all conspicuous religious symbols in public schools in 2004, no such legislation has been enforced in Norway. Nevertheless, the French hijab debate sparked a debate in Norway in 2004, and later on several attempts have been made to suggest a national hijab-ban. This debate gained much attention after deputy of the Labour Party, Hadia Tajik, was quoted late in December 2015 as opting for a prohibition of the hijab in elementary school (Ruud&Sigurjonsdottir, 2015). Misquoted or not, the debate in the aftermath of her statement featured a variety of divergent opinions and attitudes towards the hijab specifically and Islam in general. I contend that the discourses of Islamophobia, racism, sexism, and hijabophobia can be traced in these debates. Tajik was by some critics accused for using populist rhetoric and fraternizing with the right wing, so as to get ownership of the immigration debate. It is indeed interesting how the hijab is being used in the Norwegian public debate as a political firearm. The right wing of political Norway (especially FrP, accompanied by Islam critics such as Hege Storhaug) commonly postulates the veil as an expression of aggressive Islamism and women's oppression. The veil is perceived as an expression of sexual control, gender segregation, and misogyny. Thus the veil is proposed as the principal symbol of an essential difference between 'Muslim cultures' and 'the Norwegian culture' (see Phipps 2014, 68).

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<sup>5</sup> This is of course a simplification for the sake of the argument. The secularization/sacralization debate is manyfaced and impossible to explain in a short paragraph and beyond the scope of this study.

<sup>6</sup> See for example Dagbladet.no's hashtag "hijab" (<http://www.dagbladet.no/tag/hijab>).

Muslim veiled women are framed as oppressed and in need of saving, and the first step in this emancipation campaign is the removal of the hijab. Completely neglected from this account is religious agency and religious motivations for wearing the hijab (see 2.2).

Within the political landscape of Norway much attention is paid to integration, a concept that seems to have become a political mantra. When Islam is written about in the media, the related subject is almost always integration (Døving & Kraft 2013, 126). Within the concept of integration, according to the political party Høyre's political program (2016), one finds liberal ideas about democracy, freedom of speech, and respect for the individual. If one conceives of the hijab to be an act of resentment to integration, one implies that the hijab represents anti-liberal values and is anti-Norwegian (Døving & Kraft, 2013, 127). This relies on a context-dependent understanding of agency, as discussed in 2.2, where only choices in line with western secular values is recognized as choices (Bilge 2010, 18). The image of the veiled Muslim woman becomes an embodied threat to Norway's presumed gender equality, and thus by implication to agree with veiling would be to support patriarchy and women's inequality in society. Gökariksel points to how this can be seen in context of visibility/invisibility: "In Western and secular modernist eyes, the veil hides women's bodies or makes them invisible in public spaces. This invisibility is seen as a sign of Muslim women's repression within a modern secular understanding of freedom that values visibility" (Gökariksel 2009, 660-1).<sup>7</sup>

An incident that has gained much attention in the Norwegian public debate is Malika Bayan, a hijab wearing woman that in the fall of 2015 was refused entry to Merete Hodne's hair salon. The latter was sentenced to pay a fine of 8000 NOK. She appealed the case to the Supreme Court, but the Court has refused the appeal (Larsen, Hetland, Gjesdal 2017). Another debate that has sparked the public opinions interest is Blindensol nursing home in Stavanger who is refusing employees to wear hijab. Although the Equality and Anti-discrimination ombudsman deemed this to be in conflict with The Anti-Discrimination Act – the act on prohibition of discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, etc. – they are not a legislative instance, and Blindensol refused to change their routines. As a result, the Council for nursing ethics (Rådet for sykepleieetik) concluded in January this year that the hijab is an acceptable part of the nurse uniform (Dommerud 2017).

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<sup>7</sup> This presents a paradox. Although the veil might be understood to 'invisibilize' Muslim women's bodies, everyone is clearly seeing them: their veil becomes what makes these women visible.

Another aspect of the Norwegian public discourse on the hijab are the so-called “shameless Arabic girls” [de skamløse arabiske jentene]. The slogan was coined by Nancy Herz in a comment in *Aftenposten* in April 2016. Herz writes: “We are shameless Arabic girls, regardless if we wear mini-skirts, hijab, pants, skirt, burqa, or walk naked. We are not a concept. We are our own person” (Herz 2016, my translation).<sup>8</sup> Although Herz do not wear the hijab, many of the girls who in the aftermath of this comment acquired the title of “shameless Arabic girl”, promoting Islam and feminism as compatible, wore the hijab.

Summarily, the public hijab debate in Norway is characterized by diverging and polarizing stands. Left and right politicians seem to form atypical alliances on the issue of whether or not the hijab should be banned in public institutions, and populist rhetoric abound on both sides of the political spectrum. Heated debates, reflected in the comment sections in online newspapers and in social media, express a public opinion that often lean towards the two hijab narratives outlined in 2.2. Meanwhile, young Muslim women raise their voice so as to defend the right to veil or not to veil, and reclaim their position as autonomous<sup>9</sup>, independent women. Here we can detect an Islamic feminism, a movement that has been visible in the public debate in Norway since the 2009 debates regarding hijab as a part of the police uniform. Døving & Kraft identify a development in the hijab debates, stemming back to the debates in 2004 sparked by France’s ban in public schools, to 2009. The early hijab debates were embedded in a gender equality discourse, while the later debates have been debates about integration characterized by a “battle against radical Islam” (exemplified by e.g. Siv Jensen and her postulation of “creeping-Islamization” (Snikislamisering) (Døving & Kraft 2013, 144). In 2017 the picture is starting to become somewhat nuanced. The veil debates are articulated through a nexus of discourses that highlight notions of e.g. gender equality, liberalism, freedom of religion, right-wing populism, and Islamic feminism. In Gökariksel’s analysis of veiled bodies in public spaces in Turkey she points to the ideology of secularism as prominent in the body politics of the veiled body in urban spaces: “This ideology has aimed to create secular citizens through the cultivation of bodies, most importantly through the unveiling of women”(Gökariksel 2009, 658). Although the picture looks different in

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<sup>8</sup> Original quote in Norwegian: “Vi er skamløse arabiske jenter, enten vi går i miniskjørt, hijab, bukse, skjørt, burka eller nakne. Vi er ikke et konsept. Vi er vår egen person” (Herz 2016).

<sup>9</sup> In light of Mahmood’s critique, it is interesting to note how the “shameless Arabic girls” operates with a certain liberal assumption of autonomy.

Norway, one can ask if some of this is also true in a Norwegian context. The veil is definitely subject of a political power struggle and continues to spark debate.

## **2.4 Summary**

This chapter has explored many of the various ways in which the veiled body can be perceived, conceived, and lived. The veiled body has been outlined as a site of contestation and subject to policing and politization, and as such producer of at least two hijab-narratives: subordination and the false consciousness thesis, and the resistance and subversion thesis. These two narratives constituted the starting point for a discussion on agency and subject formation. Finally, an overview of the Norwegian scene was given so as to situate the chosen research topic.

### 3.0 Theoretical framework

The primary research question of this study encapsulates several loaded concepts, such as ‘space’, and ‘(veiled) body’. Indeed, these are concepts that have been exceedingly debated, theorized, and contested, and cannot as such be utilized without a thorough theoretical mapping and clear definitions. In this chapter I establish the theoretical framework of this thesis, especially as it pertains to the two core concepts ‘(public) space’, and ‘(veiled) body’. Hopefully this will create a solid skeleton through which to en flesh the forthcoming analysis.

The first section of this chapter examines the concept of ‘space’. The spatiology of Henri Lefebvre will be employed in tandem with Kim Knott’s engagement with Lefebvre. I suggest that a feminist reading of Lefebvre is accentuated in Andrew Merrifield’s reconciliation of Lefebvre’s conceptualization of space and place. The second section presents corporal feminist theory and proposes a merging of feminist theorization of the body and spatial theory. Merleau-Ponty and Simone de Beauvoir’s phenomenological approach to the body will be employed.

The theory charted in this chapter is inspired by Elizabeth Grosz brave and important endeavor in her *Volatile Bodies*, engaging the works of male theorists such as Freud, Lacan, Merleau-Ponty, Foucault, and Deleuze and Guattari who search for insights on sexuality and sexual difference, although they clearly theorize a male body. Her fraternizing with what she calls “phallogocentric theory or male philosophy” (Grosz 1994, xiv) is an important enterprise of reclaiming and reconceiving theorization of the female body and can furthermore offer epistemological keys for mapping/conceptualizing the body. Feminist theorists have demonstrated great skepticism towards all of the abovementioned male theorists, which is of course understandable considering the obvious male bias in their works. However, as revealed by Grosz, examined through a feminist lens these theorists’ work can provide fruitful insights to the project of crafting a corporeal feminism, and this approach is one that I will attempt to honor throughout this project.<sup>10</sup> Androcentric scholarship is not useless to feminists, rather the opposite as it always contains much information about women, even in their silences and exclusions. As Grosz beautifully puts it:

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<sup>10</sup> This is also pinpointed by Toril Moi who claims that feminists must: “struggle to *transform* the cultural traditions of which we are the contradictory products” (Moi 1991, 1018, her emphasis).

I have refused to simply abandon that ground [male philosophy] to the men who first claimed it (and their male intellectual heirs); and I have refused to labor on it, to look after it, to tend to it with respect and reverence, as women are usually expected to do. I have, however, tried to use this terrain to bear products that its proprietors may not be happy with and that may threaten to reshape that land in terms which contest this proprietary relation. (1994, xiv)

The value and importance of advocating and promoting female voices must not, however, be underestimated. As argued by feminist theorists, such as Lucy Irigaray and Sara Heinämaa: “the principle task of feminist readers is to search for genealogies of women. This is necessary if we want to make space for women, not just in their bodily existence, but also in their spiritual being” (Heinämaa 2003, xix). Embodied experience necessarily informs and shapes ideas and theory (Shaikh 2012, 98), and the efforts made by prominent female writers should always be the main source when theorizing women’s bodies.

### **3.1 Bodies in space**

As will become evident bodies are not merely inhabiting space, using space, living space; bodies are producing space, sustaining space, and contesting space. In other words, coincidentally as space produces bodies, material bodies – real, gendered, racialized bodies – bodies produce space in a dialectical movement. Conceptualizing the body, that is the sexed body, as relational informs feminist theorization of corporeality inasmuch as the body is inextricably linked to the production of social space. The body as a vessel for meaning making and relationality (Hoel, forthcoming) enable the subject to conceive space, to interpret space, to maintain space, to subvert space, that is: to embody space as a corporeal subjectivity.

In the forthcoming theoretical mapping of space, my key interlocutors are Henri Lefebvre and Kim Knott. Lefebvre placed great value upon the body as a means to understand space (Lefebvre 1991, 40), as does Knott, understanding the body to be: “formative for conceptual development, social relations, and the imagination of both in relation to space” (Knott 2005, 19). By virtue of their emphasis on body these theorists’ frameworks will prove to be productive for interweaving corporeal feminist theory and spatial theory. The remarks made above regarding the materiality of bodies and space and their dialectical and entwined

relationship are obviously not exhaustive, merely touching the surface of major theoretical queries, some of which this project will engage. Suffice it to say, the material body produces and inscribes meaning on social space through bodily practice in space, and thus bodies: “must take the social order as their productive nucleus” (Grosz 1994, xi). In what follows, I explore the concept of space, especially as it pertains to the different dimensions of space, power, time, place, and location.

### 3.2 Theorizing ‘space’

How can one theorize a public space and the places and locations within it? What are ‘space’, ‘place’, and ‘location’? In day-to-day language the concepts seem to be conflated, however, since the ‘spatial turn’ in the 1960’s these notions have been exceedingly engaged by scholars as they have “moved into the foreground of critical discussion” (Wrede 2015, 11). In order to thoroughly engage in the matter of enquiry a clarification of these concepts is required. I am unquestionably in debt to Professor of religious studies Kim Knott for providing an excellent framework for spatial analysis. Although I do not explicitly make use of her spatial methodology per se, her engagement with Henri Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space* (1974/1991), her inviting reflections on the body, and the developed method for examining the relationship between religion and the physical, social, and cultural arenas in which religion is situated (her *locating* of religion) has provided me with indispensable epistemological keys and theoretical charts. It is by virtue of her book *The Location of Religion – A Spatial Analysis* (2005) that the following theoretical outline has been crafted, and much of her spatial terminology is employed.<sup>11</sup> Knott develops a spatial methodology in order to examine religion in Western modernity. In her study, space is seen as a *medium*, a *methodology*, and an *outcome* (2005, 3 her emphasis). She thoroughly examines how ‘space’ and ‘religion’ have been discussed and how scholars have approached this differently, a methodology is developed, and then applied to a case study: the left hand. This part of the body is concomitantly a baleful yet an intimate *other*. Through spatial analysis she examines the left hand’s various contemporary Western representations, and by doing this she attempts to locate religion in everyday spaces. Albeit the aspect of gender not coming into any significant focus in her discussion, a shortage she herself remarks (2005, 234-5), her

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<sup>11</sup> Knott does not employ observation or incorporate empirical data in her spatial analysis (contrary to my analysis). However, her critical reflexive approach, constantly aware of her own situatedness within the field is aspiring.

theoretical contribution is of feminist interest in that she both directly and implicitly throughout the book pays great attention to the body. It is by virtue of the latter that Knott's spatial theoretical framework can be weaved into conversation with broader feminist theory, an endeavor I undertake in this thesis. Herein I argue that a feminist reading of Henri Lefebvre's theories of space and everyday life/spatiology can generate a useful theoretical framework for analyzing the veiled body in public space. In particular, I engage his work as potential for deconstructing Cartesian dualisms. Further, this framework is compatible to analyze the ways in which the veiled body is operational as a tool for maneuvering through public space, and how it can function as a site for negotiation, mediation, representation, and transformation.

### **3.3 Space as material and social**

An important elucidation of the concept of space is the emphasis on the material and physical aspects of space in addition to its metaphorical and imaginative aspects (Knott 2005, 12-13). In this project space is understood as simultaneously social, mental, and physical. Due to the complex and multilayered nature of the place of the veiled body situated in public space, it would not be useful to theorize space as a merely abstract idea, as "Object opposed to Subject" filled with "things" such as bodies (Lefebvre 1991, 1). Space is the "means and outcome as well as the medium of social and cultural activity" (Knott 2005, 34). It is not something passive and abstract, constituting some sort of pre-existential tabula rasa until it is filled with something. Rather it is active, producing, dynamic, and dialectic, and thus (social) space is a (social) product (Lefebvre 1991, 26). For Lefebvre, the production of space was not merely a theoretical concept, but was equally connected to lived reality: "The production of space (as theoretical concept and practical reality in indissoluble conjunction)" (Lefebvre 1991, 67). This 'production of space' might sound strange, but as Lefebvre points out this is due to the common conception of an empty "pre-space" (Lefebvre 1991, 15). When Lefebvre made the distinction between conceived, lived, and perceived space (see 3.7) he attempted to disprove what he conceived to be an illusion: neutral, unfilled space (Low 2003, 50). Lefebvre's spatial theory is especially useful by virtue of his emphasis on social space, as opposed to geographical and geometrical space, and how social relations are spatially embodied (Knott 2005, 20-1). Furthermore, his theoretical configuration of the interactions between the physical, mental, and social dimensions of our lived experiences is highly relevant (Knott 2005, 12), although I must endorse Knott's disassociation from Lefebvre's

engagement with Marxism. His valuable emphasis on lived experience and its implications for this project will become evident later (see 3.10). Knott's understanding of social relations encompasses not only relations between people but includes relations: "between people and things, people and places, people and symbols, and the imagined relations between these" (Knott 2005, 21). This opens up for situating the veiled body within space manifested as a social relation; in other words, the spatial practice of veiling creates a social space. This will be further elaborated in the upcoming discussion of Lefebvre's spatial triad.

### **3.4 Space and Power**

A comprehensive investigation of space cannot bypass the concept of power, as power struggles, whether social, mental, or physical, are always played out in space (Knott 2005, 28). Thus one must ask what is in fact the relationship between space and power? As briefly mentioned, and as will become evident in the forthcoming theoretical mapping of some of Henri Lefebvre's ideas, he considered space to be both producing and produced. Because space (that is social space) is produced, it can serve as a tool of thought and action, and thus it is not only a means of production but also "a means of control, and hence of domination, of power" (Lefebvre 1991, 26). Clearly, there exists an oscillation here; space can produce power relations, but power relations also produce space and furthermore: "[o]n the one hand, it is the social constitution of space that opens up to the pursuit and exercise of power; on the other, it is the capacity of space to be shot through with ideology that makes it powerful" (Knott 2005, 25). This idea, that space is permeated with power, was shared by Lefebvre and Foucault (Knott 2005, 26). Lefebvre made, like Foucault, "the connection between knowledge and power in relation to space, in his discussion of hegemony, the exercise of power over both institutions and ideas" (Knott 2005, 26). Although Foucault makes few references to women, his theories on power, knowledge, and sexuality have been exceedingly engaged by feminist theorists (Sawicki 1991; McNay, 1992; McLaren 2002). Elizabeth Grosz (1994) argues that, although Foucault fails to consider the issue of sexual difference, he succeeds in taking the materiality of bodies seriously. As such, Foucault bypasses the gendered opposition between the body and culture, because: "[t]he body is that materiality, almost a medium, on which power operates and through which it functions" (Grosz 1994, 146). Lefebvre too held the relationship between the world and the body to be discursively constituted, and when he asks whether it is conceivable that the exercise of hegemony might leave space untouched, he distinctly answers no (Lefebvre 1991, 11). This means, among other things, that space can be

utilized to exclude or include (Knott 2005, 27). According to de Certeau, individuals “continually subvert the imposed order by their everyday practices which produce cracks in the system and make spaces suitable for habitation” (in Knott 2005, 27). For instance, veiled women inhabiting a space where the majority of the individuals using that particular space conceive of veiling as oppressive, are consciously or unconsciously subverting that dominant order just by walking around doing everyday practices.

Space is never innocent. Lefebvre demonstrates how abstract space appears homogeneous and passive, but in reality it is fragmented and active (Lefebvre 1991, 285). Thus, space is not neutral, rather it has an operational or instrumental role as knowledge and action (Lefebvre 1991, 11). Again, Lefebvre and Foucault aligns, as the latter’s poststructuralist theory on knowledge and power asserts discourse/knowledge as formative for social realities and decisive for people’s conduct (Foucault 1977). However, Lefebvre is not satisfied with Foucault’s abstraction of space, which he believes to be a de-materialization of space (Lefebvre 1991, 4). Lefebvre argues that Foucault fails to explain how the theoretical space of the philosophers and the material, social space of living bodies correlate. Accordingly, ‘theoretical practice’ produces a mental space which is extra-ideological (Lefebvre 1991, 6). Lefebvre’s project is in many ways a re-materialization of space, in which space is utilized and lived by material bodies.<sup>12</sup> Considering the latter, it is timely to deliberate on the relationship between space and time.

### **3.5 Space and time**

Space and time cannot be separated (Knott 2005, 24). In Lefebvre’s words: “Time is distinguishable but not separable from space” (Lefebvre 1991, 175), and he underlines this by talking about a ‘localized time’ or a ‘temporalized place’ (Simonsen 2005, 8-9). Therefore, when differentiating time and space one dwells in the analytical sphere. Time is according to Lefebvre one of the most essential parts of lived experience (Lefebvre 1991, 95), and like space, time is a social product, producing and produced by society. By conceiving space as temporal we need to take seriously the shifting nature of space. This means that space is fluid and dynamic. It is not pre-configured and absolute, but rather in constant change and movement. Social space is never synchronic, untouched and unaffected by events and

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<sup>12</sup> This will be engaged later in this chapter, see section 3.9 “The body”.

ideologies of the past, but always diachronic, extending back and forth in time, inscribed by history for better or for worse. Thus space and time can never be divorced, as spatial configurations always are concurrently temporal (Merrifield 1993, 521). A veiled body moving through current day Oslo is inevitably subject to the temporal configurations embedded in this social space, and as such participating in a dialectics of past and present.

### **3.6 Place and location**

Following Knott I will elaborate on place and location. Knott holds place as “parts of dynamic relational space” (Knott 2005, 29) whereas location is considered to be “situated positions vis-à-vis others” (Knott 2005, 29). Location is thus “the outworking – but not the end-point – of a process of considering things, people, and events in relation to one another, both geographically and socially” (Knott 2005, 33), and this allows her to adopt a dynamic conception of location. Knott’s overall agenda is to *locate* religion in the *place* of the left hand (Knott 2005, 58). This effort can readily translate to this project inasmuch as one of its aims is to explore how or if religiosity is performed in public space and how this is mediated through the veiled body. I will keep with Knott’s conception of place and location as social, mental, and physical, so as to correlate their meaning with the general concept of space, outlined above.

Places can be regarded as both open and dynamic (Knott 2005, 31) and interrelated to space through an oscillating movement where ‘lived space’ (see below) have a mediating role (Merrifield 1993, 525). The latter is a key point in that it stresses the relational and social aspect of place, as it is more concerned with the lived moment. This will be further elaborated later, as part of the disentangling of the feminist potentials of Henri Lefebvre’s ideas. For now it is important to keep in mind the dialectic relationship between space as a whole and place as a part (interlocked with other places), each mutually informing and inscribing each other with meaning (Merrifield 1993, 520). To illustrate: the space – in this project Grønland torg – takes on meaning through the place of the veiled body, and vice versa. Hence the relationship between space and place is always a social one:

Speaking generally, all places – including a body part such as the left hand – are gathered, produced and reproduced by spatial practice, configured and also openly extended by social relations, constrained by the dominant order, but the living

expression of everyday practices and dynamic local interpretations (local knowledge) of that place. They are repeatedly bounded and settled in common discourse only to be punched through and unsettled by alternative accounts. The particularity of a place arises from the complexity of its social relations and the sum of the stories told about it. Being a progressive part of space, or a moment in space, it is open to a spatial analysis. (Knott 2005, 33)

I have now considered power, time, location, and place as different facets of space. Space is theorized as permeated by power, as temporally contingent, and as relationally connected to place and location. In the following I will turn to the spatial theories of Henri Lefebvre as articulated in his *spatiology* of social space.

### **3.7 Lefebvre's spatial triad**

Henri Lefebvre's *spatiology* articulated in his *Production of Space* presents a powerful toolbox for theorizing space and everyday life as a means to decoding, hence reading, an *already produced space* (Lefebvre 1991, 17). Knott draws on Lefebvre's insights on the production of social space so as to grapple with the location of religion within space, and prominent in her theoretical review of his *spatiology* is his spatial triad. Knott introduces the triad following social geographer Andrew Merrifield, a theorist whose insights on space-place relations in accordance with Lefebvre's spatial triad will become significant in the forthcoming merging of spatial theory and feminist theory. Before engaging in Merrifield's examination and revealing the feminist insights that can be derived from this, a presentation of Henri Lefebvre's spatial triad must be given. Lefebvre's spatial triad is a means to create a 'unity theory', in which the various modalities of space can be reconciled (Lefebvre 1991, 11). According to Lefebvre, the "epistemologico-philosophical" thinking of his time had hitherto not accomplished to develop a satisfactorily theory on space in which all aspects of space was accounted for, and the ways in which these aspects interacted in the production of space (Lefebvre 1991, 7). If physical, mental, and social space is considered as fragments and separated modes of space, without any mediation, it becomes difficult or even impossible to elucidate the various ways in which different modes of space is enacted and embodied in everyday life. And conversely, if only one of the aspects is accounted for, an analysis of (social) space would become inadequate or oversimplified. Hence, Lefebvre aspires to "discover or construct a theoretical unity between 'fields' which are apprehended separately,

just as molecular, electromagnetic and gravitational forces in physics” (Lefebvre 1991, 11), a theoretical unity in which physical, social, and mental space cease to be an undistinguishable amalgamation. It is important to note that these modalities of space, physical, mental, and social, are not primarily referring to material space, but rather the various ways in which space is experienced and lived (Knott 2005, 36), thus the social space occupied by sensory phenomena (Lefebvre 1991, 12).

As aforementioned, Lefebvre’s work is highly influenced by Marxism, problematizing the concept of capitalism. However, Lefebvre’s theories are certainly of sociological interest beyond the mere political sphere. In this project his spatial triad will serve as an analytical tool seemingly detached from Lefebvre’s overall political agenda, an effort he probably would have disagreed with due to his emphasis on unity. Nonetheless, I believe that invoking parts of his ideas can be a fruitful endeavor first because this is a project aiming at merging spatial and feminist theory, and second because this project is after all not a presentation of Henri Lefebvre’s theory per se.

Lefebvre’s rationale for a spatial triad was to conceptualize an analytical tool that honored the dialectical nature of space, so as to open up social space and its relations of production and reproduction to our understanding (Knott 2005, 35). His three aspects of social space are mutually occurring and cannot as such be accounted for separately, except maybe for the purpose of discussion. Before clarifying Lefebvre’s *spatiology* I will quote him in full length on his three aspects of space:

1 *Spatial practice*, which embraces production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation. Spatial practice ensures continuity and some degree of cohesion. In terms of social space, and of each member of a given society’s relationship to that space, this cohesion implies a guaranteed level of *competence* and a specific level of *performance*.

2 *Representations of space*, which are tied to the relations of production and to the ‘order’ which those relations impose, and hence to knowledge, to signs, to codes, and to ‘frontal’ relations.

3 *Representational spaces*, embodying complex symbolisms, sometimes coded, sometimes not, linked to the clandestine or underground side of social life, as also to art (which may come eventually to be defined less as a code of space than as a code of representational space.) (Lefebvre 1991, 33)

Knott’s purpose for engaging in Lefebvre’s spatiology is to display the triad’s relevance for a spatial analysis of religion in general, and the left hand in particular (Knott 2005, 58).

According to Knott, the significance of utilizing Lefebvre's three levels of space for religion and its study is twofold: "*relevance* – the relevance of each aspect to the illumination of the category 'religion'" and "*value*, their value in the process of studying religion" (Knott 2005, 39, her emphasis). For Knott this *value* lies in "distinguishing the aspects of space produced and transformed by religious individuals and groups" (Knott 2005, 129). My engagement with Lefebvre's spatial triad will to a certain extent follow Knott's employment of the triad, although my account follows Lefebvre's original order (spatial practice, representations of space, representational space). Knott does not rationalize directly why she chooses to follow Lefebvre-commentator Andrew Merrifield's arrangement (representations of space, spaces of representations<sup>13</sup>, spatial practice), but in a footnote she suggests that by doing so the aspect that encounters us most commonly and hence is the easiest to understand is introduced first. This of course depends on the eye of the beholder, but intuitively I grasped *spatial practice* much easier than the two other aspects. I am also more comfortable in keeping with Lefebvre's original order if only for the sake of authenticity. I will initially discuss *spatial practice* (which one might conceptualize as physical place), followed by *representations of space* (which one might conceptualize as mental place), and finally *representational space* (which one might think of as social place). In the following discussion of Lefebvre's spatial triad I will not only summarize his ideas accompanied by Knott's reflections<sup>14</sup>; I will also provide my own understanding of the triad and the ways in which it is relevant for this specific project. Accordingly, some of the upcoming considerations might not be in line with Lefebvre's original purpose or objective, and furthermore, concepts might be, if not altered, then at least reinterpreted and reused for different purposes than originally intended.<sup>15</sup> This is not a critique of Lefebvre's ideas that is presented, but rather what Toril Moi refers to as *appropriation*: "By 'appropriation' I understand a critical assessment of a given theory formation with a view to taking it over and using it for feminist purposes" (Moi 1991, 1017). Before engaging the three modes of social space let me just repeat that these three modes are always in a triple dialectic, they are always simultaneously present in social space, and it is hence just for the sake of discussion that these modes of space are investigated separately.

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<sup>13</sup> Knott prefers the term *spaces of representations* over *representational space*, I will elaborate on this in 3.7.3.

<sup>14</sup> In fact Knott states explicitly that she does not provide any critical discussion of the triad, rather she states that her contribution is of a pragmatic kind (Knott 2005, 58)

<sup>15</sup> See especially my discussion of representational space, 3.7.3

### 3.7.1 Spatial practice

#### – Perceived space

Of spatial practice Lefebvre wrote: “The spatial practice of a society secretes that society’s space; it propounds and presupposes it, in a dialectical interaction; it produces it slowly and surely as it masters and appropriates it” (Lefebvre 1991, 38). Spatial practices, or perceived space, is thus “the articulation of social spatiality” (Knott 2005, 40). In other words, it is how we use and generate space and as an aide-mémoire we can think of it as physical place. A body walking down the street, doing grocery shopping, playing with kids, hurrying to work – these are articulations of and navigation of space. These everyday spatial practices are what Pierre Bourdieu understood as generated by *habitus*, in *The Logic of Practice* (See Knott 2005, 39 n.22). In Toril Moi’s appropriation of Bourdieu, when analyzing social power structures, everyday practices become normative and established in space, but also contested and subverted in space (Moi 1991).

As Knott points out, reading spatial practice is never an unambiguous endeavor due to the fact that we as ‘interpreters’ are never not situated in space and cannot as such read the spatial practice from an objective point of view (Knott 2005, 40). Thus interpreting religious bodies, in this case veiled bodies, is always a means of inscribing that particular spatial practice of veiling with religious meaning. However, is a veiled body always a religious body? Does the veil unconditionally inscribe the body with religious meaning, and further with specific religious meaning; that is Islamic meaning? If I walk down the street with one of my students, who is a Muslim and commonly use the abaya and hijab, people who observe us will likely assume that my student is religious, most likely Muslim, inscribing her body with religious meaning. If I were to borrow her abaya and hijab we can presume that my body would be inscribed with religious (Islamic) meaning, and my student not.<sup>16</sup> But are these the only dynamics at play? What about our skin color? Our ethnicity? Our age? Our gender? Our height and weight? Other clothing? Our body language and rhythm? The space we are walking in/using? Indeed bodies are inscribed with multiple meanings, not only religious, as bodies carry numerous divergent meanings and interpretive possibilities. As intersectional corporealities we are never just exposing one particular meaning, e.g. a veiled body being a religious body, although this body is conceptualized as such within certain discourses. Yes,

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<sup>16</sup> Knott uses a similar example about two Asian men, one which is wearing a turban, when she discusses the aspect of spatial practice, although she does not elaborate on intersectionality specifically (Knott 2005, 41-2).

bodies are producing meaning because they are religious, but they also do so because they are for example gendered, racialized, queer etc. (see Hoel, forthcoming). The purpose of using the mode of space “spatial practice” is not to analyze whether the body is a religious body or not; rather – and this becomes clearer when I enter the others two levels of space – this mode of space opens up the possibility for analyzing the perceptions of that particular body and renders the discursive production of meaning.

Nothing is inherently religious or non-religious, and thus when we interpret a veiled body as a religious body, that is a Muslim female body, we engrave this meaning upon that particular body as a result of the cultural and social context we are situated in. Of course, this attribution of religious meaning upon a veiled body is not only dependent upon the observer, but also the actor. The point is that meaning is attributed *a posteriori*. Similar to this is the way in which spatial practice create places. According to Merrifield “place is where everyday life is *situated*. And as such, place can be taken as *practiced space*” (Merrifield 1993, 522, his emphasis). What does this mean? For example, I work part time as a Norwegian tutor and when I teach and my students want to take a break to pray, the place of the classroom is being transformed into a place for worship through the women’s ritual movements, the prayer mat, and one might even say that their abaya and hijab is appropriated with new religious meaning during the prayer (spatial practice). After prayer the mat is put away and we go back to teaching, the room (place) is transformed from a place of worship back to a place of learning through spatial practice. In this lies the presupposition that a place is dynamic and ‘plastic’, and Lefebvre’s argument that social space is indeed *produced*. Of course, this does not have to be the only understanding of that particular situation. For me, as the observer, this was the most obvious interpretation and thus meaning of the situation, but what about the other subjectivities present? This is a part of the ambiguity of space, implicating that while I defined the room as a place for learning that was transformed into a place for worship and then back again, this is certainly not exhaustive. The room could have multiple meanings depending upon the subject who is inhabiting it, and as such it could be understood as for example a place for socialization or a place for recreation, or something completely different. The point is, while I define a specific place as having specific meaning, the other bodies who are equally part of this place might inscribe it with a completely different meaning. In the following I investigate how veiling can be understood as an embodied spatial practice.

### 3.7.1.1 Veiling as an embodied spatial practice

In an issue of *Social & Cultural Geography*, Banu Gökariksel explores the corporeality of religion and veiling as an embodied spatial practice. She focuses on the production of the body as religious space and the significance of religion, the body, and related corporeal experiences for subjectivity (Gökariksel 2009, 669):

This combination reflects the tremendous amount of work on the body, or ‘bodywork’, that goes into veiling. It also allows examining the spatial experiences of and through the veiled body. The bodywork of veiling includes the cultivation of piety and modesty through everyday practices. Through veiling belief is formed, enacted, and embodied. (Gökariksel 2009, 661)

Gökariksel argues that “clothing may be the most visible and easily identifiable corporeal marker of religiosity or secularity” (Gökariksel 2009, 660), and nuances the act of veiling as a matter of “being and becoming a subject of power” (Gökariksel 2009, 661). For Gökariksel, religion and the pious body are central to the production of self, and through veiling subjectivity is produced. Nevertheless, she also highlights the ways in which secularity molds the body and how it in some ways produces subjectivity. Her key argument is that the body is the significant medium through which the self is fashioned, a position that sits well with this project. Gökariksel’s analysis is relevant for this project as it resonates with Lefebvre’s understanding of the body as active and resilient, as she sees the body as “a space of contestation and struggle” (Gökariksel 2009, 658). Further, following Mahmood, Gökariksel advocates a corporeal understanding of subjectivity in which the body is formative in the formation of the self. As we have seen in chapter two, Mahmood highlights the importance of the body in the making of the self (Mahmood 2005, 159), and this is stressed by Gökariksel: “Mahmood’s analysis shows that mosque participants ‘treat the body as a medium for, rather than a sign of, the self’ (2005: 166), and the body is a *means* to the formation of the self” (Gökariksel 2009, 661). The embodied spatial practice of veiling is crucial in these women’s perception and fashioning of themselves, and the body is key in the ongoing process of the production of subjectivity: “subjectivities are never finished, but in the permanent process of making” (Jouilli 2011, 57). By stressing the embodied self, Gökariksel highlights the need for a remodeling of traditional spatial boundaries: “This notion underlines the need to move

beyond clear spatial demarcations of interiority and exteriority, which are often implicit in studies of the body” (Gökariksel 2009, 664).

### **3.7.2 Representations of space**

#### **– Conceived space**

Representations of space, or conceived space, is conceptualized space, the “discursively constructed space” (Merrifield 1993, 523) of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers, and social engineers (Lefebvre 1991, 38; Knott 2005, 36). We might think of it as mental space. Because ideology, knowledge, and power always are incorporated in this modality of space it is conceived and abstract (Merrifield 1993, 523). Although the objects of conceived space is visually manifested in the built environment, institutions, laws, and politics are also main constituents of representations of space (Knott 2005, 47). Such hegemonic power structures imposed by for example national legislations do not however guarantee the protection of the individual. Taking the *hijab* as an example, in Norway no law enforcement has been put down to prohibit the veiling of Muslim women, but discrimination and exclusion do occur regularly (Furuly 2016; Ansari 2016). As one of my students told me during an oral exercise where the task was to discuss positive and negative sides of the Norwegian society: “I only have good things to say about Norway except for one thing. I am sick of people looking at my hijab instead of me. I am sick of people asking me why I wear it when I live in Norway and am “allowed” to take it off. No one thinks I want to wear it!” This is an example of how discrimination or marginalization can be experienced despite the “right to veil” in Norway, which is protected by “The Anti-Discrimination Act – the act on prohibition of discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, etc.”.

Due to the materially engineered aspect of conceived space we must take into consideration the structural and built surroundings constituting a space and the various ways in which materiality reflects ideology, knowledge, and power. Regarding the particular space of this project, Grønland torg in Oslo, the fact that there are several mosques located here present a disruption of normative space that once used to be Christian. Due to the majority of Muslims inhabiting this space today, the surroundings have changed correspondingly. From these dimensions of change in materiality of the space we can read at least two things about context; it says something about who inhabits this space (were there no Muslims living there, there would probably not be any mosques), and secondly it says something about the

Norwegian government and “building/construction/architectural”-politics. For example, Norwegian national legislation opens up for buildings of mosques and minarets, but this is certainly not without restrictions.<sup>17</sup> Hence government, both national and local, are interfering and engaging in representations of space and molding the space’s interior.

### 3.7.3 Representational space

#### – Lived space

Lefebvre referred to *representational space* as lived space, that is “space as directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’” (Lefebvre 1991, 39, his emphasis). Knott prefers the label *spaces of representations*, following Stewart, Soja, and Shield, as it is presumed to be closer to the original French (Knott 2005, 37). In this project, the term *representational space* will be favored.

Representational space is “directly lived space, the space of everyday life” (Merrifield 1993, 523). This lived space differs from perceived space by the intervention of culture, and that is not as ideology, as in conceived space: “but through the imagination as tradition and symbol” (Knott 2005, 37). This mode of space provides meaning of space, and if we think of spatial practices as physical, and representations of space as mental, representational space could be envisaged as social space. It is constituted by a combination of signs and symbols by which I understand my world, and can as such be a space for resistance or liberation (Knott 2005, 42). In Lefebvre’s words it is: “space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate” (Lefebvre 1991, 39). In a way, this dimension of space lies between the polar opposites of perceived space and conceived space, and it “offers a site for resistance through the imagination which seeks to destabilize the dominant spatial discourse’s codes and symbolism, thereby appropriating and changing the meaning of space” (Wrede 2015, 12). Because

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<sup>17</sup> All form of construction of buildings in Norway requires official authorization, cf. “plan- og bygningsloven” § 20-1 subsection 1 letter a, cf. § 20-2 subsection 1. For such permission to be given there are many factors. However, a central factor is that the building’s purpose must be in line with the regulation plan in the area. If an area is regulated to residential purposes, the authorization requires a modification in the regulation plan. Public buildings, such as mosques, are – contrary to a general construction of a residence – more of a political matter. Generally, for buildings for religious practice, such as mosques, many stakeholders have thoughts and opinions regarding where these buildings should be located or if they should be constructed at all. Buildings, such as mosques, also usually require larger areas that are owned by private landowners or there already exist buildings. This will necessitate expropriation of land, which will imply an intervention for the landowner or resident. In addition to this come the technical and esthetic requirements to the construction. As mosques are buildings of “non-traditional” kind, the competent authorities will usually exercise influence regarding the mosques external design.

*representational space* encompasses the symbolic aspects of space, it is an ambiguous aspect of space. In symbols dwell meaning, that is, also the contestation of meaning.

Lefebvre's representational space is identifiable with what has been referred to as *Third space*.<sup>18</sup> Ed Soja further developed this Third space theory in his *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (1996). According to Soja, thirdspace is a product of a "thirthing-as-Othering" (Soja 1996, 5), that is "a product of a 'thirthing' of the spatial imagination, the creation of another mode of thinking about space that draws upon material and mental spaces of the traditional dualism but extends well beyond them in scope, substance and meaning" (Soja 1996, 11). Read as a 'space-in between', spaces of representation can also approximate Foucault's concept of *heterotopia* (1967), a concept which Soja also captured in his thirdspace. For Foucault heterotopias are spaces where the physical coincides with the mental, and where difference is affirmed. The concept also has a function as sanctuary, and is thus both an intersectional and social space. The heterotopias "break down spatial hierarchies and binaries and thus subvert the forms of knowledge and meaning that underpin the dominant power structure" and "assert the value of difference and embody an escape from oppression and tyranny" (Wrede 2015, 11). South African postcolonial scholars Farid Esack and Nadeem Mahomed mention the term a couple of times, without explicit reference to Foucault, when considering the "closet" as a protected queer space, a space of freedom and even redemption. They compare the counterproductive action of removing the closet for the purpose of more queer freedom with the removal of the hijab: "In the same way, the liberation of Muslim women does not coalesce with the judicial removal of the institution of hijab, both physically in the way of personal space and interactions and socially by way of public and private women's spaces" (Esack and Mahomed 2011, 54).

In her doctoral dissertation "Calling Bodies in Lived Space – Spatial Explorations on the Concept of Calling in a Public Urban Space" Kaia D. M. S. Rønsdal emphasizes the aspect of lived space. According to her, "the analytical level of lived space or representational space lets the spaces produce a different meaning than before, giving the roles of the protagonists as not solely 'marginal' and 'powerful', but giving them substantially more meaning" (Rønsdal

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<sup>18</sup> In *The location of culture* (1994) post-colonial scholar Homi Bhabha understands space not as a physical location, but rather as a discursive and imaginary space. He identified the *Third space*, the space carved out by post-colonial subjects so as to create a hybrid culture or identity (Bhabha 1994 37-8). This space is also recognized by feminist geographers, such as Gillian Rose (1993).

2016, 115), implying that in the lived space it is not given who is *other* and who has power. This will be a point I develop in the analytical section of this thesis. Rønsdal also highlights the role of the researcher that becomes evident in the lived space: “When the researcher-subject appear in the tales, the lived spaces manifest themselves, as she becomes part of the lived spaces of the encounters” (Rønsdal 2016, 114). This is also a topic that will be investigated in the analytical section of this thesis. As representational space phenomenologically is a *lived space*, it is a space of possibilities. It is a space in which bodies can rupture the dominant order of space, and create new and promising spaces. Due to these qualities, when I engage in the spatio-corporeal feminist analysis of the female veiled body, much of the analysis is executed on the level of lived space or representational space, following Rønsdal. In the analytical section of this thesis I will demonstrate how a feminist appropriation of the analytical category of lived space, with its emphasis on lived experience and the body, is well suited for analyzing veiled female bodies in public space. It is my belief that feminist corporeal theory and a Beauvoirian lens can enrich and complement Lefebvre’s spatiology, especially the category of lived space, so as to analyze veiled embodiment and female corporeality as something unique.

By now, I have explored the three dimension of social space as articulated by Henri Lefebvre. I have unraveled some of the potential embedded in this triad for the purpose of this project. In what follows I examine how these theories of space can be utilized for feminist aspirations.

### **3.8 Feminist access to Henri Lefebvre’s spatial triad**

[...]space has moved more and more into the critical dialogue while gender studies, in tandem with globalization theory and a growing postcolonial literary canon and scholarship, are increasingly more multifaceted. When combined, gender and spatial studies can inspire fresh and exciting reading of space and gender and sometimes offer alternate spatial and gender figurations (Wrede 2015, 16).

Andrew Merrifield argues that Lefebvre’s spatial triad is: “[...] an extremely suggestive and flexible heuristic device for interpreting the mode of mediation between space and place which can shed light on the nature of place and how it, in turn, relates to the broader social whole” (Merrifield 1993, 522). I argue that Merrifield’s approach can offer much broader insights; that is, how corporeal feminism can be conceived within Lefebvre’s framework.

Where Merrifield sees spatial practice as having a mediating role between space and place, a reconciling function, I explore the ways in which this can lay the groundwork for a feminist spatial theorization of embodied being-in-the-world.

Merrifield's article "Place and space: a Lefebvrian reconciliation" explores how Lefebvre's spatial framework can offer a dialectic method for "reconciling the way in which experience is lived and acted out in place, and how this relates to, and is embedded in, political and economic practices that are operative over broader spatial scales" (Merrifield 1993, 517). This dialectic method is juxtaposed to the dualistic world view of Cartesianism, and it is by virtue of the latter that Merrifield opens up Lefebvre's spatiology for feminist inquiry. Before engaging in this theoretical query, some feminist theory on dualisms and the body must be outlined.

The philosophical legacy of Descartes has since the seventeenth century echoed through social and scientific thought up to the present day, perpetuating a dualistic world view (Lakoff & Johnson 1999, 408). This particular *Weltanschauung* maintains that "there are two distinct, mutually exclusive and mutually exhaustive substances, mind and body, each of which inhabits its own self-contained sphere" (Grosz 1994, 6). Accordingly, this generates dichotomies, in which spirit/matter, mind/body, reason/emotion, culture/nature, subject/object, male/female, and so on, constitute hierarchical binaries in which one component is favored: "Dichotomous thinking necessarily hierarchizes and ranks the two polarized terms so that one becomes the privileged term and the other its suppressed, subordinated, negative counterpart" (Grosz 1994, 3). This dualistic paradigm engenders particular gender narratives in which woman and the female is associated with the inferior counterpart of the binary. As such, women are somehow more natural, more corporeal, more body than men, which one presumably can argue aligns with the oppression of women (Grosz 1994, 10). This is further problematic due to the body's degraded ontological status, being the inferior notion in the binary mind/body. Associating woman with body and man with mind engenders a gender dynamic in which women are forever inferior to men. This, however, does not imply that men's bodies are omitted, quite the contrary; the white, youthful, abled, male body represents the ideal human being, the norm (Grosz 1994, 19). When the male norm constitutes the central paradigm, the woman is nothing but a lesser (and flawed) man (Braidotti 2013, 15, 24). Insofar as women are designated a specific corporality, this is by no means an active or autonomous corporality; rather women are reduced to an inferior creature

that does not attain the same ontological status as men. She is *the Other* (Heinämaa, 2003 88; Moi 2005, 190). Subsequently, these binaries has not only excluded women from various sociopolitical positions, it has also led to the neglect of women's experiences, subordinated them and undermined their capabilities and status as humans: "women's corporeal specificity is used to explain and justify the different (read: unequal) social positions and cognitive abilities of the two sexes" (Grosz 1994, 14). Inevitably, this androcentric world view, where the male norm reigns, entails that women's experiences are neglected, and what is more, women's bodily lived experiences are neglected. As aforementioned, this is due to Woman and Body both being the inferior term in each respective binary. If women's bodily lived experiences are to be taken seriously then a refiguring of the body and mind is required, exactly because hitherto the mind has been theorized as a disembodied term and experience, accordingly, as noncorporeal (Grosz 1994, 4). By moving towards a corporeal feminism in which: "Bodies and minds are not two distinct substances or two kinds of attributes of a single substance but somewhere in between these two alternatives" (Grosz 1994, xii), all effects of subjectivity can be explained through body. Not by undermining the mind and notions such as agency, reflection, and consciousness, but by postulating that "they can be remapped, refigured, in terms of models, paradigms which conceive of subjectivity in terms of the primacy of corporeality" (Grosz 1994, vii). Not only would this embodied subjectivity or psychical corporeality (Grosz 1994, 22) comply with a gender inclusive and feminist approach to lived experiences, it would engender a paradigm shift from an androcentric, male biased model of humanity to a diverse and situation oriented model in which our body, as our way of being in the world, is at the center (Heinämaa 2003, xvii-xviii).

By now it is evident that although the nature of Merrifield's endeavor is of conventional geography, his reading of Lefebvre is clearly of major feminist interest for at least two reasons: First, by deconstructing dualistic thought and implementing a dialectic framework, in which the modalities of space intermingle. And secondly, by stressing the importance of bodily lived experience, and in reaction to the first point, how this interconnects with all aspects of spatiality. Let us consider the latter first. Merrifield seeks to reconcile the notions of space and place, and argues that both place and space "have a real ontological status since they are both embodied in material processes – namely, real human activities" (Merrifield 1993, 520). For Merrifield then, place constitutes the node where Lefebvre's modalities of space meet because place is not abstract space, place is: "the terrain where basic social practices – consumption, enjoyment, tradition, self identification, solidarity, social support

and social reproduction, etc. – are lived out” (Merrifield 1993, 522). Place is thus practiced space, and accordingly to inhabit space and *live* space is to create space. This second feminist insight coalesces with the first; emphasis on bodily-lived experience, including sexed corporeal experience, presupposes a dismantling of the dualistic paradigm. His disassembling of Cartesian dualisms is with regard to this present project essential. However this endeavor cannot be solely assigned to Merrifield as Lefebvre early on in his *Production of Space* placed a critique upon the Cartesian logic’s conception of space as absolute and dominant, and container of senses and bodies (Lefebvre 1991, 1). Lefebvre’s usage of the spatial triad is also indicative of his antagonism towards binary thought. As aforementioned, binaries have often come to imply favoring one of two elements, and Lefebvre is clearly attentive to this problem rejecting all binary logic (Lefebvre 1991, 39).

I have demonstrated how Merrifield’s reading of Lefebvre can present a way of bridging corporeal feminism and spatial theory by deconstructing dualisms and emphasizing bodily experience. The importance of this bridging for a feminist project should by now be clear, and now I turn to the latter, that of *bodily* experience. Whenever Lefebvre discusses his spatial triad he always keeps a reference to the body: “In seeking to understand the three moments of social space, it may help to consider the *body*. All the more so inasmuch as the relationship to space of a ‘subject’ who is a member of a group or society implies his relationship to his own body and vice versa” (Lefebvre 1991, 40). The body is not only inhabiting space and using space: the body *is* a space. The object of this research project is the veiled *body* in social *space*, and in the following I will elaborate on the living, material body. Focus will be on Merleau-Ponty’s understanding of how the subject can be theorized with regards to the relationship between the body and the world, and how Simone de Beauvoir’s theorization of the body as a situation can be fruitful for the project of crafting a corporeal feminist theory of spatial interactions.

### **3.9 The body**

Within the field of space and culture the body has come to be recognized as a vital element of spatial analysis (Low 2003, 9), and as such several attempts has been made to explicate the relationship between the body and the world and in turn theorize subjectivity accordingly (Merleau-Ponty 1962 and 1965; Foucault 1977 and 1984; Bourdieu 1977; Giddens 1984).

Lefebvre writes about the ‘spatial body’, a body which materiality is derived from space (Lefebvre 1991, 195).

The intersections between space and gender have for some time now received increased feminist attention (Wrede 2015, 10), and feminist spatial critique has already focused on power distribution in space, patriarchal spatialization, and the ways in which space is gendered and enable agency only for men in particular (Wrede 2015, 12). Today, feminist geocritics continue to critique this legacy by emphasizing space as “multiple, shifting, and characterized by ‘difference’” and that “time and space are integral and that spaces are linked to other spaces” (Wrede 2015, 13). Feminist theory foregrounds the body as the locus of experience (Shaikh 2012; Hoel 2013), stresses the ways in which the production of knowledge must rely on bodily lived experience (Grosz 1994, 94; Heinämaa 2003, xvii), and feminist phenomenology has emphasized the body as our way of being in the world (Heinämaa 2003, xviii). Since the body for long has been neglected and/or interpreted as antagonistic to feminist projects inasmuch as it has been associated with biological determinism, feminist voices have called for a reclaiming and reconceiving of the body. As Grosz puts it: “[...]a refiguring of the body so that it moves from the periphery to the center of analysis, so that it can now be understood as the very “stuff” of subjectivity” (Grosz 1994, xi). This refiguring is important, as it radically transforms our understanding of experience as something cognitive to something corporeal. For feminist theorists, this has been a main concern, especially for the last four decades (Hoel 2013, 34), inasmuch as it offers a response to several feminist interests: First, by ‘enfleshing’ experience the Cartesian split subject is reconfigured and binary thought “[...]is replaced by stressing the interdependent and dynamic nature of the body and mind in the construction of experiential realities” (Hoel 2013, 34). Second, by taking intersectionality seriously feminist scholars have put to the fore gendered, sexualized, and racialized bodies (Hoel 2013, 34). And third, feminist theorists on embodiment and the body have taken seriously dimensions of human nature that traditionally have been neglected, such as the symbolic, imagined, and the spiritual (Hoel 2013, 34). I argue that by employing Lefebvre’s spatial triad, these three feminist concerns can be taken seriously. Not only is his spatiology sensitive to multifaceted bodies and spaces and debunk harmful binary thought; his dialectical triadic model for the production of social space allows for – even emphasizes – the symbolic meaning of living bodies in space (see 3.7.3). Later I will explore the potential of reading Lefebvre’s spatial theories in tandem with Simone de Beauvoir’s feminist theory of the body as a situation, but first a brief overview of Merleau-

Ponty's understanding of the subject and body in relation to the world. The rationale for this is the immense impact this theorist has had on the field of "the anthropology of the body", and his accentuation of the spatiality and temporality of the body. Additionally, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology has in particular been largely influential on Simone de Beauvoir and her view on corporeality and sexual difference (Heinämaa 2003, xii, 17).

### **3.9.1 Merleau-Ponty**

The body is our general medium for having a world.

(Merleau-Ponty, cited in Moi 2005, 63)

Foucault understands the subject to be a product of discourse, that is: "[...]the body is the object, target, and instrument of power" (Grosz 1994, 146). In Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological reflection on the body, however, the subject is theorized as an intentional producer (Hoel 2013, 36). This is post-dualistic thinking, in that it proposes consciousness as continuously embodied (Hoel 2013, 35). Merleau-Ponty suggests, as opposed to Cartesian dualisms, the body and mind as necessarily interrelated: "The perceiving mind is an incarnated body" (Merleau-Ponty 1963, cited in Grosz 1994, 87). Accordingly, our main entry, or only access, to the world is the living body, and this body has spatial and temporal limits (Heinämaa 2003, 44). However, without these spatial and temporal limits our living body would not be free, rather it would become impossible to understand and grasp bodies and things in the world. This is what Merleau-Ponty means when he claims that "[t]he body is not an object. It is the condition and context through which I am able to have a relation to objects" (Grosz 1994, 86). Knott's understanding of the body corresponds to Merleau-Ponty's conception of the body as perceiving and perceived: "The body is not clay to be molded, but instead is effecting the molding" (Knott 2005, 20).

As we have seen with Lefebvre, the body is a concrete embodiment of space, concurrently as it is a user of space. For Merleau-Ponty, the body's relation to space and time is a precondition of the subject's relations with objects (Grosz 1994, 90). The body inhabits space and "applies itself to space like a hand to an instrument" (Merleau-Ponty 1963, cited in Grosz 1994, 90). As such, the living body's relation to space is different from that of other objects in space, in that space is grasped through our bodily situation (Grosz 1994, 90). This means that when Merleau-Ponty placed the body in a field of space and time, he did so not through a

spatiality of position, but by considering a spatiality of *situation* (Simonsen 2005, 9). As argued by Heĩnamaa, these were some of the ideas that laid the groundwork for Simone de Beauvoir’s analysis of sexuality and sexual difference in *Le deuxième sexe* (1949) (Heĩnamaa 2003). In the introduction to this defining feminist work, Beauvoir states that: “Nevertheless it will be said that if the body is not a *thing*, it is a situation, as viewed in the perspective I am adopting – that of Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty: it is the instrument of our grasp upon the world, a limiting factor for our projects” (Beauvoir 66, 1949/1997). It is to Beauvoir’s understanding of the body as a situation I now shall turn, and I will demonstrate how her insights are ripe for feminist readings of Lefebvre’s spatiology.

### 3.9.2 Simone de Beauvoir – the body is a situation

In her essay “What Is a Woman?” (1999)<sup>19</sup> Toril Moi demonstrates how Simone de Beauvoir’s theory of the body as a situation offers an alternative to poststructuralist intricate theories of sex and gender. Moi outlines how poststructuralist feminists, such as Judith Butler, Donna Haraway, and Elizabeth Grosz, are not happy with the binary structures proposed by the dichotomy sex/gender (Moi 2005, 34). Moi reveals how these theorists’ attempts to overcome this dichotomy present immense theoretical difficulties. She suggests that when Elizabeth Grosz, for example, turns to the theories of the ‘lived body’, in order to bypass the sex/gender distinction, she does so without acknowledging or appreciating Beauvoir’s notion of the body as a situation (Moi 2005, 42-3). The body as a situation, Moi argues, presents the solution poststructuralist feminists seek to find.

For Simone de Beauvoir, the body *is* a situation. This must not be reduced to the statement that the body is *in* a situation. Beauvoir believes both claims to be true, but they are not reducible to one another (Moi 2005, 59). To understand this, we must appreciate the subjectivity of every human’s situation. Each human’s use of her freedom is bound up with her situation (Moi 2005, 65), and her situation and her own specific lived experience will inform how she realizes her projects in the world. In this context, ‘lived experience’ describes “the way an individual makes sense of her situation and actions” (Moi 2005, 63). When

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<sup>19</sup> I have used the student edition of “What Is a Woman?”, *Sex, Gender, and the Body: The student edition of What Is a Woman?* (2005)

poststructuralist's, such as Judith Butler<sup>20</sup>, neglects the body inasmuch as they construct gender as a disembodied category, they abandon the category of lived experience, as well as stripping the body of meaning (Moi 2005, 74). In order to take seriously the material, concrete, experiencing, living body, we must take into account the embodied *situation* every human is in.

### 3.10 The spatial body conceived as a situation in corporeal feminist terms

Western philosophy has betrayed the body; it has actively participated in the great process of metaphorization that has *abandoned* the body; and it has *denied* the body. The living body, being at once 'subject' and 'object', cannot tolerate such conceptual division, and consequently philosophical concepts fall into the category of the 'signs of non-body'. (Lefebvre 1991, 407)

The quote above highlights Lefebvre's claim that the body, that is the living, material body, needs to be reinstated in philosophy and social theory. As suggested earlier, the lived space, functions as a bridge between perceived space and conceived space. If we are to understand the production of space this dialectic relation is of essence, as it connects the concrete and abstract (Simonsen 2005, 7). As previously mentioned, Lefebvre states that in order to understand the three dimensions of space it can be helpful to consider the body (Lefebvre 1991, 40). For him, these three dimensions are analogous to the body as perceived, conceived, lived. This means that his critique of the poststructuralist reduction of space to the mental, abstract sphere, is mirrored in his emphasis of the material body as a mediator between his three dimensions of space (Simonsen 2005, 7). As we have seen, Merleau-Ponty and de Beauvoir's phenomenological approach to the body implies an ambiguity of the body as subject-object, and this can be related to Lefebvre's conception of the duality of social space relative to the body "as simultaneously part of the constitution of the self and mediator to the perception of something else" (Simonsen 2005, 9).

Although Lefebvre continuously referred to the body when discussing the social production of space, he never developed a coherent theory of embodiment and the body (Simonsen 2005,

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<sup>20</sup> In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) and *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (1993) Butler describes in Foucauldian terms the ways in which the body is inscribed and performed through discourse.

9). Occasionally, he considered the role of the sexed body for social space (Lefebvre 1991, 243-44) and how the phallic nature of abstract space produced social space in which women were exploited and female bodies were objectified (Lefebvre 285-87, 308-11). However, he has been criticized for never elaborating to any extent on the interpretation of gendered bodies and gender relations (Simonsen 2005, 12 n.1), and the non-recognition of female agency beyond that of biological determinist binaries (Blum & Nast 1996, 577). However, as argued by Kirsten Simonsen, a combination of his works with other writers who theorize the material body can be a fruitful endeavor (Simonsen 2005, 9). Here, I propose a merging of Simone de Beauvoir's theory of the body as a situation, combined with aspects of Elizabeth Grosz' corporal feminist theory, and Lefebvre's spatial body.

For Lefebvre, space has for long been subject to a dematerialization. Parallel to this, the perception of the body as disconnected from lived experience and social space has produced theories of embodiment and the body as non-spatiotemporal. Resembling de Beauvoir's phenomenological approach to the living body, simultaneously subject and object, Lefebvre stressed the body's corporeal ability to produce space (Lefebvre 1991, 195). He suggested the body as active and resilient:

Thanks to its sensory organs, from the sense of smell and sexuality to sight (without any special emphasis being placed on the visual sphere), the body tends to behave as a *differential field*. It behaves, in other words, as a *total* body, breaking out of the temporal and spatial shell developed in response to labour, to the division of labour, to the localizing of work and the specialization of places" (Lefebvre 1991, 384).

When Lefebvre turns the body into producer of difference, he implies that the body has "an inherent *right to difference*, formulated against forces of homogenization, fragmentation, and the hierarchical organized power" (Simonsen 2005, 11). In the analytical section of this thesis I will explore the implications of these struggles for the right to be different as it pertains to the veiled body. Lefebvre's conception of the body as a differential field and as a social and creative body (Lefebvre 1991, 195) can profitably be combined with de Beauvoir's understanding of the body as a situation. If we consider the body both as a situation *and* as placed within other situations (Moi 2005, 65), concomitantly as we conceive the body as being a space and having its space (Simonsen 2005, 4), we must necessarily turn our attention towards *lived experience*. As mentioned before, lived experience is a part of a subject's

situatedness, and thus for de Beauvoir it affects my situation and how I understand it. In the same way, Lefebvre's spatial body is informed by lived experience, and through lived experience the body "constitutes a practico-sensory realm in which space is perceived through smells, tastes, touch and hearing, as well as through sight" (Simonsen 2005, 4). As argued by Doreen Massey in *Space, Place, and Gender*, all spaces are gendered (1994). The ways in which I understand my *gendered situation* and others interpret my gendered situation will necessarily inform gender structures and the spatial distribution of power and knowledge that permeate the space I inhabit.

If we are to take seriously the influence our particular situation and lived experience plays upon our projects in the world, we need to appreciate the spatial and temporal aspects of our living bodies. As de Beauvoir argues, there are countless distinctive manners of being a woman (Moi 2005, 66), but these different potentials are necessarily bound up with the spatial and temporal limits of our bodies (Lefebvre 1991, 40, 194, 203). The corporeal feminism called for by Grosz, – in which experience is 'enfleshed' and subjectivity is conceived as corporeal – de Beauvoir's body as a situation, and Lefebvre's re-materialization of space and spatial bodies, are frameworks productive for the imagining of a feminist approach to spatial explorations in which gendered bodies and sexual difference are highlighted.

### **3.11 Summary**

This chapter has established the theoretical framework for this thesis. Spatio-corporeal feminist theory has been probed as the most suited theoretical perspective for investigating veiled bodies in public space. Key interlocutors have been Henri Lefebvre, Kim Knott, Elisabeth Grosz, Merleau-Ponty, and Simone de Beauvoir. The chapter outlined the various facets of space, in particular Henri Lefebvre's spatial triad and concept of "the production of space". Furthermore, a feminist appropriation of the analytical category of lived space was proposed as suitable for the analysis of veiled female bodies in public space. Feminist theory of the body and corporeality was introduced through the corporeal feminist theory of Elisabeth Grosz and Simone de Beauvoir's theorization of the body as a situation. Ultimately, spatial and feminist perspectives were engaged in conversation for the purpose of exploring a corporeal feminist theory of spatial interactions. The theoretical insights brought to the fore in this chapter are used to making sense of and theorize the narratives introduced in the analytical chapter of this thesis.

## 4.0 Method chapter

*The garment felt light and soft on my skin. Intricate gold embroidery in tortuous patterns framed the long, black dress from top to bottom. The headdress, securely held in place by a shiny black pin with a shimmering stone, wrapped surprisingly well around my face. Gently, I let my hand slide across the delicate fabric. It was really beautiful. I closed my eyes, turned slowly towards the full-length mirror, took a deep breath, and looked. I could feel how my body rhythm was changing tempo; my pulse rising, my palms sweating, mouth dry, knees shaking, eyes tearing up. Even before entering the field, standing in my own safe apartment, I was freaking out!*

Doing research is always an embodied endeavor (Hoel 2013; Hoel, forthcoming). We can never step out of our bodies and engage in an objective, dislocated, and impartial mode of research. Accordingly, our corporeal presence in the field is always constitutive for how the field is interpreted, and equally important, how the field interprets us. Thus, being aware of the body's movements, to communicate and interpret our corporeal reactions encountering other bodies, is of essence. Notwithstanding, to be sensitive and aware of our embodied presence when doing research, in other words, being able to listen to our bodies is not an easy task.

The introductory vignette in this chapter is illustrative of what challenges fieldwork observation presents and how the body plays a key role in research. In this project my body constitutes the foremost lens through which to investigate the space of Grønland torg, and as such attention must be paid to the lived, material body, always materializing and negotiating social space.

This chapter is divided into three sections: Part one provides an outline of the methods employed: field research in the form of hidden observation and autoethnographic method. In particular, the body is investigated as an analytical tool in the process of research, foregrounding notions of positioning and reflexivity. Part two engages the physical specificities of the location, Grønland torg, including reflections on my physical positioning in the field and in time. Finally, part three deals with the ethical conundrums of this project. The problem of deception in hidden observation will be considered, in addition to a reflection upon the notion of accountability.

## **PART 1**

### **4.1.0 Doing fieldwork**

I understand field research in the study of religion as:

[...]the practice of observing religious groups, communities or activities, sometimes for sustained periods of times, sometimes in a series of shorter visits. It entails attempting to understand as fully as possible what people do, when, where, how and (possibly) why they do it [...] it is not only about religious rituals or discourses but may attend to seemingly mundane issues that impinge on people's lives, acts and ideas. (Harvey 2011, 218)

Lofland et al. argue that the epistemological foundation of fieldstudies is that direct observation and/or participation is the only way of attaining intimacy to those studied needed to understand them and their social context (Lofland et al. 2006, 3). Thus, the researcher is simultaneously a witness and a research instrument. In this project my field is Grønland torg, a market place located east in central Oslo. The people I observed consisted of veiled Muslim women inhabiting this space during the course of one month. Two weeks of the fieldwork was completed during December 2016, and then two weeks in January 2017. This division is due to at least three reasons. First, although Grønland torg is a fairly familiar place to me – it is where my part time job is located – entering a field always denotes a myriad of methodological variables which regulates the politics of space, such as: time of the day (which in turn determines daylight/darkness), my positioning in the field (walking around, standing still, sitting down), my style of dress (wearing the abaya and hijab/not wearing the abaya and hijab), observing the field from inside a café or positioning myself outside, weather conditions (temperature, snow, rain etc.). Some of these variables are possible to manipulate, such as my physical positioning and my choice of dress, but again these variables can be overridden by highly unpredictable variables such as weather conditions. This pinpoints how research always is an embodied endeavor, and the various ways in which the body informs how research is conducted. Very low temperatures or heavy rainfall would certainly make outdoor observation a rather unpleasant experience, and more so, the space would probably be less inhabited due to the bad weather conditions. This can be further illustrated by a rather

banal example. Just a few days before I was planning on starting my fieldwork I caught a pretty bad cold, and as such the fieldwork had to be postponed one week. Our bodies are not cold, mechanical vehicles designed to transport the mind around in the world, rather bodies are vibrant, organic vessels of meaning-making (Hoel 2013, 37). I will elaborate this notion further in the section on “embodying the field”. The point is that because the field presents a web of methodological variables the first two weeks of observation served as a sort of semi-pilot. The first two weeks of fieldwork gave me the opportunity to try out different combinations of the abovementioned variables so as to attain a deeper understanding of Grønland torg as a social space and the Muslim veiled women moving through this space. Second, by doing fieldwork two weeks in December I got to observe the space wrapped in “pre-Christmassy” paper. From the end of November and throughout December Grønland is like the rest of Oslo, impregnated with Christian symbols in the shape of Christmas decorations. Yet, due to the Muslim people inhabiting the space, Grønland is characterized by a number of what we might call “Muslim elements”: mosques, several shops selling Muslim clothing like hijabs and kurtas, shops selling halal meat, restaurants offering Middle Eastern and Pakistani food, and Islamic decorations such as calligraphy and the star and crescent moon. This amalgamation of Christian and Muslim elements is relevant for this project, especially as it pertains to how the conceived and perceived aspects of space inform the lived mode of space.

Third, when first entering the field I brought a set of prejudices and hypotheses. As mentioned, because my job is located nearby Grønland torg I had spent a considerable amount of time in the field prior to actually starting the fieldwork, and naturally I had some reflections about the overarching dynamics of the market place. One of these preliminary observations was concerning the gendered politics of inclusion and exclusion. I perceived Grønland torg to be a fairly male dominated space, as I often observed small groups of men hanging around the benches located nearby the sidewalk of the market place. This assumption actually checked out with what I later observed during the time of fieldwork, as will be elaborated in the analysis. My body is never a tabula rasa on which the outer world can inscribe meaning and knowledge; rather I enter the field with everything I have experienced in the past, including my reflections about the field made prior to actually being in the field. This necessarily informs the way in which I experience and interpret the field, and the way in which my body responds to being in the field. However, this is not to say that I do not enter the field with a receptive and volatile body and that my prior assumptions cannot be

challenged, invalidated, and eventually changed. When faced with new stimuli through seeing, hearing, smelling, feeling, *living* a social space, our bodies are in constant negotiation with other bodies using that same space.<sup>21</sup> Although our bodies remember and are in quest for familiar patterns and categories, new impulses can alter and change previous understandings. As such, I found it expedient to do the fieldwork in two separate periods, divided by a few weeks. By doing so I could enter the field with my pre-thoughts and experiences about the field made prior to the fieldwork (the two weeks in December), and then I could return to the field in January with new experiences, different perspectives on the field, and a broadened horizon of understanding.

#### **4.1.1 Hidden observation**

In order to study and observe veiled bodies in public space as enacted and performed naturally and unaffected, my observation needed to be covert. There is a lively debate about whether or not hidden observation is an ethically acceptable method (Lofland et al. 2006, 29), and according to The American Sociological Association's *Code of Ethics* this type of observation is only ethically justifiable under two specific conditions: "(1) the research involves no more than minimal risk for research participants, and (2) the research could not practicably be carried out were informed consent to be required (1997)" (Cited in Lofland et al. 2006, 29). Considering the former, in this study it is arguably minimal risk involved for the people observed and described, as the characteristics given do not reveal the identity of those described beyond that of being veiled, Muslim women, and their interaction with others. Regarding condition number two, it is difficult to imagine how this project could have been carried out if I was to hand out consent forms to all the people I saw during two hours. To track down everyone I had observed after a day of fieldwork also seems like a ludicrous thought. Thus, in order for the project to be practically possible, hidden observation was the obvious choice. The apparent advantage of being able to observe people without them knowing weighed heavy on my decision of method. People who are aware of being studied tend to act differently than they would have under "normal" conditions (Lofland et al. 2006, 37). As such, hidden observation would allow me to observe people behave as they usually would when performing their bodies in public space. However, arguably all movement in space could be understood to be performative (Butler 1990, 1993).

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<sup>21</sup> All of these categories presupposes ableness, see 4.1.5 "Embodying the field".

Clearly there are some ethical challenges linked to the method of hidden observation, and I will elaborate on these in part 3 of this chapter. Here I would like to explore the possible advantages and disadvantages of hidden observation. As described by Lofland et al. hidden observation in public settings does rarely require any specific type of behavior or appearance (Lofland et al. 2006, 36). As long as you follow the common public code of your chosen location, you are pretty much good to go. This means that in a public park in Norway you should be wearing clothes and maybe not be singing opera (although during the summer season people in the parks in Oslo are usually wearing bikinis and shorts and spontaneous cultural performances of varying quality occur regularly). As the fieldwork in this project was conducted during two of the coldest months of the year, December and January, I was required to dress accordingly in order to be able to sit outside and observe for a fair amount of time. As the narratives in this thesis show, some days I had to shift location from my bench outside on the square to inside a Deli de Luca, simply because it was too cold to sit outside. Fortunately, several days during my fieldwork were unusually warm for the winter season in Norway, and I was able to do a lot of the observation outside. The point is that while my presence as a hidden observer went on fairly unnoticed by the people I observed (although in many of the narratives I present, I felt severely policed), I would probably have gotten very different responses had I not dressed for the season.

While I was doing fieldwork I often felt anxious about what I would say to people if someone confronted me with my lingering on the same spot, returning every day. What if someone came up to me and asked me what I was up to? What if they said to me that they had seen me come back every day, looking at people, taking notes? This concern is common among unknown observers, although people are not usually irritated if they find out (Lofland et al. 2006, 56). In fact, according to Lofland et al., there is a gap in the literature regarding the hidden researcher's stress and fears of being revealed or disclosed (Lofland et al. 2006, 56). During the period of fieldwork I often rehearsed conversations in which I explained to people why I was sitting on a bench and taking notes. Sometimes I got so anxious when I felt like someone was staring at me for a bit too long (this was usually when I was wearing the abaya and hijab) that I had to get up and move around for a bit. However, no one ever came up to me and asked me what I was doing, and generally I felt like people did not notice me all that much. After all, the people who were moving through the market place could not know whether I had been sitting there for five minutes or five hours. The people I observed who

“hung around” the benches for some time also did not seem to notice me all that much (especially when I was not wearing the abaya and hijab). Nevertheless, the stress of constantly fearing a possible disclosure certainly had immense impact on how I embodied the field.

#### **4.1.2 Autoethnography**

In this project, autoethnography is employed in the full process of research; that is in the preparations before entering the field, in the field taking fieldnotes, and post fieldwork during the course of writing. Initially, I want to highlight a few aspects of autoethnographic writing. In the same way that research is always situated and subjective, so is academic writing. It does not simply appear from nowhere, written by nobody, addressed to no one. Every written piece, whether that be a diary or a peer reviewed article, is to some level inscribed with the author’s personal biases and interests. Naturally, how partial a piece is varies from author to author and in what context the written work is done. Nevertheless, to write is always a situated and subjective process. Thus we must ask ourselves: who is telling what to whom? And how is this told? In this project I use my body as an instrument for observation, experience, interpretation, and analysis – as all humans do all the time – and accordingly the chosen methodological framework and the style of writing has to reflect this. I found autoethnography to be the best, if not to say the perfect, method to do this, and in the following I will elaborate on the characteristics of this particular style of research.

#### **4.1.3 What is autoethnography?**

Autoethnography is an ambiguous qualitative method of research, which includes a broad scope of different forms and approaches. Feminist voices have long promoted this specific mode of research and style of writing, particularly research that include narratives about personal aspects of the project or research in which personal knowledge constitutes a key element in the research process (e.g. Linden 1992; Jones 1998; Nason-Clark 2002). An etymological definition outlines that: “Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)” (Adams, Bochner, Ellis 2011, 273). The different manifestations of autoethnography depends upon where emphasize is placed; “the study of others, the researcher’s self and interaction with others, traditional analysis, and the interview context, as well as on power relationships” (Adams, Bochner, Ellis 2011, 278). In

this project the type of autoethnography that will be employed is highly subjective and places emphasis on the researcher's feelings and experiences in the research process. There are different variants of this particular mode of autoethnography, such as "confessional tales" (Van Maanen 1988), "ethnographic memoirs" (Ellis & Bochner 2000), and "reflexive ethnographies" (Tedlock 2000). As aforementioned, autoethnography is not a rigorous and clear-cut method that follows a certain set of rules and parameters, rather it contains a myriad of definitions and configurations and thus I must clarify how I understand autoethnography. In this project I follow Ellis and Bochner's definition of autoethnography as: "autobiographies that self-consciously explore the interplay of the introspective, personally engaged self with cultural descriptions mediated through language, history, and ethnographic explanation." (Ellis & Bochner 2000, 742). Although the authors place emphasis on auto, the self, in favor of ethno, the inclusion of "ethnographic explanation" links the personal to the cultural and thus this style of writing distinguishes itself from other types of self-narratives by engaging in social analysis and interpretation. Ellis and Bochner would probably play the latter aspects down and focus on the evocative and self-reflective researcher, but I argue that it is possible to do emotionally engaged writing in tandem with a broader cultural and social analysis and interpretation. This is how I understand autoethnography. Not all autoethnographies are done this way, and there is a tension in the discourse between objectivity and subjectivity. Anderson is promoting a version of the method in which the following five conditions should be met: "(1) complete member researcher (CMR) status, (2) analytic reflexivity, (3) narrative visibility of the researcher's self, (4) dialogue with informants beyond the self, and (5) commitment to theoretical analysis." (Anderson 2006, 378). Atkinson aligns with Anderson, stating that: "[...]the goals of analysis and theorizing are too often lost to sight in contemporary fashions for subjective and evocative ethnographic work." (Atkinson 2006, 400). On the other side of the spectrum Ellis & Bochner advocates a subjective and evocative style in writing in which 'auto' and 'ethno' do not have to be antithetical: "[...]good analysis can be evocative!" (Ellis & Bochner 2006, 443). As mentioned above, this latter position is in line with my understanding of autoethnography. In keeping with the subjective and evocative style of writing that is embedded in the type of autoethnography that I employ in this thesis, I have chosen to present my field data in the form of what I call "narratives". Narratives allow for deep depictions and enables descriptions of subjective emotions, and as such I believe this term to be suited for this type of project. Also, through narratives the reader can hopefully get some sort of feeling of how the space of Grønland torg appeared to me during the month of fieldwork. To write personal narratives entails, among other things "a way to write that

acknowledges the presence of others” and furthermore “being able to stake one’s own experience (subjectivity) in one’s general claims, and to do so in a way that addresses the other’s freedom” (Moi 2005, 245). As such, by means of the narratives this theoretical project can successfully be combined with personal writing.

#### **4.1.4 Why do autoethnography?**

Scholars have identified “mainstream” western feminism as a discourse of authority in relation to other societies (Ahmed 1992, 246), critiqued the ways in which it produces ethnocentric universalism (Mohanty 1988, 64), and revealed the ways in which this has led to the importation of concepts (e.g. freedom and emancipation) that have hegemonic power within western feminist imaginaries (Bilge 2010, 10; Mahmood 2005, 10). So called “white feminism” has been critiqued for failing to consider the voices of women of color (Minh-ha 1987) and their lack of attention to intersectionality, and for postulating veiling as essentially an act of subordination or essentially an act of resistance (Abu-Lughod 1990; Mahmood 2005; Deeb 2006). Indeed, mainstream feminism is a politics of privilege (Phipps 2014, 17). Given this reality, I wished to employ a methodological approach that honor diversity and devalue tactics that favor certain qualities, values, and epistemologies on the basis of a western scientific paradigm. Also, there is a need to avoid the heterocentrism and androcentrism embedded in the field of social sciences. Most of the writing done in traditional and conventional research is: “advocating a White, masculine, heterosexual, middle/upper-classed, Christian, able-bodied perspective” (Adams, Bochner, Ellis 2011, 275). How is one to attempt to understand Muslim women if one is writing from this point of view? As a matter of fact, how is one to understand anyone or anything writing from such a stance? With this in mind, the following became decisive for my choice of methodology:

Autoethnography, on the other hand, expands and opens up a wider lens on the world, eschewing rigid definitions of what constitutes meaningful and useful research; this approach also helps us understand how the kinds of people we claim, or are perceived,[sic]to be[,] influence interpretations of what we study, how we study it, and what we say about our topic (Adams, Bochner, Ellis 2011, 275).

The assumption of scientific objectivity would be counterproductive for several reasons. First, neutral research is at its best a deficient manner of achieving knowledge, and at worst a

harmful and unsympathetic approach to human beings. Academic “objective” writing presents itself as if it is written from nowhere by nobody (Hoel, forthcoming, 7). This is a clear violation of several feminist commitments, which I will elaborate on in the following. Second, as I will elaborate below, the researcher is always an embodied subject that interacts with the participants and negotiates the social space that constitutes the field. Autoethnography recognizes the way in which personal experience influences the research process. Third, and connected to the latter, the fact that I am engaged in the organization Info123, working as a tutor and Norwegian- and English teacher for mainly Muslim Somali immigrants, I have developed personal relationships to several girls and women who wear the hijab. In between sessions, and sometimes also when we definitely should have been memorizing irregular verbs, we talk about everyday ups and downs, discuss the difficulties arising when facing a foreign culture, the struggles with combining the latter with the culture of the homeland, and I get to share in on experiences that often makes me no less than deeply ashamed of being Norwegian. It literally breaks my heart when students tell me about public harassment and discrimination clearly linked to them wearing the hijab. Hence this project has a deep-felt social vision and a normative aspect, which I think is a strength and not a pit fall, especially when using autoethnographic method.

By committing to autoethnographic writing, with particular emphasis on evocation, I am of course putting myself in a very vulnerable position. In fact, one of the challenges autoethnographers face is the level of self exposure and vulnerability one must demonstrate when doing this type of writing (see 4.1.5 ‘Embodying the field’, where I elaborate on the vulnerable observer). However, autoethnography is not a self-centered method, only focusing on the researcher’s feelings and thoughts. Rather, it is a method in which knowledge and understanding of others can be attained through the self. The self becomes both the lens and the interpretive tool through which the data – in other words, the researcher’s experiences – can be reflected upon and analyzed.

#### **4.1.5 Embodying the field**

The subjective nature of autoethnographic method allows for the researcher’s participation in the study and accordingly, my own embodiment of the field, wearing the abaya and hijab, is key. Consequently, emphasis must be placed upon feminist standpoint epistemology, which takes the politics of location and positioning seriously and “imagines the research relationship

between researcher and participant as horizontally aligned; rendering the researcher someone who *partakes* in the research process rather than someone who possesses authoritative or expert knowledge” (Hoel forthcoming 6, her emphasis). Rosi Braidotti argues that we need to: “[...]practice the politics of locations, or situated and accountable knowledge practices” (Braidotti 2013, 51). This means that I as a researcher is, like all other knowers, located in space and time, and further that all knowledge is situated and partial. These politics of positioning are determinative, as argued by Donna Haraway:

I am arguing for politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims. These are claims on people’s lives; the view from a body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring and structured body, versus the view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity. (Haraway 1991, 195)

My body is intersectionally composed by a number of elements, which inform my situatedness: white, female, abled-bodied, non-Muslim, heterosexual, feminist. When I enter the field, with or without the abaya and hijab, this positioning, both in the physical and social world, has an impact on how I understand, interpret, analyze, and produce knowledge. My interests and biases will always influence the way in which I interpret experience, and also how I reflect upon my field observations and analyze data. Thus reading spatial practice is never an unambiguous endeavor due to the fact that the researcher as ‘interpreter’ is never not situated in space and time and cannot as such read the spatial practice from an objective point of view (Knott 2005, 40). We can never step out of the context, put on our precious academic and blissfully objective glasses, and produce a neutral and unbiased account. From being human, from having a body, from using vision, hearing, smelling, touching, and even tasting, comes a certain subjective embodied lens we cannot escape. Of course, all this presupposes ableness. It is not given that for all humans the full spectrum of senses are operational, or that the body is fully functional. The lack of a limb or the loss of one or several senses naturally changes the way in which one interprets the world and how the world interprets you.

Autoethnography stresses that the researcher reflects upon her feelings, thoughts and experiences, and “turns the gaze inwards”. Hoel calls attention to what this introspection combined with feminist standpoint has accentuated:

First, that research ‘data’ is collected by an en fleshed researcher (that is, ‘data’ do not write themselves from a position of ‘nowhere’); second, the en fleshed researcher may occupy multiple positionings while in the field; third, this en fleshed researcher embodies and performs gender and sexuality in particular ways; and fourth, that because the researcher is en fleshed, gendered and sexed, the researcher may inhabit and experience the field differently than a differently embodied researcher (Hoel, forthcoming, 7)

Turning the gaze inwards must necessarily be combined with turning the gaze outwards, an oscillation that is presupposed in Donna Haraway’s concept of ‘situated knowledges’, in which knowledge production is always situated, embodied, and context dependent (Hoel, forthcoming, 5). This means that knowledge production never can be separated from space and time, and that research is dependent upon researcher’s embodiment. By foregrounding the visual sense as a metaphor for knowing, Haraway reclaims vision as a legitimate resource for acquiring knowledge and producing knowledge. Ever since the antiquity, vision has been considered superior to the other senses, and accordingly the preferred instrument through which to attain knowledge (Grosz 1994, 97). Unfortunately the gaze is conceived as non-corporeal and male, and thus excludes female experience (Haraway 1991, 188). By saying that “vision is *always* a power to see” (Haraway 1991, 192 her emphasis) Haraway demonstrates that vision is indeed a way to gain knowledge, but that this is always located and embodied, and thus includes power dynamics as influential in knowledge production.

Feminist standpoint is focused on subverting hierarchical research relationalities (Hoel, forthcoming), and therefore *reflexivity* is key. Reflexivity involves “paying particular attention to self-positioning and workings of power, and attempts to document the various ways in which knowledge production always is a collaborative process – a co-construction – between researcher and participant(s)” (Hoel, forthcoming, 13). When doing hidden observation I had to pay particular attention to the reflexive moves I had to undergo in relation to wearing the abaya and hijab. As the initial narrative of this chapter hints at, I had quite a few anxieties about going into the field wearing the abaya and hijab, and this triggered a distress that could be referred to as what Pillow has identified as a ‘reflexivity of discomfort’ (Pillow 2003, 188). This reflexivity is cautious of the delicate balance of subjectivity and fragileness within the process of knowledge-consumption and production (Hoel, forthcoming, 14). It is a reflexivity that “seeks to know while at the same time situates

this knowing as tenuous” (Pillow 2003, 188). I had a hard time figuring out why I felt so uncomfortable wearing the abaya and hijab. When I carried out the fieldwork I had some deeply troubling encounters while wearing the abaya and hijab, which further perpetuated my discomfort. To be a reflexive researcher and a reflexive writer makes the researcher somewhat vulnerable. The emphasis placed upon self-reflexivity in autoethnographic writing renders this method suitable for feminist projects as autoethnography places emphasis upon the vulnerable observer, a position that sometimes can be both difficult and scary (Ellis & Bochner 2000, 752). Wearing the abaya and hijab I felt exposed on three levels which I am usually not due to privilege, used to consciously having on display: My gender, my religiosity, and my ethnicity. While in the field without the abaya and hijab, I was never aware or conscious of any of these embodied/performed aspects. And I usually never am, when walking around in Oslo, or at school, or work, or whenever. There are of course occasions where I feel as though my gender is decisive for how the world responds to me, but the triad of gender, religion, and race/ethnicity had never occurred as an intersectional challenge for me. Hoel calls attention to the importance of being self-reflexive in relation to the *contextual* scripts of the field, and how mechanisms such as sexual harassment or surveillance can pose challenges for the fieldwork (Hoel, forthcoming, 15). When wearing the abaya and hijab I appeared as a white, Muslim woman, and I felt like all of these three features were burned into my retinas. I will explore this insight further in the analytical section of this thesis. Suffice it to say that this configuration was for me crucial in order to experience the gaze and policing mechanisms that exist. Which bodily reactions do I experience, how do different people respond to me, how do other veiled bodies respond to me (are there any bodily mechanisms initiated between veiled women), and so on, were questions I continued to ask myself when in the field. Although this project does not include any “participants” per se, as I did not recruit a sample – rather I let the location (Grønland torg) determine the participant bodies – reflexivity is of essence as it is my responsibility as a researcher to avoid reinscribing inequality and stereotypes, propagating ‘othering’, and producing stigmatization (see 4.3 ‘Ethical considerations’). Being conscious and aware of the discomfort self-knowledge might bring to the fore is not always easy, but as Pillow puts it:

[The]qualitative research arena would benefit from more “messy” examples, examples that may not always be successful, examples that do not seek a comfortable, transcendent end-point, but leave us in the uncomfortable realities of doing engaged qualitative research. (Pillow 2003, 193).

## **PART 2**

### **4.2 Going into the field**

#### **4.2.1 Setting the scene – Grønland torg**

According to Statistics Norway (henceforth SN), per 1. January 2017 16,8 percent of the Norwegian population are immigrants or are born in Norway to two immigrant parents. The largest group of immigrants is from Poland, followed by Lithuanians, then Swedes, and then Somalis (SN). The largest group of Norwegian-born to immigrant parents is as of 1. January 2017 Pakistanis, followed by Somalis, then Poles. Oslo has the highest percentage of immigrants in Norway, 33% of the population as of January 1. 2017 (SN). In a study from 2011, which explored the ways in which ‘whiteness’ has come to signify a ‘secular’ position and ‘non-whiteness’ a ‘religious’ standpoint, it was estimated that 50 percent of Oslo’s migrant population has a background in a country where Islam is the dominant religion (Andersson & Vassenden 2011, 578). As the percentage of immigrants from these countries has increased since then, it is presumable that so has the percentage of the Muslim population.

Grønland torg is located in the center of Oslo, eastwards from the city center. According to the abovementioned study, 44 percent of the people living in Grønland in 2011 had an immigrant background, the majority being Muslim (Andersson & Vassenden 2011). Since the establishment of Grønland torg in 1864 until the present day, the place has evolved from a very homogenous space to a highly heterogeneous one. In the early 1970s many work immigrants, especially from Pakistan, settled down in Grønland, and during the next forty years Grønland became one of Oslo’s most multicultural districts (Hyrve 2005, 12). It could be argued that Grønland has evolved from being a Christian space to a Muslim space, if taking into account the people inhabiting it.

Grønland received increased attention in 2010 when the so-called ‘morality police debate’ was sparked by the liberal-conservative newspaper *Aftenposten* (see Bangstad 2011). This debate revolved around the newspaper’s “revelation” of how Muslim men conducted strict moral control on the streets of Grønland. The article led to a nationwide debate, and soon stories of young girls and gay people being harassed by the ‘morality police’ flourished. Not to question the validity of these stories, but Grønland has been subject to massive stereotyping

and prejudices in the aftermath of this debate. Arguably, many people conceive Grønland as a ‘ghetto’ space wherein “the Muslims” are taking over. Islamophobic tropes circulating in western imaginaries have been discussed exceedingly (see Abu-Lughod 2002; Ahmed 2011; Mahmood 2011; Puar 2007), and post 9/11 these tropes seemed to gain ground, also in Oslo. After I got a job at Grønland friends and family, especially my parents, have more than once expressed concerns about me going home alone at night. My personal experience is that Grønland is not any different from the rest of Oslo, with regard to my own feeling of safety. I have never felt unsafe walking there alone during evenings, or at least no more than in the rest of Oslo.

The focus area of this study is Grønland torg, located in the heart of Grønland. The market place is shaped like a rectangle, and as the subway entrance is located on the west side of the square it is a busy thoroughfare. The area called “Grønland torg” is usually understood as a bigger space than just this rectangle, but for practical reasons I limited my area to this location. Having one strictly delineated location allowed me to observe the entire field in one sweep, and this location also had suitable seating. Along the south side of the market you find a big MENY store and a Deli de Luca. On the west side you find a flower shop, Floriss, the subway entrance, and the kiosk MIX. Along the north side there is a bus stop and an organized taxicab stand, the main road Grønland, and three restaurants. On the east side of the market you find the road Tøyenbekken, a banking enterprise offering money transfers and mobile services, Somnor, and a fabric store, Lakshmi Tekstiler Malhotra. There are several seating areas in the form of wooden benches assembled in pairs located along the north side of the market place. The square is relatively spartan, the only decoration being an allée of trees located on the north side of the market. In the following I will elaborate on the specifics of my physical locations in the field.

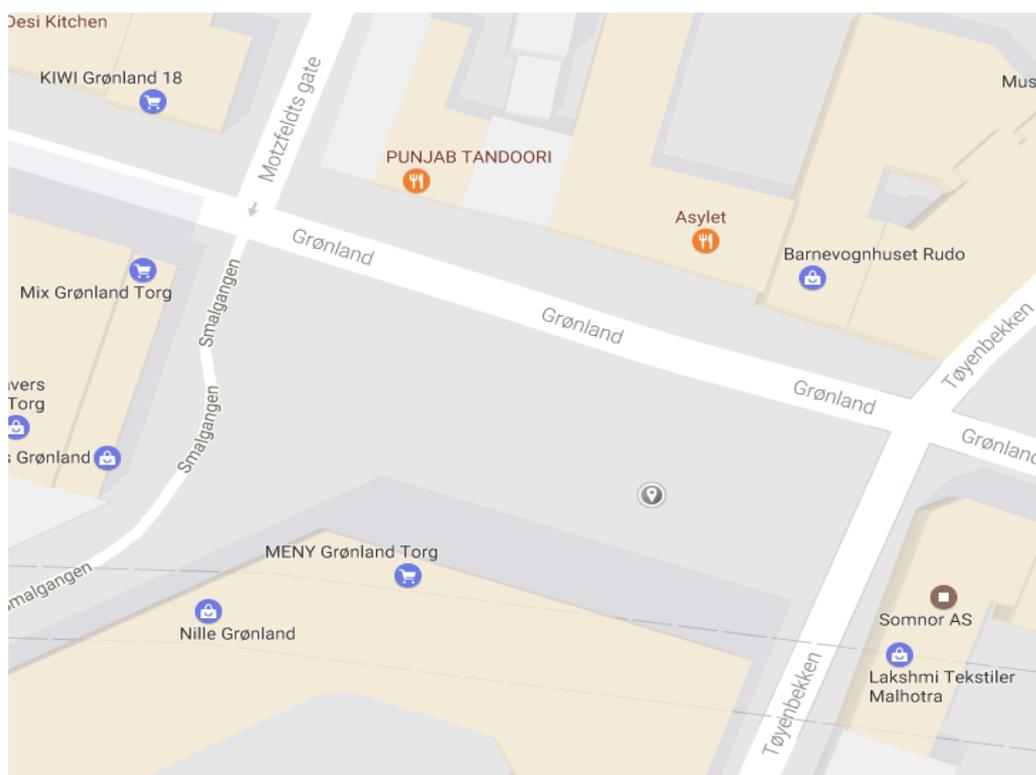


Figure 1: Grønland torg, Google maps

#### 4.2.2 Reflections on locations and time

When planning the fieldwork I had to do some reflections on when and where I was going to do the observation. In order to get a sufficient amount of data, the fieldwork had to be carried out when the market was most crowded and ideally when it was visited by the primary focus group of my research: Muslim veiled women. During the first two weeks of observation in December, I learned that certain times of the day were more suitable for observation than others. If I visited the market too early or too late there would simply not be very many people to observe. In addition I experienced that there were times of the day when there were more veiled women moving through the space. The morning hours between 8-11 am (on weekdays) were crowded by people going to work or school, and in the afternoon between 15-18 pm the same. The latter was also the period in which people went grocery shopping and (presumably) running errands. Naturally the place was significantly less visited during the weekends (in the morning), and visited by very different people in the evenings than those who used the place in the evenings on weekdays. Nevertheless, I decided to do observation at approximately the same times of the day during the weekends as on the weekdays.

To find a suitable place to sit turned out to be a rather easy task. I knew that I had to find a spot with a good view of the market, a spot in which I could sit still for some amount of time, and a spot I felt comfortable in. As the fieldwork was carried out in December and January the rather low temperatures necessitated an additional spot somewhere indoors. As Grønland torg is a familiar place to me I easily selected the outdoor spot: a wood bench located east on the market. From this bench I had a full overview of the square, and as the seat was made of wood and not stone I could sit there for a long time without getting too cold. My indoor spot became the Deli de Luca located south on the square, which offered seating with a view. Although I did not get the same overview as I did from my bench outside, this spot offered a good view of the west north half of the market and the subway entrance. And of course, on the days when the temperature dropped to 15 minus degrees, this spot was indispensable. As some of the narratives show, I sometimes felt uncomfortable just sitting around at Deli de Luca. I contemplated whether or not I should tell the staff working there what I was doing, but as no one ever came up to me and confronted me and the employees varied from day to day, I decided not to.

Another decision I had to make was when and how often I should wear the abaya and hijab. As already mentioned, I had a lot of anxiety going into the field wearing the abaya and hijab. This stress was persistent throughout the entire period of fieldwork, and as a result I was not able to wear the abaya and hijab every time I had planned for it. When wearing the abaya and hijab I also experienced some sense of unrest. Due to this, I moved much more around when wearing the abaya and hijab in the field as opposed to the days when I was not wearing it. When it came to documenting the data from my observations, I considered three options. One way of doing it would be not to take any fieldnotes during my time in the field, and then write it down as soon as I got home. This would allow me to feel relatively free in the field, and it would look less “suspicious” to just sit there and watch as opposed to taking notes. This approach of course has some obvious disadvantages. Not taking notes on the spot could lead to loss of important data, and furthermore, it could make it difficult to remember and represent the observations. As such I discarded this option. Another possibility was to use a recorder and audiotape myself as I observed the people in the field. This would also leave me unfettered and allow me to look as though I was just hanging around in the square. However, the freedom the recorder offered me did not compensate for the embarrassment of talking to myself in public. In 2016/17 it could maybe pass for a hands free mobile phone, but the thought was still not appealing. My third and favored option was fieldnotes. As pointed out by

Lofland et al., researchers in public settings are usually allowed to take fieldnotes rather unnoticed by those being observed (Lofland et al. 2006, 109). This was also my experience in the field as nobody ever came up to me and asked me what I was writing, and a small notebook and a pen did not feel too conspicuous. This meant that I had to transcribe my notes as soon as I got home in order to catch every nuance of my scribbles. The transformation from pen writing to computer screen with the experiences and emotions of the field fresh in my body, allowed me to appreciate dim and fluid shades in the notes and their possible meaning. An interesting observation was how my handwriting changed drastically whenever something evocative happened, which I will explore further in the analytical part of this thesis.

## **Part 3**

### **4.3 Ethical considerations**

As noted by Lofland et al., being a so called “hidden researcher” or “unknown investigator” in an environment that does not require any specific access keys or explicit reasons for hanging around in particular areas, does not pose any insurmountable problems. The problems, however, is aligned with the ethical considerations linked to covert observation (Lofland et al. 2006, 35). Although hidden observation in public places does not pose the same degree of delicate ethical dilemmas as those of undercover research conducted in private settings, all types of hidden observation need to take into account the ethical challenges proposed by the method. In Norway, all qualitative research projects must be approved by NSD (Norwegian Center for Research Data). As such, before entering the field I was required to apply for an authorization. I discussed this with my supervisor, and although we both agreed that my project did not readily stand out as a typical case for NSD, we decided that I should apply anyway just in case. In the application I specified that although I would be collecting data about the veiled women inhabiting the space of Grønland market during the course of one month, these data would not be of a character that could reveal the identity of those observed and described. Identification markers would be gender, ethnicity, religion, and maybe age. Apart from these characterizations, the people described in the study would not be identifiable. I also emphasized the autoethnographic nature of the project, and as such I would not be recruiting a sample: rather the urban place (Grønland torg) determined who the participants were. Further, I explained that I would not communicate with the Muslim women who moved through this space, but undertake observation related to how their bodies moved

and interacted with their surroundings. From this application it became pretty clear that my project did not include any “participants” per se, and accordingly the NSD considered my project as ethically unproblematic and did not require a license by the Personal Data Act §§ 31 and 33. It must be emphasized that when I write “ethically unproblematic”, I mean unproblematic in the sense of data collection and not in the sense of my own overall ethical considerations. In the following I will elaborate on the ethical questions and dilemmas my project presents.

As mentioned before, although hidden observation is generally considered to be ethically problematic, studies carried out in public spaces are dealt with differently. Covert observation in public settings does not pose the same ethical dilemmas as covert observation conducted in semi- or completely private settings, and is usually considered unproblematic (Lofland et al. 2006, 36). However, being committed to feminist principles of reflexivity and accountability (see below), some ethical reflections are required. I have earlier reflected upon the infeasibility of retrieving consent forms from all the people I observed. Further, justification for not soliciting an informed consent is to prevent observer-effects, that is, the obvious advantage of being able to observe people uninterrupted or affected by the presence of a researcher. Indeed, I had no guarantee that people would not notice me where I was sitting taking notes, but as mentioned before I did not feel like people paid any particular attention to me.

In order to understand how a veiled body moves, feels, and is policed, I was required to wear the abaya and hijab myself. Only this way I would be able to observe and experience the phenomenology of the veiled body. This aligns with Ninian Smart’s phenomenological approach to religion, as studying religion requires an ‘empathetic imagination’ and that in order to understand someone you need to “walk a mile in his moccasins [sic]” (Ninian Smart 1988, 6). This embodiment poses a new level of ethical considerations. This aspect of the project triggers contemplation around deception and respect. Pretending to be someone else is in most social settings unacceptable and regarded as dishonest and disrespectful. Pretending to be a Muslim woman with the intent to observe possible reactions and social mechanisms is clearly problematic. Although a veiled body does not equal a religious body, I was fully aware of that most people would probably assume that I was indeed a Muslim. If someone were to confront me about my religiosity, what would my response be? Clearly, I was not comfortable about lying and saying that I was a Muslim. But the alternative, telling them that

I was not a Muslim and doing an observational study, was also not very appealing to me. After consulting with my supervisor I decided that if it would come to a confrontation, I would answer with a polite: “that is none of your business.” In public space we can never know if a certain body is exactly what we interpret it to be. To exaggerate a little, how was I to know that the people I observed was not doing the same thing as me? How was I to know that every veiled body was a religious body, or at least a body that usually would veil in public space? The point is that pretending to be someone you are not in public space, e.g. wearing the abaya and hijab when not being a Muslim, does not pose any significant ethical dilemmas, as you actually do not have to answer to anyone. This is the luxury of public space in Norway; it is not policed to the extent that religion (and gender) is not a private matter. However, I did experience policing due to my appearance when I was wearing the abaya and hijab, and I observed it exercised on others when not wearing the abaya and hijab. I will explore this further in the analytical chapter of this thesis.

When it comes to the method of autoethnography there is always the question of who owns the story. Am I in the right to write everything that I experienced during the fieldwork? Just because it is my story, I experienced it and I am telling it, does that mean that I can print it regardless? Facing these questions, attention must be paid to one of Donna Haraway’s feminist key principles: *accountability* (1988). That is, in short, being answerable for what I see. As a feminist, I am committed to use and produce knowledge that encourages accountability, as I am always situated and thus have to be responsible for my perspective. This means that all views are partial, and I must be accountable for my stories, which stories I choose to tell and how I tell them. As a result, I am more critical of my own perspective, as well as equally responsible for being critical to the scholar interlocutors I engage in my project. It can be argued that accountability is especially important in feminist research inasmuch as these project do not only have an academic aspect, but also a social vision that entails social change (Johnson et al. 2004, 59). To seek knowledge, to produce knowledge, and to be a knower always demand an awareness of accountability as knowledge is never innocent (Solberg 1997, 123).

#### **4.4 Summary**

This chapter has outlined the autoethnographic method employed in the thesis. The chapter initially charted this thesis’ understanding of fieldwork, debated the various aspects of hidden

observation, and engaged the specificities of autoethnographic method. Several feminist commitments regarding methodology and implications for doing embodied research was engaged. Second, the space of Grønland torg was introduced, and I provided some reflections on location and time. Ultimately, I considered the ethical conundrums of this project.

## 5.0 Analysis

In Lefebvre's understanding of the production of space, it is implied that space can never be fully analyzed. As it is continuously produced it can never have an end, or an ultimate analysis. According to Lefebvre, the people inhabiting a space are the producers of that space; hence the finality of space does not exist. The analysis presented in this section is derived from my own embodied perspective, and the narratives that I engage are informed by my presence in the social space I observed. Our bodies are lived social spaces and through my body I lived the space of Grønland torg together with the bodies I observed. Grønland torg is a volatile and shifting space, as all social spaces are, and thus the narratives presented in this thesis display only a brief moment in this particular space. By taking a closer look at what we might first perceive to be insignificant movements, encounters, and behaviors embedded in the narratives, deeper meaning can be found.

The analytical chapter is divided into three sections. The first section engages Grønland torg analyzed through Lefebvre's spatiology, the second section examines the autoethnographer's presence in the narratives, and the third section analyzes the veiled body from a spatio-corporeal feminist perspective. When I conducted the fieldwork, I had a special interest: veiled bodies. Accordingly, I observed these bodies and I described these bodies. A different researcher body would have developed dissimilar, perhaps even contrary, narratives than mine. Also, had I not done parts of the fieldwork while wearing the abaya and hijab, the narratives would of course have been strikingly different.

## 5.1 Grønland torg – perceived, conceived, lived

As presented earlier, Lefebvre's spatial triad is interconnected as the three aspects of space intersect in the production of space. One can never go 'empty-handed' into space, and the conceived and perceived space will influence our lived space as it encompasses the two former dimensions (Soja 1996, 67). In the following, I examine Grønland torg through Lefebvre's categories of conceived, perceived, and lived space.<sup>22</sup>

### 5.1.1 Spatial practice

As noted by Kaia D. M. S. Rønsdal, the only way to analyze the spatial practice of a space, in other words how people *perceive* space, is by asking them (Rønsdal 2016, 126). For the sake of analysis, however, I can make some assumptions. Grønland torg is a multifaceted and chaotic space, and therefore it is probably perceived in numerous of different ways. As the subway-entrance is located here, Grønland torg may be perceived as a thoroughfare for people getting back and forth to work and school. Perceived as a thoroughfare, Grønland torg is made up of bodies moving determinately towards different destinations while looking down at their smartphones, listening to music through ear plugs, some walking in pairs and talking, some walking alone, some smoking, some drinking coffee, some talking on the phone, and some even reading the newspaper while walking. The market could be experienced as a 'hang-out' area, a social site where people meet up to chat and socialize. During my fieldwork, the main group of people using the space in this manner was men with minority backgrounds. These men sat down for sometimes just a few minutes, sometime for several hours. They usually sat in pairs or bigger groups, and chatted, smoked, and used their smartphones. Their bodies rested in this space. As one of the biggest grocery shops on Grønland is located on Grønland torg many people use the space for shopping and then for carrying their grocery bags home. My observations from fieldwork revealed that veiled women constituted a main group of people using the space for this purpose. These veiled women often walked in pairs, and they usually carried impressively heavy bags full of what usually looked like vegetables and fruit. If they walked in pairs they often talked to each

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<sup>22</sup> Again, let me stress that Lefebvre's intention was to create a 'unity theory' in which the dialectic of space was emphasized forasmuch as the three aspects of space are interconnected (Lefebvre 1991, 11). Thus, when analyzing Grønland torg through each of Lefebvre's aspects of space separately, this is done for the purpose of a coherently organized analysis.

other, and if they walked alone many would have ear plugs and presumably listen to something. A few veiled women that I observed in this spatial practice, that is carrying grocery bags, sang or hummed to themselves. Grønland torg is a fairly crowded space, and thus an excellent location for putting up stands exhibiting the work of volunteer organizations. Later in this analytical section (see 5.3.2.1) the spatial practices of a representative from a volunteer organization is specifically analyzed. For me, as an autoethnographer, the square was a place for observation, and taking notes, for sitting down, and for moving around.

As public space is constituted and negotiated by spatial practice, corporeal performances of Muslim embodiment, such as the veiled body, spark debate. However, it is not given that a veiled body is a religious body, or an expression of religious spatial practice. As noted by Knott, “[t]here is nothing intrinsically religious or secular about spatial practice” (Knott 2005, 39). Religious meaning is first given when it is attributed *as* religious by the veiled body or other bodies.<sup>23</sup> A narrative from one of the first days of the fieldwork illustrates this:

*Afternoon 06.12.16 The market is crowded with people hurrying from A to B. I feel more at ease today. The twilight has a comforting effect. In the glow from the traffic lights I feel less exposed. I am the observer now, not the observed. Several Muslim women are walking passed me, many carrying grocery bags. I count for a while. One, two, three. I stop when I reach thirty.*

When I write “several Muslim women” the category ‘Muslim’ is attributed to these women’s veiled bodies by me because of what I read as a religious spatial practice, viz. veiling. This is evident when I in the same narrative go on to describe these same bodies as “women with hijab”:

*Small groups of men with minority background frequently stop in the middle of the square to have a quick chitchat. Most of them are smoking, and no one is carrying grocery bags. Meanwhile, women with hijabs are constantly passing by me with a determined look, carrying heavy bags.*

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<sup>23</sup> I engage this further in section 5.3.3

Even this label, ‘women with hijab’, is not neutral, as hijab is associated with a garment many Muslim women wear. For all I knew, the veiled bodies I observed were no more religious than my veiled body when I was wearing the hijab.<sup>24</sup> As outlined in chapter 3, nothing is inherently religious or non-religious, and thus when we interpret a veiled body as a religious body, that is, a Muslim female body, we inscribe this meaning upon that particular body as a result of the cultural and social context we are situated in. Nevertheless, the veiled body represents an embodied difference from the majority population, and this embodied difference is visible to others.

Spatial practice is “the articulation of social spatiality” (Knott 2005, 40), implying that our actions in space are what constitute this mode of spatiality. Further, “place can be taken as *practiced space*” (Merrifield 1993, 522, his emphasis). This means that our spatial practices can change and transform space, in the same way as space can change or transform spatial practices. This is firmly tied to the shifting and dynamic nature of space; how space is never constant. In the following narrative the spatial practices of two bodies changed space from a calm and unruffled space, to a chaotic and intimidating space:

*Afternoon 06.12.16 I am so cold. I have been sitting outside on the bench for approximately one hour, and my butt doesn't really feel like my butt anymore. I change location to my indoor spot at Deli Deluca, and slowly the liquid in my veins feels like blood again and not ice water. I feel calm. I notice two young men with minority background standing nearby, only a couple of meters and the window separating us. It is clear that they are having a fight. Heavy gesticulation and angry looks. Anxiously, I wriggle at my seat, as one of the men is getting close up in the other one's face. Suddenly, they walk a few meters to the left, even closer to my seating, and I wonder if I misread the situation. But in a blink of an eye, they are back at each other, and before I have time to realize what is happening they are fighting. I immediately freeze. No more than a meter away from me two grown men are pummeling each other. Luckily, before I even grasp the severity of the situation, a Securitas guard is breaking up the brawl. He came out of nowhere. Three veiled women and one un-veiled woman have stopped to watch the commotion, but most people are just passing, staring. I feel sick. And scared. I want to go home, I don't feel safe.*

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<sup>24</sup> I will explore this theme further in section 5.2.

This narrative is a clear-cut example of how space and time cannot be separated (Lefebvre 1991, 175), and how spatial practices can change a space completely just within a few seconds. In the narrative, the space, as I perceived it, was calm and my body felt safe. When the two men started the fight, the space changed dramatically. Suddenly it was an unsafe and dangerous space; a space I no longer wanted to reside in. I got an urge to flee, and as such the spatial practice of the two men changed my spatial practice (but also my lived space). This was how I perceived the space, and as noted in the narrative four women stopped to watch the commotion outside. As the women were even closer to the incident (as I was sitting inside Deli Deluca) it is fair to assume that they did not perceive the situation as threatening as I did. And if the women did perceive the situation in the same manner as I did, viz. dangerous, the fight did not trigger the same reaction in their bodies as it did in mine; I wanted to leave, and I got up and left, while the women stopped and watched the fight. Space is never synchronic or unaffected by events; rather it is fluid and always changing. Obviously, this is not only due to the mode of spatial practice, but it is also closely connected to representations of space, and representational space. For example, the narrative with the fight could readily be analyzed as conceived space, or maybe even better as lived space. For now, I leave it at perceived space so as to make this modality of space as clear as possible.

### **5.1.2 Representations of space**

Grønland torg as representations of space is how we conceive this space, how we imagine or think it. According to Lefebvre, “[t]his is the dominant space in any society” (Lefebvre 1991, 38-9). As shown earlier, Norwegian public space (in this case, Grønland torg) is in many ways imagined and constructed as secular. This could be said to be the dominant representation of space, which controls how public space is conceived: “In these “dominating” spaces of regulatory and “ruly” discourse, these mental spaces, are thus the representations of power and ideology, of control and surveillance” (Soja 1996, 67). Grønland torg presents a rupture in this conceiving of public space as secular, and as such it can be conceived as an open yet closed public space. This means that for many Grønland torg is conceived as an ungraspable and differential space, a space that is something *else* than other public spaces in Oslo. This *else* could be what people conceive as Islamic: Veiled bodies, mosques (although the mosques are not located directly at Grønland torg), calligraphy and the

star and crescent moon, halal meat shops and so on.<sup>25</sup> As presented in the geographical outline of the square in the method chapter of this thesis, Grønland torg encompasses a myriad of such religious (Islamic) symbols. Thus, as representations of space, Grønland torg could be conceived as a Muslim space. As this is on the conceived level of space, people do not have to actually visit Grønland torg and experience the space for themselves. For a conceived space to be produced and sustained it is sufficient that people hear about this space from other people, read about it in the newspapers, watches a documentary about it, and so on. This production of knowledge about the space of Grønland torg is a dialectical one; the Muslim bodies using the space of Grønland torg produce the space and how it is conceived, and the space of Grønland torg produce the bodies using Grønland torg and how these bodies are conceived. Furthermore, if Grønland torg is conceived as a Muslim space, then it is conceived as a myriad of qualities associated with Islam: multicultural, oppressive of women, pious, extreme, enriching, dangerous, and so on. How it is conceived is subjective, but it is also discursively constituted, meaning that overarching power structures, such as media, politicians, the government, educational institutions, and so on, influence and mold how Grønland torg is conceived.

As with spatial practice, Grønland torg as representational space could be conceived in numerous of ways: For Muslim users of the square, it can be thought of as a gateway to the mosques located on Grønland. For the people using the square just as a thoroughfare, it could be thought of in distance to different destinations, or as the location of the subway entrance. For the men using the space as a hangout spot, it could be conceived of as providing good seating, both outdoor (the bench assemblages) and indoor (Deli Deluca). For the veiled women using the space for shopping, it could be conceived as a space where particular commodities are located. The Securitas guards in charge of the areas safety might have an actual drawn map of the square with certain spots marked as particularly suited for surveillance. For me, as an autoethnographer, parts of my conceived understanding of Grønland torg were drawings and maps so as to get an overview of the space. For the public opinion, maybe especially for people who never actually visit Grønland torg, it could be conceived as a dangerous and ghetto infested space in which “the morality police”<sup>26</sup> exercise

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<sup>25</sup> This is of course also found in other public spaces in Oslo, but at Grønland torg one finds a high concentration of these Muslim elements.

<sup>26</sup> In January 2010, influential Norwegian newspaper Aftenposten printed a front page in which Grønland was framed as subject to strict Muslim moral policing. The article’s title was “Moral control on Oslo’s immigrant streets” (Lundgaard & Stokke 2010). This sparked a nationwide public debate that came to be known as “the

social power. Indeed, space as produced on the conceived level is permeated with ideology, knowledge, and power (Knott 2005, 36). When family members and friends (often not residing in Oslo) express concerns about me spending a lot of time at Grønland torg (as my job is located there and for the fieldwork of this thesis) this often stems from a *conceived* understanding of Grønland (torg) as a problem area. This could originate from, among other things, how the media represents Grønland torg, how influential people such as politicians choose to talk about Grønland torg, and how the governmental legislation regarding this space is carried out (such as for example building regulations on mosques). These constitute hegemonic power structures which mold, change, and produce knowledge about the space of Grønland torg. The conceived space Grønland torg is different for different people, and the people who use the space on a regular basis may have very different conceptions of the market than people who never use the space. These different conceptions of space produce different knowledges about Grønland torg, and as such, space is never innocent, but active and operational (Lefebvre 1991, 11, 285). A question that arises is who has power to control how most people conceive Grønland torg, and further how does this affect the perceived and lived space of Grønland torg? Clearly, representations of space is a powerful aspect of space, and accordingly this mode can be used as a means to dominate space.

In section 5.3.1 I analyze Grønland torg as a male dominated space. As noted in the method chapter, this was one of the hypotheses or presumptions I had about this space before I did the fieldwork. Indeed one important source for this supposition was previous experiences and observations on Grønland torg. However, we cannot bypass the apprehension that some of these presumptions also were rooted in my conceived idea of the space of Grønland torg as dominated by men. Indeed, this influenced how I fashioned my body on Grønland torg, how I perceived this space, and how I lived this space. Again, this is an example of how the conceived aspect of space impacts the perceived and lived, and how the three modalities of space intermingle.

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morality police debate” (Moralpolitidebatten). The reports in this debate claimed that social control was being practiced by the so-called “morality police”, Muslim men, “in particular upon immigrant women who defied patriarchal control and gay men who defied Muslim heteronormativity” (Bangstad 2011, 7). Also, see method chapter 4.2.1 for the “morality police debate”.

### 5.1.3 Representational space

Representational space are the directly lived spaces: “These are the spaces that are experienced by “‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’”, “in the practice of their everyday life””(Rønsdal 2016, 128). Following Rønsdal, I want to emphasize this aspect of space, as it is the ambiguous, symbolic, in-between-space, which is ripe for feminist analysis of the veiled body. As will become evident, combined with corporeal feminism and Beauvoir’s feminist phenomenology, the analytical category of lived space is well suited for analyzing veiled bodies in public space as lived space emphasizes lived experience. As such, a spatio-corporeal feminist perspective opens up the modality of lived space so as to investigate the specificity of female veiled embodiment. Grønland torg as lived space exposes the everyday lives of people using this space, people living this space. Analyzed through this mode, the real meaning and significance of this space for people is revealed. Grønland torg is exposed as more than just a crowded market place, more than a thoroughfare, more than a ‘hangout’ spot, more than a place for grocery shopping. It is a social space in which people are living their lives, a space of encounters, struggles, acknowledgment, difference, and revolt. It is in these lived spaces that we can find something *more*, something surprising, and unexpected. In the lived aspect of space the counterintuitive emerges and the designation of roles such as “other” is not a given. Rather, the space becomes a different space through which “difference is tolerated rather than erased” (Rose 1993, 155). If only analyzed through the perceived and conceived level of space, which tends to be the tendency in many studies of space (Rønsdal 2016, 128), much of the complexity of space is lost from the analysis. As lived space, Grønland torg and the veiled bodies using and inhabiting this space are more than “just” a space and bodies in space. Through the level of lived space we can begin to understand what is really going on beyond the surface of Grønland torg.<sup>27</sup> In the following narrative an encounter between two women reveal the space of Grønland torg as something *more*:

**Afternoon 15.12.16** *I’m sitting on my wooden bench. It is a quiet afternoon, nothing much happening. People are moving determinately in different direction. I notice a woman with abaya and hijab stopping in the middle of the square. She has a baby stroller and frenetically tries to fix something under the stroller, maybe it is one of the wheels? Suddenly, as her movements get more intense, her hijab loosens a bit. It slides down to one side, and some of*

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<sup>27</sup> These points will be thoroughly investigated in sections 5.2 and especially 5.3.

*her black curly hair is showing. Meanwhile, the woman doesn't seem to notice and it also looks like she has fixed the problem with her stroller. She stands up and starts looking for something in her pockets. Another un-veiled woman approaches the woman with the stroller. She gently touches her arm, says something, and points to the crooked hijab. The woman with the stroller looks a bit perplex and quickly fixes her hijab, smiles at the other woman, and they exchange a few words before they part.*

Analyzed on the perceived level of space this narrative is not very rich or interesting: Two women meet in public space, a helping remark is made, some words are said, and they part ways. This is what it might have looked like for other people who saw the encounter, and it is reasonable to question whether anyone else really noticed the incident. In order to discover the lived spaces one really has to look closely and open up to the possibility for discovering something unexpected. In the moment when the un-veiled woman touches the veiled woman's arm the space is transformed. In this lived space two bodies acknowledge each other, and although they were seemingly strangers contact was made through touch and verbal utterance. The un-veiled woman's body reached out to the veiled woman's body and assisted her in her situation. These two bodies, one veiled and one un-veiled, could have nothing more in common than that they were both female and in that same public space at the same time, and yet their bodies met in this space and accordingly the space became *theirs*. Seemingly, at a perceived and conceived level of space, their bodies were different; the one body being veiled, the other un-veiled. However, if analyzed as lived space their bodies were different, but not alien. Their difference was affirmed in this lived space. Helpfulness, surprise, and gratitude, was expressed in that space between these two bodies. The un-veiled body saw the veiled body, and the un-veiled body let the veiled body know that she saw her, and vice versa. Analyzed as a lived space, thus, this narrative suddenly is very rich and telling.

If one is to understand someone's lived space, a sharing of that particular space is of essence: "In order to encounter with, understand and hear the other, his or her lived spaces must be understood. Or, not understood per se, but seen and sensed, deemed important and respected as somebody's lived space that has value in itself" (Rønsdal 2016, 129). By using autoethnography as my primary method I attempted to do just this. I breathed the same polluted winter air as the people I observed. I felt the same cold. I heard the same noises. I smelled the same smells. I was scared, happy, comfortable, and anxious in that same space. And, I wore the abaya and hijab and veiled my body. The only way to analyze the policing of

the veiled body and its performance in public space in terms of the analytical mode of lived space, is to be a part of that particular lived space. Veiled embodiment allows for a spatial analysis of the veiled body and female corporeality through the category of lived space. From a phenomenological point this is crucial, as the veiling of my own body allowed me to *feel and live* the veiled body, if only for a brief moment. By reading Lefebvre's spatio-geography through a corporeal feminist lens, complemented by Beauvoir's feminist phenomenology, the analytical category of lived space is revealed as ripe for analysis of veiled female embodiment as something distinct. In lived space, lived experience and the body is emphasized, and as such by means of feminist theory lived space is an analytical key in this project.

#### **5.1.4 Summary**

This section analyzed Grønland torg using Lefebvre's spatial triad. The aspects of perceived, conceived, and lived space were employed as analytical categories so as to open up Grønland torg and the veiled and un-veiled bodies using this space for spatial analysis. I have highlighted the intersectionalities of the three spatial dimensions outlined and employed, and this *mélange* of space is key in the social production of space (Lefebvre 1991, 11). Let me exemplify: On the conceived level of space Grønland torg could represent a number of different things. If one conceives Grønland torg to be a dangerous space, then one would readily interpret the spatial practices on Grønland torg in the same manner, for example the spatial practice of veiling as an expression of extremism. This would in turn create a lived space in which the body of this person who conceived and perceived Grønland torg in this manner would feel unsafe and uncomfortable. In this example it is clear how the three dimensions of space intermingle and how the production of space is a dialectical one between bodies and space.

I have noted that the aspect of lived space is key in analyzing the veiled body in public space. Hence, lived space plays a vital role in section 5.3 in this analytical section that uses a spatio-corporeal feminist perspective to engage and analyze the veiled body. I now turn to examining some of the narratives in which the autoethnographer's presence was found to be particularly interesting.

## 5.2 The autoethnographic subject

In this section I analyze the role and presence of the autoethnographic subject in the narratives. The narratives came about because my body was there to see, hear, smell, feel, and as such the narratives are a reflection of my presence in the field. In the following I engage some of the narratives in which the autoethnographic subject is of particular interest for the analysis of the veiled body in public space. I start out by engaging the exposing nature of the narratives, meaning that I examine the vulnerability embedded in the autoethnographic method. I then engage the implications of sharing a lived space and how my body responded to the bodies I observed. Further, I analyze some of the narratives in which I struggled with wearing the abaya and hijab, followed by a section engaging the harassment and policing I experienced when wearing the abaya and hijab. Finally, the last section explores the autoethnographic (veiled) body as an alien body.

### 5.2.1 Exposing the corporeal self

*Morning 05.12.16 I can feel his gaze. Like needles pinning into my skin. A burning sensation rises inside me, and I get an immediate urge to stand up and walk away. What I am doing? I feel so completely out of place, so visible. I have been sitting on my wooden bench for approximately thirty minutes, and the taxi driver waiting in the cabstand hasn't taken his eyes off me for one second.*

*"Okay, try to relax. Breathe. He probably hasn't stared at you for half an hour. Why would he do that?"*

*I try to unwind my shoulders, focusing on my breath. But now I feel like everyone is staring at me. People passing by. The taxi drivers. The small group of men who has been sitting in the seating area two rows in front of me since I came this morning. The people walking in and out of Meny. The person looking like a drug addict lingering around the big Christmas tree in the center of the market. Am I losing my mind?*

*And then it hits me: How am I ever going to be comfortable enough to wear the hijab when I am this uncomfortable sitting here in my own worn-out puffer jacket?*

This narrative is from the first day of fieldwork. The feeling of being watched was overwhelming. Several of the narratives display my own discomfort when I was in the field,

both with and without the abaya and hijab. This is a significant point. As we have seen, autoethnography places emphasis on the vulnerable observer (Ellis & Bochner 2000, 752), and through the narratives a space of intimacy is brought about. The distance between the reader and the writer is reduced, and the reader can get a sense of the lived space described and the bodies in it. The backlash of this can of course be the heavy emotions such writing can trigger in different readers. I contemplated whether or not I should include the narratives in which I was most obviously harassed in public space, but decided not to cut any of them. As argued by Ellis: “If you want to restrict yourself to pleasurable experiences, much of autoethnography may disappoint or intimidate you” (Ellis & Bochner 1996, 23). Surely, these narratives might trigger bad memories and raw emotions in veiled women who have experienced harassment in public space, or as a matter of fact, in anyone who have had these sorts of experiences. However, it is important to engage in these narratives and display them, as they “make it possible to converse about previously silenced and unspeakable topics and prepare us to appreciate and deal more humanely with the diversity of human experience” (Ellis & Bochner 1996, 25).

I often questioned my own perceptions – like “do I write/think this now just because of that and that? Is this real? Why did I feel like that because of that?” This is evident in several of the narratives. The narratives also display my insecurities, discomfort, fear, excitement, wonder: my *being-in-the-world*. By doing so “[...]the reader gains a sense of the writer as a full human being” (Gergen 2002, 14). Our bodies tell stories irrespective of what we are doing. As such, when doing research, in this case sitting on Grønland torg taking notes, my body told stories. And I think it is important that these stories are communicated.

### **5.2.2 Sharing a lived space**

In many of the narratives my body has a clear reaction and response to other bodies. As elaborated in the previous chapter, the fact that I shared the same space as the bodies I observed is an important point. In addition, my interest in veiled bodies is also crucial. Accordingly, I was “[...]attuned to them such that another person might not see or recognise it as an interesting or particular event” (Rønsdal 2016, 136) and therefore I saw and experienced episodes differently than what a person just passing by and not looking for anything particular would have. The following narrative illustrates these points:

*Afternoon 05.01.17 A woman with abaya and hijab stops just outside Deli Deluca. She is completely covered, except from her face. She's trembling, and obviously she is very cold. She clings to a stroller and discusses something with a man (maybe her husband?). She rubs her arms, as she's jumping up and down to keep warm. They're clearly arguing now, and I can't imagine why they don't sort this out somewhere inside. The cold is numbing. Suddenly she starts to cry, and the man awkwardly tries to put his arm around her, but she shakes him off. I feel so bad, and I immediately think "what did you do to her, you asshole?" I want to go outside and hug her. After a while she wipes her tears and they start to walk toward the subway entrance.*

This episode was indeed visible for everyone passing by and crossing the market, but it is not given that everyone noticed it. For people using Grønland torg only as a thoroughfare in the perceived space of Grønland torg this episode might not even exist. However, if one really looks and dive into the space with one's entire sensory apparatus the market emerges as a lived space being produced through peoples' happiness, sadness, confusion, fear, and so on. In the above narrative my body responded to the woman's body by feeling sad and sympathizing. I felt an urge to go outside and hug her. I wanted to know what had happened to her, and I wanted to make it better for her. Her lived space appeared to me as a result of us sharing the same space and my body being attuned to her body. This corporeal response is possible without talking or knowing what people think, it is triggered by the shared embodied experience of lived space. To push this a bit further, to "[...]become part of what one sees and senses in order to do analysis that makes it plausible to interpret this on the level of lived space" (Rønsdal 2016, 138), my embodiment of the veil was crucial.

### **5.2.3 Wearing the abaya and hijab**

One of the principal arguments in this thesis revolves around the phenomenological implications of the autoethnographer wearing the abaya and hijab. In order to understand how the veiled body moves, feels, and flows, I had to wear the abaya and hijab myself. Not only would this serve the purpose of answering parts of this study's research aim regarding veiled bodies' performances in public space, it would also assist me in engaging the question how policing mechanisms regulate or shape veiled bodies' performance in public space. As noted in the method section of this thesis, I did indeed experience policing due to my appearance when I was wearing the abaya and hijab. I will turn to this shortly, but first I provide an

analysis of some of the narratives in which I struggled to wear the abaya and hijab. I have briefly engaged this anxiety in the method chapter of this thesis, and here I would like to examine the bodily mechanisms triggered by the veiling of my body through the lens of corporeal feminism:

*Afternoon 08.12.16 I feel defeated. So stupid. I'm sitting on my wooden bench, and feel so ashamed of myself. Downright embarrassed. This was the big day. This was the day I was going to wear the abaya and hijab. And I chickened out. I actually made it to the point where I was wearing the abaya and hijab, studying myself in the mirror. And it was too much. I honestly don't know why. I just felt so estranged. So completely disconnected from my own body. Like I was looking at someone who wasn't me, or someone who just pretended to be me (or maybe to be someone else?). It just didn't feel like my body anymore. Finally, after standing in the hallway of my apartment for what felt like forever, I took it off. I folded it neatly, put it back in my closet, and put on my puffer jacket. The walk of shame down to Grønland was unbearable.*

In 1990, Carole Naggar identified the veil as a 'second skin' (Naggar 1990, 4), and in a study from 2013, Heidi Safia Mirza noted how one of her interlocutors referred to her hijab as a 'second skin' and thus a part of her religious gendered embodiment, inseparable from her body (Mirza 2013). In Grosz' examination of Paul Schilder's notion of 'body image', she points to the way in which "the body image is capable of accommodating and incorporating an extremely wide range of objects" (Grosz 1994, 80). These objects, for example dress (in this case the abaya and hijab), "mark the body, its gait, posture, position etc." (Grosz 1994, 80). In this narrative, when I write that *it didn't feel like my body anymore*, the abaya and hijab is clearly not a part of my embodied self. Or is it? The body is transformed. It is now a veiled body; an unfamiliar body. A body I no longer can identify as mine, due to an outer garment. Nevertheless, the abaya and hijab is part of my *situation*, as I will explore shortly. If veiling is understood as an embodied spatial practice, according to Gökariksel this bodily transformation "affects how one's [sic] sees her self and relates to her body as well as how other people see and interact with her" (Gökariksel 2009, 664). The veiling affected the ways in which I performed my body in public space, how I walked, stood, and sat, but also how other people reacted and responded to me. Another narrative, in which I was not veiled, from the day after wearing the abaya and hijab for the first time, illustrates the radical difference in my understanding of my embodied subjectivity:

*Morning 12.12.16 I'm sitting on my wooden bench. It is the weirdest feeling being back at the exact same spot that I was yesterday, but with a completely different body rhythm. I feel relaxed and comfortable. It's my body, me. The feeling of control prevails.*

The feeling of an *unveiled body* as opposed to a *veiled body* became evident when I switched between wearing and not wearing the abaya and hijab. From the two narratives at hand, it is interesting how I perceived my unveiled body to be my modus operandi, my safe and familiar starting point. Contrarily, my veiled body was a strange body, in which the veil felt like an intrusion. Here, it is clear that my embodiment is informed by the spatial triad of perceived, conceived, and lived space, and that the perceived and conceived modality of space inform how I understand my lived space; my veiled body. When I engaged in the spatial practice of veiling I did so knowing that there exist diverging, often negative, conceptions about the veiled body. This knowledge arguably informed my understanding of my lived embodiment of the veiled body, and although these negative conceptions about the veiled body was not my own they influenced how I performed, understood, and experienced the spatial practice of veiling. As outlined in chapter 2, there are two dominant hijab-narratives which inform power relations on a discursive level in perceived and conceived space. Accordingly, as I knew what the spatial practice of veiling might connote on the perceived and conceived level of space, this affected my lived space and my *situation* as a veiled body. But does this signify the veiled body as more inscribed than the unveiled body? According to Grosz, all bodies are always culturally, sexually, and racially specific (Grosz 1994, 19). She argues that no body is natural or ahistorical, as bodies are socially constructed. This production of bodies is subject to overarching power relations, relations that determine their specificity as cultural, sexual, and racial bodies. As I have argued earlier, Grosz's endeavor to create a corporeal feminism is successful as long as one takes into account the material situation each body is in. Bodies are produced but, equally important, they are also inscribed with meaning through bodily practice in space. The spatial practice of veiling is not more marked, or more inscribed than the spatial practice of not veiling. Following Grosz, the veiled body is a specific cultural and sexual embodiment of subjectivity, but whether or not this is an embodiment of gendered religiosity depends upon that particular subject's *situation*. When I put on the abaya and hijab, the abaya and hijab became part of my being-in-the-world, part of my lived experience. This did not imply a religious embodiment, forasmuch as the veil does not connote any spiritual or

transcendent meaning for me. However, it did imply a radical change in my understanding of my embodied situation, which is evident from the following narrative:

*Afternoon 07.01.17 I'm struggling to get the hijab to fit properly. I dread going out. My fingers are trembling, making it almost impossible to attach the headdress with the diamond-pin. I'm never getting used to this.*

*"One step at the time. Come on, you can do this. What are you afraid of?"*  
*The inner monologue is on repeat. I shiver, although it's not that cold today.*

The anxiety described in this narrative grew bigger as I regularly experienced harassment and policing when I was wearing the abaya and hijab. It is to these narratives I now shall turn.

#### **5.2.4 Harassment and policing**

As noted earlier, the Norwegian hijab debate has been characterized by polarizing stands and episodes in which women have been discriminated or harassed because of their dress has frequently been part of public discussion. This was the context in which I conducted the fieldwork, and I was aware of these dynamics. However, I was not prepared for the obvious public harassment I experienced when I wore the abaya and hijab. This narrative is from the first day that I wore the abaya and hijab:

*Afternoon 11.12.16 I finally made it. I'm walking down town, towards Grønland, wearing the abaya and hijab. Relief and joy coupled with anxiety and apprehension. As I approach Stortorget I notice two middle-aged white women walking towards me. They stare in an obvious manner, and it is clear who they are talking about. As I pass by them, one of the women utters in a loud, clear voice: "Poor thing [stakkars]". I'm shocked. But not angry (as I was later, when I reflected upon the incident in retrospect). I get an instant urge to tear off my hijab and yell back at them: "Hey, I'm doing a project! This is fieldwork!" But I don't, I just keep on walking. I can't shake the feeling that the woman wanted me to hear her.*

*A few minutes later I arrive at Grønland torg. I sit on my bench. My pulse is so high, it feels like my heart is showing outside my jacket. I'm trembling, but it's not the cold. I feel so watched. It's hard sitting still, I need to move. As I walk across the square, two white women*

*are coming towards me. Both staring. As I get close enough to hear what they are saying, one of them says plainly: "Terrifying [skremmende]". I need to go home. Now! As I am walking home I have the constant feeling of being watched and followed. I'm so scared. The long abaya is making an unfamiliar sound as I am walking, and it makes me persistently look over my shoulder.*

This is one of my longer narratives, and there are many elements that I found of interest in these two paragraphs. I have chosen to present this narrative in its full length, and not in separate and more tangible pieces in order for the reader to get a sense of the chaos, confusion, and fear that flows through this narrative. What is striking in all the narratives in which people commented on my appearance is the sense of entitlement people expressed when they talked *about me to me*. In Norway, it has been argued that there is a common understanding among people that in public space 'silence is gold' (Longva 2003). People often cross the street to avoid walking passed people, and people rarely confront strangers on the street. In this narrative, two different women who did not know me spoke *about me to me* in public space. From my position, it was obvious that their comments were meant for me; the comments were intended for me to hear. Another interesting aspect of this narrative is found in the slight nuances of the utterances, and how the women interpreted my veiled body differently. The first woman who confronted me ("*Poor thing [stakkars]*") and the last ("*Terrifying [skremmende]*") could be analyzed as expressions of the two hijab-narratives outlined earlier in chapter 2. Whereas the first woman expresses compassion and empathy and thus the hijab-as-oppressive-narrative, the other woman's outburst epitomizes the hijab-as-resistance-narrative by virtue of her articulated fear. However, the word "Terrifying" could also be read in another way; she thinks it is scary that now even Norwegian women convert to Islam, 'creeping Islamization' has happened before her very eyes, and as such the utterance could be interpreted as hijab-as-oppressive-narrative. By virtue of their comments the women presented an opinion of my veiled body (or even the veiled body) as a wrong body; a body cultivated in a manner that was contrary to or opposed something in their perception of what is a suitable body in public space. On the level of perceived space, they reacted negatively to my spatial practice of veiling. Regardless of which hijab-narrative the two women attributed to my appearance, they both felt entitled to talk to me. It did not matter really whether I was wearing the abaya and hijab due to subjugation or extremism, my veiled body was a production of embodied difference, and as such my body became a site for discussion and condemnation. This is a clear example of how space is never innocent, and how even though

we might conceive of space as homogenous and passive, it is really fragmented and active (Lefebvre 1991, 285). Space can thus, by virtue of taking on meaning through the veiled body – and conversely, the place of the veiled body takes on meaning through the space (Merrifield 1993, 520) – be used as a means to dominate and exercise power. By understanding space in this manner, as permeated with power, the harassment experienced in the narrative above can be read as an embodiment of how various discourses come together in a nexus of Islamophobia, racism, and sexism and create the gendered discourse of hijabophobia (Hamzeh 2011, 484). The people who commented on my veiled body saw my veiled body as something “wrong” and maybe even counter to the appropriate or preferred social production of space.<sup>28</sup>

Below the narrative about the two women harassing me, I had added these two sentences:

*The notes from this day were very hard to read, especially the last paragraph. My hand was so shaky – and in addition some of the notes were taken while walking – that my writing was almost illegible.*

It came to the point that I didn't recognize my own handwriting. As an autoethnographer, I went into the field with my whole sensory orchestra, letting each feeling that floated through me affect the field notes. This did not, however, only affect the connotation of the written words, that is, the linguistic signifier or the decoding of signs into meaning; it affected the actual material process of writing by hand. This means that there was a correlation between the meaning of the words “*I'm so scared*” and the materialization of these words on paper. My experienced fear was channeled through my body and represented on paper through my handwriting. Writing is often associated with something cognitive or intellectual; the written word is a manifestation or even an extension of the mind's intellect and superiority. However, what this narrative shows is that the written word, as an embodiment of experience and lived reality, is something corporeal. The body becomes the very “stuff” of subjectivity” (Grosz 1994, xi). This pinpoints how the cognitive and corporeal coincide and joins in the production of meaning. Moreover, this illustrates that I was on the move when these field notes were taken. The urge to move was initiated by how other bodies in that space interpreted me and

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<sup>28</sup> I will explore this last point further in section 5.3.2.1.

reacted to my spatial practice, and furthermore how that molded my understanding of embodied self in that particular situation. For Beauvoir, a woman defines herself “through the way in which she makes something of what the world makes of her” (Moi 2005, 72), and as I have noted, Lefebvre emphasized the body’s corporeal ability to produce space (1991, 195). The lived space in which I wore the abaya and hijab was produced by the bodies of the women who harassed me as a space in which my veiled body felt unsafe, abnormal, and unwelcome. However, me being there also produced the space, and the next narrative illustrates these points quite poignantly:

*Afternoon 07.01.17 Just as I pass the street Grønland, moving towards my bench, a middle-aged blond woman walks by me. Just as she passes, our eyes locks and she says: “Seriously [alvorlig talt]”. I keep on walking, repeating my mantra: “One step at the time. Come on, you can do this. What are you afraid of?”*

It is evident that my body, my veiled body, remembered the incidents of harassment as I experienced increased signs of anxiety each time I put on the abaya and hijab. In this particular narrative I kept on asking myself “what are you afraid of?” implying a certain fear of something. The space of Grønland torg, and the route down town, was an unsafe and unwelcome space for my veiled body, as opposed to my un-veiled body. Yet, my body was also a part of this space, and as such my body was partaking in the social production of this space. No bodies, or even things or symbols, are passive entities in space (Knott 2005, 21), rather they are equally participating in the production of social space. As outlined in the theory chapter, space takes on meaning through place and vice versa, and thus the place of the veiled body and the space of Grønland torg mutually informed and inscribed each other with meaning (see Merrifield 1993, 520). When I experienced Grønland torg as an unsafe space, this was a result of a dialectical and mutual production of this space.

### **5.2.5 The Alien Body**

As we have seen, a veiled body is of course no more or less inscribed than an un-veiled body. But the experience of wearing the abaya and hijab – and how I perceived my veiled body and how I perceived other people to perceive me – was quite another story.

***Morning 16.12.16** The anonymity I feel is a relief. When wearing the abaya and hijab I feel so marked. Exposed. When wearing my old puffer jacket and cotton beanie I feel invisible, safe, unmarked. Then I'm just one body of many. With the abaya and hijab and my white skin I'm an alien body. Then I can't hide. The abaya and hijab for me is the opposite of covering up and blending in. It is a flashing sign.*

When reading the narratives it became clear to me that my experience of alienation was an intersectional one. Never before in my life had I been so aware of my ethnicity and my religious belief or lack thereof, and never had I had to face the uncomfortable public spatial visibility of the nexus gender, ethnicity, and religion. By analyzing the narratives in which this was especially apparent, it is possible to some extent to “reveal the process of ‘being and becoming’ a gendered, raced and classed subject of discourse” (Mirza 2013, 307). I knew I wasn't a Muslim veiled woman, and I knew that my visible markers, such as skin color and eye color, likely was decoded to my surroundings as ethnic Norwegian and maybe as a Muslim convert. This is an assumption that was embodied in the following narrative:

***Afternoon 11.12.16** As I cross Lybekkergata, facing Gunerious, about four minutes away from Grønland torg, a woman and a man with a stroller come towards me. I'm just a few meters away, and the woman looks at me with something resembling disbelief before she says, in loud voice, to the man: “Is she Norwegian? She is Norwegian!” Although she is talking to the man, she is looking at me, addressing me. Once again I feel dazed. Why would she talk to me like that? Like she can say whatever to me?*

My veiled white, young, and female body made me alien; for myself and for other people. Here the notion of embodied intersectionality can successfully be employed. Embodied intersectionality “seeks to theorise the complexities of race, gender, class and other social divisions not only as lived realities [...] but interrogates how this experience is affectively mediated by the body and lived through Muslim female subjectivity” (Mirza 2013, 307). Although I am not a Muslim, the notion is still operational. As I was constructed by other bodies and understood my own veiled body as an other, this had an impact on my lived experience and how I fashioned my body (as elaborated in section 5.2.3). All the people I came to consciously observe and who saw me the days I was wearing the abaya and hijab did not say anything to me. The people who commented on my appearance, my veiled body,

constituted a minority in the fieldnotes.<sup>29</sup> I cannot know what most people thought of me, as this is not accessible information for me. However, through my presence in that same space as those who spoke to me and those who did not say anything, I could grasp and interpret my own bodily reactions on other bodies' responses to me. At times I found myself questioning my own bodily experiences, which is expressed in this narrative:

*Afternoon 20.12.16 One thing that often hits me when I wear the abaya and hijab is the gaze from other veiled women. Until now, I haven't seen anyone with the abaya and hijab who has visual Norwegian ethnic looks, and I often feel like other veiled women gives me suggestive looks. I don't now how to interpret this, or if it's even real.*

An interesting aspect with this narrative is the gaze experienced from other veiled bodies. I did not fit in among the majority of un-veiled bodies, as my body was indeed veiled. Nevertheless, I did not fit in among the minority of veiled bodies either. Or at least, my lived experience was that of alienation from both veiled and un-veiled bodies. All of this led me to have a constant high pulse, an overwhelming urge to flee, and unquestionably restricting my own mobility range. According to Beauvoir "a woman defines herself through the way she lives her embodied situation in the world" (Moi 2005, 72). My spatial practices clearly affected my situation. My potentials and projects – such as when I wanted to sit still on my bench but was urged to move by the space I produced and who produced me – was changed, stalled, or molded by virtue of the spatial and temporal limits my body was bound up with (Lefebvre 1991, 40, 194, 203). How people perceived and conceived my veiled body affected my lived space and how I employed my veiled body in that space. The intersection of my body as white, young, and female engaging in the spatial practice of veiling triggered a reaction in other people's bodies, such as the women described in the narratives who harassed me. This could be interpreted as if the intersectionality that my body represented did not coincide with their conception of a veiled body in public space in Norway, and that the spatial practices of my body created a scary, pitiful, or surprising lived space for them. And the production of this lived space was, seemingly, unwanted.

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<sup>29</sup> It should be noted that the people who commented on my appearance were, by one exception, white women who appeared secular.

### 5.2.6 Summary

This section has engaged the presence of the autoethnographic subject in the narratives. The narratives have been analyzed through the lens of the autoethnographic subject, and I have drawn some insights from spatial theory and spatio-corporeal feminist theory. In autoethnographic method my body constitutes the tool through which I analyze my data, a method which has proved itself to be fruitful in light of my findings in this chapter, especially as it pertains to the analytical level of lived space and how this is enabled through the lens of the autoethnographer, and so as to investigate how the veiled body is policed and harassed in public space. The presence of the autoethnographic subject in the narratives has been analyzed both with and without the abaya and hijab, and episodes of harassment and policing has been examined by way of how these mechanisms produce a certain type of space. This produced lived space is a product of how the veiled body is perceived and conceived by both the veiled body herself, and by other veiled and un-veiled bodies. Many of the narratives engaged in this section display how this produced lived space is an un-welcome space for veiled bodies, or leastways what I perceived as an un-welcome space for *my* veiled body.

### 5.3 Veiled bodies analyzed from a spatio-corporeal feminist perspective

Grønland torg is at first sight a crowded market place. People passing by, people hanging out by the benches, people arguing, people shopping, cars honking, lights blinking, the smells of spicy food, exhaust, garbage, and cigarette smoke blended together; complete turmoil. In order to analyze Grønland torg, the space needed to be opened up for spatial analysis. The two foregoing sections have attempted to do this, and this enables me in this section to explore how veiled bodies can be analyzed from a spatio-corporeal feminist perspective in the space of Grønland torg. I will demonstrate how a feminist appropriation of the analytical category of lived space is suited for analysis of the veiled body and veiled female embodiment. I begin by investigating Grønland torg as a male dominated space. Next, I explore possible ruptures in the gender structure of this space, and how this could be understood through spatio-corporeal feminist theory. Following this, some selected narratives are analyzed so as to interrogate the power relations embedded in the space of Grønland torg and how power is exercised. Finally, the last section explores to what extent we can talk about the veiled body as a religious space.

#### 5.3.1 A male dominated space

Before the fieldwork began I had made some presumptions about the gender dynamics of Grønland torg based upon earlier experience with the place. I conceived it to be a rather male dominated space, and this became evident when I started the fieldwork. Two narratives from early in the fieldwork tell the story of a gendered space:

*Afternoon 06.12.16 So far, I haven't seen any men with minority backgrounds with children. The veiled women seem to walk alone or in pairs, and always walking. Moving towards a destination. While the men seem to have monopoly on the seating assemblages.*

*Afternoon 12.12.16 I have been sitting on my wooden bench for an hour or so, observing a group of men with minority backgrounds sitting in the seating assemblages a few meters in front of me. As usual they talk and smoke, clear-cut 'hanging-out'. They were already there when I arrived, so I don't know how long they've been sitting there. But for the hour I've been observing them they haven't done very much interesting. And they are men. Only men.*

At this early point in the fieldwork I didn't know if these observations would be persistent or lay the foundation for an argument of a gendered politics of inclusion or exclusion, and as noted in the previous section I continuously questioned my own observations. However, as the fieldwork was carried out the observations seemed to be consistent. The narrative displays the constant movement of the veiled bodies I observed – an iterative pattern, in which the market place seemed to be a place to rest for male bodies and a place for movement or action for female veiled bodies. Whenever the space was used as a resting place for female veiled bodies it was utilized in a very different manner:

*Afternoon 13.01.17 I'm sitting at Deli. Two Somali (?) men are sitting next to me, discussing. A group of men has stopped at the center of the market, and a woman with abaya and hijab is standing next to them. It is obvious that she is a part of the group, standing just a meter or so away from them, but she doesn't take part in the conversation, just stares right in front of her. After approximately ten minutes the group breaks up, and the woman joins one of the men walking towards the subway. Why am I writing this, what do I imply? I feel strange. Bizarrely aware of my meta perspective.*

This narrative pinpoints my fear of reading particular gender dynamics into my observations. On the perceived level of space it looked like the woman was excluded, e.g. she was standing beside the men, she was not talking, the men did not include her by talking with her or make gestures towards her and so on. From my embodied perspective I saw a space produced by men, and thus produced as a male space. According to Lefebvre, space is a social product and it is relational (Elden 2004, 184) and therefore the men using Grønland torg produced a male dominated space in which the veiled female body did not have, want, or get a place. Or maybe more precisely, the veiled body did not have a central place, or a place that I, from my embodied situation, interpreted as a central place. If space is relational, then the relations in this encounter was dominated and controlled by maleness. Again, this is how I perceived it, and it is fair to assume that this perception came about because of my situation: my conceived understanding of Grønland torg as male dominated and my conceived belief that spaces are gendered and sometimes excludes women. This influenced my interpretation of the encounter narrated above. However, social relations are spatially embodied by the people who use space (Lefebvre 1991, 404) and accordingly the spatial relations produced by the bodies of the men and the woman is a collectivistic project. In order to produce social relations between bodies in space there has to be two or more bodies involved. For all I knew the veiled woman had

absolutely no interest in taking part in that conversation. Maybe she was daydreaming. Maybe she did not care what they had to say. Maybe she did not like the men and therefore did not want to engage in conversation with them. It is interesting, and honestly a bit embarrassing, that my first interpretation of this situation is that she is passive and that the men are active. That the men are actively excluding her and that she had to passively wait, when it just as well could have been the other way around; that she actively chose not to take part in the conversation. Nevertheless, I interpreted this situation as exclusionary spatial practice on the men's part, and as such, from my embodied perspective, this provoked me. This is not to say that I was upset by this observation because I am a woman, this would contradict Beauvoir's concept of the body as a situation. Rather, I was upset by this episode because of the woman I am; because of my body as situation. As space continuously produce me and makes me the woman I am, I constantly make myself the woman I am (Moi 2005, 74) and this influence how I interpreted the narrative.

Apparently, male bodies and female veiled bodies utilize the space of Grønland torg quite differently. This was manifest in the various ways in which certain bodies took ownership of the seating facilities of the market and how these bodies was either resting or moving:

*Morning 08.01.17 Due to the mild weather the market is once again reclaimed by its male inhabitants. Groups of two to five men/boys are gathering around the benches. As usual they chitchat with each other, smoke, and talk on their cellphones. Two veiled women have stopped in the center of the market, both carrying grocery bags. They look like friends, smiling, exchanging some phrases. They switch smoothly between Norwegian and what I think is Somali. I can hear the phrase insha'Allah over and over. They stand a few meters away from the men and although there are several benches available they don't make any gesture as to sit down. After a couple of minutes they say goodbye, without touching or hugging, before they walk away in different directions.*

The spatial practice of the two veiled bodies in this narrative is inconsistent from how the space usually was used by veiled bodies (as a thoroughfare) in that they stopped moving and appropriated the space as a space for an encounter. By engaging in the spatial practice of stopping, greeting, chatting, they transformed the space from a space of transportation to a space of socialization. The *lived space* produced by these two veiled bodies is carved out as a

space for female veiled bodies. I will explore this trace of rupture in the gender structure in the next section.

The opening line of the above narrative is telling: “Due to the mild weather the market is *once again reclaimed by its male inhabitants*”. As I switched between sitting outside on my bench and inside at Deli Deluca, I became aware how the space of my indoor spot also was gendered. One of the reasons for why the spot inside Deli Deluca was deemed suitable as an observational location was the obvious advantage of shelter on cold and/or rainy days. My body is in no way unique in requiring necessities such as warmth and cover, and therefore other bodies also occupied the space inside Deli Deluca on the days when I sat there. After a while I became aware of what seemed to be a gender oscillation from outside the market place to inside Deli Deluca, that is, a movement of the gender dynamic from outside to inside:

***Morning 04.01.17** I’m sitting on the wooden bench, it’s a windy morning. I’m wearing the abaya and hijab. After only twenty minutes or so I decide to go inside Deli Deluca. It hits me that this also is a highly male dominated space, just like the market place. I have never seen any veiled women hanging around here, but there is always an assemblage of two-three men (with ethnic minority background) hanging around inside the kiosk.*

Another narrative displays the same tendency:

***Afternoon 11.01.17** Another day of heavy rain. I’m prepared and the big umbrella keeps me dry until I’m safely inside Deli Deluca. Usually the market is packed with people in the afternoon, but the rain is draining the square. A group of men with ethnic minority background has gathered around the entrance. I recognize some of them. They often hang around here or outside when the weather allows it.*

Although the men in the narratives never explicitly do or say anything to the women, they control space by their very presence in the space. Space is permeated by power, and by claiming the space of Grønland torg the men partake in this power by normalizing the space as male. Following Lefebvre, hegemony does not leave space untouched (Lefebvre 1991, 11) and as such space can be used to exclude. It is not possible for me to know whether or not any of the veiled bodies I observed actually wanted to sit down and use the space as a hangout spot, but what is clear is that *they did not use it for this purpose*. Although there are several

explanations for why they did not appropriate the space with the spatial practice of sitting down, one of the reasons would arguably be the men inhabiting the space and dominating the seating areas.

From my observations it is clear that the space of Grønland torg is a male dominated space. Seemingly, female veiled bodies were excluded from the space due to men exercising power.<sup>30</sup> However, is there something more to this space? Is it possible to imagine Grønland torg in a different manner? Maybe there is something more going on here, something that can be revealed through feminist spatio-corporeal analysis? It is to this query I now shall turn, and investigate the possibilities embedded in the lived spaces of Grønland torg.

### **5.3.2 Rupturing the gender structure – the veil as lived space**

When I was wearing the abaya and hijab my veiled body ruptured the gender structure both outside on the bench and inside at Deli Deluca. Just by being in that space the dynamics changed; my resting female veiled body's presence was an embodiment of alternative and different space. But what about the other veiled bodies? In order to open up the space of Grønland torg as something *more* it is useful to take another look at one of the narratives I engaged in the previous section and analyze it from a feminist spatio-corporeal perspective (I here once again recount the narrative in full):

*Morning 08.01.17 Due to the mild weather the market is once again reclaimed by its male inhabitants. Groups of two to five men/boys are gathering around the benches. As usual they chitchat with each other, smoke, and talk on their cellphones. Two veiled women have stopped in the center of the market, both carrying grocery bags. They look like friends, smiling, exchanging some phrases. They switch smoothly between Norwegian and what I think is Somali. I can hear the phrase insha'Allah over and over. They stand a few meters away from the men and although there are several benches available they don't make any gestures as to sit down. After a couple of minutes they say goodbye, without touching or hugging, before they walk away in different directions.*

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<sup>30</sup> It should be noted that the market was indeed almost exclusively used by men with minority background, and that the few women I observed who sat down on the benches was not veiled.

As a conceived space, how Grønland torg is thought, it could be conceived of as male dominated and subject to moral policing. The spatial practice of the men in this narrative sitting at the benches, occupying and controlling the space and the two veiled women standing, not taking a seat, could perpetuate this conception. If we stop the analysis here, at the level of perceived and conceived space, this is what we find. However, as argued by Rønsdal “one must look for transgressions and surprises, listen for the murmurs” (Rønsdal 2016, 130). What happens if we look to the lived space of this narrative? The female veiled bodies constitute a gendered rupture simply by stopping, claiming the space. Their bodies produce that space as not only a space for male bodies, but also for female veiled bodies. As such their female veiled bodies take the space into control. Their embodied presence in that space signify a rupture of the maleness of that space, and by engaging in some of the same spatial practices as the men usually do in that space (such as talking and socializing) they mark both the space and these particular actions in that space as gender inclusive. As Lefebvre puts it: “Bodies themselves generate spaces, which are produced by and for their gestures” (Lefebvre 1991, 216). In a narrative from another day the gender structure was again ruptured in an even more striking manner:

***Morning 19.12.16** NRC [The Norwegian Refugee Council] is not here today, but in their spot are three young women selling homemade cakes. Two wearing the abaya and hijab, one with big, pink hair. A group of men with ethnic minority background have sat down on the benches in front of me. The women have started to walk around the square, shouting: “Help the kids in Aleppo! Buy cakes”. Without hesitation, they address the men on the benches, clearly asking if they want to buy cakes. The men smile, but shake their heads. They exchange some phrases and the women move away, towards two available benches right next to the subway entrance. They put down their equipment (cakes, posters, boxes) and continue to shout and stop people passing by. I notice the men looking at them, but their faces are hard to read.*

In this narrative the women explicitly speak to the men, and later on both male bodies and female veiled bodies occupy the seating area. The lived space of Grønland torg produced by these three female bodies (where two bodies were veiled) was no longer a space dominated by maleness. Or at least, in the new lived space both male and female bodies engaged in the same spatial practice: sitting down. Further, the (veiled) female bodies appropriated the space in a different manner than the male bodies. The (veiled) female bodies did indeed rest, but simultaneously they shouted and exhibited their charity cause. Their produced lived space

was claimed by the female bodies and it was a different space than that of the male bodies. The women in this narrative were significantly younger than many of the men usually sitting on the benches, and also than many of the veiled women who regularly rushed through the market. The next narrative also displays an age difference and a possible generational aspect:

***Morning 15.01.17** After sitting for an hour or so outside on my bench, I move to my indoor spot at Deli. Two young women with the abaya and hijab have walked passed me two times. I noticed them the first time because I felt like they were getting unwanted attention from an older man. The second time around I can't help but noticing how chic they look. Both with the hijab and long abaya in matching, beige colors, figure fitting trench coats, leather bags, and high-heeled boots. They carry themselves with a striking and appealing confidence. Like they're floating over the pavement. They stop just in front of the subway entrance, looking around. Two other young women, both wearing the abaya and hijab, approach them. The "grace" from earlier is long gone, and they throw themselves into each others arms. I smile to myself. They chat with excitement and big gestures for a few minutes, before they part.*

An interesting aspect of this narrative is the prevalence of touching. In the narrative about the two veiled women greeting and chatting, I specifically noticed the lack of touching: "After a couple of minutes they say goodbye, without touching or hugging, before they walk away in different directions." In the narrative above, however, the four veiled women throw themselves into each other's arms without any hesitation. In addition to using the space as a hangout spot, the space is used for corporeal affection. This narrative, in addition to the narrative with the three young women selling cake, could be interpreted as an expression of young, veiled women producing a differently lived space than that produced and occupied by the men of Grønland torg. Through the presence of their veiled bodies in this space, and their spatial practices, they produce a lived space in which the veiled body has its legitimate place. As it is produced by their bodies, their veiled female bodies, and conversely as this space produce their bodies, their veiled female bodies has a natural place in this produced lived space. This production is done without verbal utterances; it is manifested in the embodied presence of veiled bodies in this space. In this way, we can interpret the veiled body as Lefebvre's lived space, as it is a "terrain of struggle on the way to realizing ourselves as 'total persons' and bringing into being alternative imaginations of space" (Simonsen 2005, 7). In this lived space the veiled bodies produce a "social space as not only a space of 'no', but also as a space of 'yes', of affirmation of life" (Simonsen 2005, 4). Simultaneously as these veiled

bodies produces themselves in space, they produce that particular space, and thus the space is transformed.

In lived space we discover the unexpected and surprising (Rønsdal 2016, 130). What at first sight appears as something familiar or something we can categorize due to previous experience, can emerge as something more. Through my analysis of these narratives I show how bodies can create and transform spaces by virtue of the dialectic nature of space and bodies. Before ending this section I want to take a look at a narrative in which the conceived space of a veiled body was transformed due to spatial practice, which ultimately created a lived space in which the veiled body became something new:

*Afternoon 12.01.17 I'm at Deli. The market is crowded. The ambivalent January weather is today relatively warm. The regular groups of men have again reclaimed the space. Two women pass by my spot; one wearing a floor-length hijab, the other a black niqab and shiny, silver buffalo boots. I can't help but smile. The contrast is striking. The platform-shoes must be at least ten centimeters, if not more, and the woman has no problem wearing them. Her steps are firm and confident. I probably would have looked like a drunken giraffe. She lifts her arm to fix something under her veil, and reveal a long, black glove. The last thing I see before they disappear around the corner on the opposite side of the market is a glistening blink from her silver boots.*

In this narrative I perceive the niqabi veiled body as something surprising. The silver buffalo boots do not coincide with what is usually associated with a woman wearing the niqab. This particular female embodiment represented a rupture in the conceived space of the veiled body, maybe especially because her spatial practice of veiling included facial veil and gloves. In the conceived space the niqabi veiled body can be associated with a wide range of qualities: modesty, piety, religious extremism, women's oppression, anti-liberalism and so on. Although these qualities connote different meaning they all do not fit well with a pair of silver buffalo boots. The conceived space of these boots reads bold fashion, exposure, secular, modern and so on. When these two conceived spaces were joined in the female embodiment of the veiled niqabi through her spatial practice of veiling and wearing silver buffalo boots, a new and unexpected space was created. This lived space of the veiled body is exposed as something more than what the conceived and perceived modality of space can offer. This veiled body is a new situation, although I obviously cannot say anything about her lived

experience. The situation of this niqabi veiled woman is certainly bound up by the discursively manifest power relations embedded in the conceived space of the veiled body, as outlined above, but what is interesting is that this did not hamper her realization of this unexpected embodiment. All humans are bound up by their situation (Moi 2005, 65), and this situation is necessarily informed by corporeal, temporal, and spatial limits (Lefebvre 1991, 40, 194, 203). In her corporal spatio-temporal situation – female veiled body on Grønland torg in current day Oslo, and all that this implies on the perceived and conceived level of space – this niqabi veiled woman created a new space; a space in which a niqab and a pair of silver buffalo boots is a legit and normal combination. *For her.*

In the next section I will explore further how the veiled body in space can negotiate power in space so as to create a *lived space*. I do this by analyzing some narratives in which the veiled body was inscribed with a specific meaning that influenced the way in which spatial practice was manifested and how that affected the lived space of Grønland torg.

### **5.3.2.1 The veiled body as the other body or a no-body**

Bodies are produced in space simultaneously as bodies produce space. This reciprocal production process is endless and constitutive for how different bodies enact in space. But what happens when a certain group of people is defined as *other* by another group of people, how does this change the dynamics of space? Is it always given who is other in space? The following narrative speaks of a possible inscription on a certain type of body, which ultimately led to exclusion:

**Morning 12.12.16** *I notice a man standing at the corner of Deli Deluca. He has some kind of a stand. Is he selling something? Trying to enlist people? I can't see from where I am sitting. He is very energetic and jolly, he almost physically grabs people walking by. After a while I notice that none of the veiled women get stopped. I have been sitting on my bench for almost an hour, and by now it has become rather conspicuous that he stops everyone, except from veiled women. I move to Deli Deluca, and now I have ringside seat to the stand. The stand is for NRC [Norwegian Refugee Council]. Why isn't he stopping any veiled women? It's getting worse by the minute. I feel so annoyed! He almost grabs everybody else, but all veiled women get to pass unnoticed [...] It's not like the veiled women don't take any initiative. Nobody takes the initiative, they just get dragged in by the "volunteer man". Although I am super*

*annoyed by his exclusionary behavior, I can't help but admiring his efforts. He uses his entire body in his fierce approaches towards the passersby. Except towards veiled women.*

What is interesting in this narrative is how the NRC-representative exclusively approached non-veiled bodies. Regardless of his intentions or motives for doing so, the corporeal spatial appearance of the veiled body did not trigger the same reaction in his body as un-veiled bodies. The intersection of veil, female, and maybe ethnic minority was for some reason interpreted as not suited for this particular activity, that is, getting stopped, engage in conversation, donating money, joining the NRC and so on. It is un-known whether the NRC-representative's reluctance to stop veiled women was founded in the actual physical contact between the NRC-representative and the people he stopped (as he regularly grabbed them), in the verbal interaction after contact had been made, or if there were some other reasons for why veiled bodies was deemed inappropriate for the NRC-representative's agenda. It could of course be a coincidence, maybe he stopped veiled women at certain times of the day when I did not watch him, and surely there is no way to now if this was conscious or unconscious behavior from his side. Nevertheless, as I watched him for several hours, for several days, he never once stopped a veiled female body. This spatial performance affected me deeply, and in the following narrative I took action:

***Morning 14.12.16** I've brought my abaya and hijab to Grønland today. I've planned an experiment. NRC-guy has repeatedly tried to stop me when I haven't worn the abaya and hijab, so today I want to see whether he will try to stop me while I'm wearing the abaya and hijab. I change at work and walk over to the market. NRC is not there. I'm a bit disappointed, but since it's still early I'm hoping they will show up later. I sit for a while at my outdoor bench, but as usual when I'm wearing the abaya and hijab I feel restless and decide to take a stroll around the market. When I return to my bench, the NRC is back. Bingo. I can feel my pulse rising, I feel excited. As casually as I possibly can I walk towards the NRC-stand, and when I pass by no one (a new guy has joined the first NRC-guy today) makes a move to stop me. I'm feeling a bit sick. I sit down at Deli Deluca, determined to try one more time. Half an hour later I repeat the experiment. Nothing. I'm so angry now. I want to yell. Instead I walk back to work, change back to my own clothes and walk home. Disappointed.*

One of the reasons for why I decided to do this so-called "experiment" is linked to my constant introspection and questioning of my own perceptions. Also, by engaging in the

embodied spatial practice of veiling I was able to feel the rejection and indifference. Or at least, this is how I experienced it – others might be relieved not to be stopped or grabbed for that matter. I could not know what the veiled women were thinking or what the NRC-representative was thinking, but as argued by Rønsdal: “my body knows something about their bodies” (Rønsdal 2016, 144). As a female veiled body I was put partly in the same situation as the veiled women who did not get stopped by the NRC-representative. Although lived experience and various intersectional categories separate my body from the other veiled bodies that I observed, we were still in the same situation by being female, veiled, and sharing that space at that particular time. And we all were excluded. As such, my body knew something about their bodies. Though I could not know how the other veiled bodies experienced this I could feel how my own body responded to this exclusion. A question that arises is why I was so disappointed and angry. What was it about this situation that I reacted to? Was it the feeling of alienation? Or the feeling of being prejudged? The feeling of being *other*? Or maybe it was the feeling of not being recognized at all as a body inhabiting a space. To the NRC-representative I was a non-person, or at least this is how I perceived it, and thus I became invisible. One can argue that this is one of the reasons for veiling; not to attract unwanted attention. So then the question is: what is unwanted attention? Is being recognized as a body in public space unwanted attention? I perceived the behavior from the NRC-representative as extremely exclusionary, and that he deemed a veiled body as a body not worthy of conversation. As such, for me, my veiled body became an embodiment of otherness and non-presence. Whenever I put on the abaya and hijab after this episode, these feelings stuck in my body:

*Afternoon 20.12.16 I'm walking down town towards Grønland. I'm wearing the abaya and hijab. Just after Stortorvet I pass Amnesty International and Red Cross stands. They don't stop me. Maybe I'm getting paranoid, but it doesn't feel like a coincidence.*

In the narratives analyzed in this section someone is deciding who is *other* or a *no-body* by spatial practices such as exclusion. On the perceived level of space it could seem like this was the case: the NRC-representative could consider the veiled women to be *other* or a *no-body*, or his body reacted to their veiled bodies as *other* or a *no-body* and as such did not bother to engage these women in conversation. In the conceived space, the veiled body, as we have seen, could be thought as “oppressed”, “extreme”, “non-liberal”, “disadvantaged”, and other qualities that do not coincide with what majority society wants or in this case what the NRC-

representative looked for in the people he stopped. Here, the veiled body represents a rupture in normative space. On this level, the veiled body could be conceived as not contributing to the production of space in a manner that is desirable for the majority society. By virtue of these politics of majority society, the veiled body could be conceived as *other*. But what about the aspect of lived space? As we have seen, Lefebvre understood the body to be active and resilient, and through his notion of the ‘right to difference’ he emphasized the body as “a site of resistance and active struggle” (Simonsen 2005, 11). To Lefebvre “abstract space is power, and what suppresses differences, and it is only through revolt that these differences can be recovered” (Rønsdal 2016, 116). In the aspect of lived space the ‘right to difference’ is realized as a differential field. Within this lived space it is not given who is *other*, as everyone can be *other*. As outlined in the theory chapter, lived spaces are spaces-in-between, and thus spaces in which difference can be affirmed and encouraged. In the lived space the veiled body is no longer the *other*, as power is negotiated differently in lived spaces. This means that the body is indeed an active producer of space, and what Lefebvre considered to be “the site of resistance within the discourse of Power in space” (Elden 2004, 189). I will demonstrate these points through an analysis of the following narrative, in which space was transformed from a space of exclusion to a shared space of affirmation:

***Morning 13.12.16*** *The morning is cold and clear. I’m not wearing the abaya and hijab. During the night a film of ice has glassed the ground, making it an extreme sport exercise to move across the market. I’m at my regular spot outside, and the NRC-stand has moved from the corner of Deli Deluca to the front of the subway entrance. Probably a more strategic location. A woman wearing the abaya and hijab loses control of her balance in the middle of the square and falls down. I choke the urge to laugh, as it looks pretty painful. But the woman bursts out laughing. I can’t help but smile. A man with minority background who has been hanging around the benches along with three other men rushes to the scene and helps her on her feet. They both smile and exchange some words before they part. It’s rather amusing looking at people moving across the square. They look like penguins, moving in a jerkily and stiff manner, waddling from side to side.*

Grønland torg can be interpreted as a male dominated space, and in the above narrative this is seemingly the case: four men hanging around the benches, a veiled woman on her way through this space. But in the moment when she falls down and the man hurries to help her and lifts her up, and they establish eye contact and smile at each other, the space is changed.

The veiled female body and the male body acknowledge the other's body through touch, and the space is produced as theirs. She is not *other*, and he is not *other*. For Beauvoir, the idea of an absolute other is contradictory as “the self-other relation is essentially – necessarily – reciprocal: I see an other only if I see a living body which is able to see me as a body. “There is no presence of an other unless the other is also present for himself”” (quoted in Heinämaa 2003, 125). It is not given who is other in this narrative, as it never is in lived space. And maybe no-body is other in this narrative. The veiled female body reaches out to the male body by sharing the same space. She does not call out for help verbally, and he does not hesitate or think twice. His body responds instinctively to her body as their bodies are attuned to each other's needs just by being in that same space at the same time. In the narrative one body responds to an-other body, and by virtue of this these two bodies create a lived space in which none of them needs to be defined as *other*. It is a lived space, which “embraces places and their symbolic value, conflicting rhythms of everyday life, feminine/masculine and so on” (Simonsen 2005 7). The female veiled embodiment and the male embodiment is seemingly in some sort of conflict in this space, as the space of Grønland torg is arguably gendered by virtue of how female and male bodies utilize and inhabit the space differently. Nevertheless, in the moment when the veiled female body needed help the male body responded to her body immediately. This is not to frame her as some sort of ‘damsel in distress’ – maybe she did not need help at all, she was after all laughing. The point is that this is a dialectical enterprise; their female and male embodiment did not matter in this lived space. What mattered was that their bodies responded to each other and that they as a result shared a lived space. Obviously, the implications of gendered corporality must not be underestimated or trivialized and played down. Our bodies, whether they are female, male, or anything else, affect our situation and our grasp on space and the world and how the world perceives us. However, in lived space difference is affirmed (Rose 1993, 155; Wrede 2015,11; Simonsen 2005, 11), and as such in lived space no body is *other* or a *no-body* as these spaces are defined by the bodies who use these spaces.

### **5.3.3 The veiled body – a religious space?**

One of the aims of this study is to explore how or if religiosity is performed in public space – and how or if this is mediated through the veiled body. A body can never be religious or non-religious in itself; rather religiosity is something that can be mediated through a body. This means that through the embodied subject's spatial practices we can interpret a body as a

religious body. If we assert that the body is an embodiment of space, a question remains: is a veiled body a *religious* space? Had I observed veiled bodies in the ritual spatial practice of Islamic prayer, I would have had a clear indication of the religiosity of those bodies (but not a definite answer!). Spatial practices commonly understood as religious, or as linked to a specific religious tradition, can provide evidence for the religiosity of the performing body. But what about visual markers? As we know, symbols are ambiguous. For example, the cross can be interpreted as a symbol of Christian affinity, but in popular culture it can also be a sign of fashion. Although all signs and symbols are pregnant with meaning and marked by history, they can be appropriated and used for different purposes. Surely, there is a question of who has definition power and whether a symbol can be too charged for re-appropriation, and there is an ongoing debate on whether or not certain symbols should be reclaimed. Nevertheless, a symbol or visual marker does not speak in plain language, and thus the veil and the veiled body cannot be read as ultimately religious (or Islamic for that matter). Indeed we must appreciate the complexity of the veil as more than simply a symbol or a sign for various religious bodies as: “explaining the veil as merely a sign, then, tells only part of the story and misses how dress and religion affect the whole body” (Gökariksel 2009, 666). However, certain information about the religious status of a body, veiled or not, is only accessible through interviews. In the two following narratives verbal utterances became an important tool in the bodies mediation of religion:<sup>31</sup>

***Morning 08.01.17** Due to the mild weather the market is once again reclaimed by its male inhabitants. Groups of two to five men/boys are gathering around the benches. As usual they chitchat with each other, smoke, and talk on their cellphones. Two veiled women have stopped in the center of the market, both carrying grocery bags. They look like friends, smiling, exchanging some phrases. They switch smoothly between Norwegian and what I think is Somali. I can hear the phrase insha’Allah over and over. They stand a few meters away from the men and although there are several benches available they don’t make any gestures as to sit down. After a couple of minutes they say goodbye, without touching or hugging, before they walk away in different directions.*

***Afternoon 12.01.17** The language barrier annoys me. The groups of men sitting at Deli usually have heated conversations, but almost never in Norwegian. I can’t help but wonder*

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<sup>31</sup> The first narrative has been analyzed earlier for other purposes and I recount the narrative here in full.

*what they're talking about. The phrase insha'Allah is regularly repeated, but other than that I don't understand much.*

According to Islamic teachings, Allah is omniscient, and this is often articulated in the phrase *insha'Allah*. Translated as “if Allah wills”, the phrase has nearly become a figure of speech, but beyond semantics this expression carries a deeper theological and epistemological meaning (Esposito 2003, 138). In the phrase lay metaphysical understandings of predestination, but also mundane meaning such as “hopefully” or “if all goes well”. The bodily articulation of this phrase could be interpreted as a corporeal mediation of religion. However, *insha'Allah* is an Arabic expression, and as there are many Arabic speaking Christians we cannot know if the bodies who articulated this phrase are Muslims. Also, it could just be a way people speak. The Arabic language is ripe with religiously charged words and phrases, but this does not mean that the people who use this language are religious or are implying something religious. What is interesting is that this phrase was articulated in a seemingly secular public space. If interpreted as a religious saying, the utterance of *insha'Allah* presents a rupture in this normative space. Interpreted as a religious saying, the spatial practice of talking ruptures the conceived space as secular and creates a lived space in which religion has its place in public space in Oslo. Drawing a parallel back to the discussion of symbols, this fracture in space can occur whenever a body interprets another body as religious. This is illustrated in the following narrative:

***Morning 10.01.17*** *It's raining. I didn't bring an umbrella, and my abaya and hijab is dripping wet. I arrive soaked and cold on Grønland, but at least no one has said anything to me. Yet. I sit down at Deli, the market is empty. Everyone's taking cover from the rain. A man who looks ethnic Norwegian stops right next to me, not sitting down. I give him a quick look, and he stares back. Clearly, he has no intention of sitting down. He just stands there. A sweat drop emerges at the top of my neck and runs down my spine. I shiver. I stare straight ahead of me. The market still empty. Should I say something? Hello, mister. Please stop staring?*

*After what seems like forever, in real time probably no more than a minute or two, he says: “I don't understand why anyone would want to be a Muslim”. Before I get a chance to respond or react, he leaves. I breathe a sigh of relief. I think that's it for today. No one talks to me on my way home. I see nothing but a uniform flow of silent umbrellas.*

This narrative is interesting on many levels. One remark that should be made about this narrative is my choice of words: “[...] *but at least no one has said anything to me. Yet.*” The experiences of harassment and comments had led me to starting to anticipate being confronted. My veiled body as lived space was produced as a space in which I anticipated being confronted due to previous experiences when engaging in the spatial practice of veiling. This had now become part of my embodied situation as a veiled body, and thereby this situation, as part of my lived experience, affected how I fashioned my veiled body in public space and how I lived that space. Interpreted in a spatio-corporal feminist perspective, my lived experience as a veiled body in public space produced a certain type of space in which I expected to be confronted, simultaneously as the space I inhabited produced my veiled body as a body that could be confronted. My veiled body’s corporeal ability to produce space (Lefebvre 1991, 195), in addition to the productive nature of space, informed my situation so that my lived experience of that space, Grønland torg, appeared to me as hostile. This is not to say that this space was hostile per se for veiled bodies, but that it was hostile for *my* veiled body in *my* embodied situation.

The comment: “*I don’t understand why anyone would want to be a Muslim*” can be interpreted in many different directions, one obvious understanding of the remark being that the man saw my veiled body as a religious body. One can of course ask if this episode is representative or typical, given the oddness of saying something to a stranger and then just leave. As noted, it is not considered to be common behavior in Norwegian public space to talk to strangers (see section 5.2.4). However, whenever I was veiled this codex of social conduct in public space seemed to change radically. Public space in Norway, abstract space, or normative space, can be understood as somewhat secular. If the veiled body is interpreted as a religious body, then it can be read as a material symbol of Islam’s presence in public space and thus a rupture in normative space. Naturally, if one holds the conceived space of Grønland torg to be religious, or even Muslim, then my veiled body (interpreted as a religious/Muslim body) does not represent a rupture in the conceived space. Rather, my veiled body, as spatial practice, becomes a confirmation of Grønland torg conceived as religious/Muslim space. One analysis of the above narrative is that my veiled body was indeed interpreted as a religious body. Further, it was interpreted as a Muslim body. Here, Islamic visibility got a corporeal, visual, and spatial dimension. My embodied presence in that space resulted in the man’s reading of my body as an Islamic body, and by his negated style of expression (*I don’t understand*) he communicated my veiled body as undesirable for that

space. For the man in the narrative, then, whether or not he conceived Grønland torg to be a Muslim space, my spatial practice of veiling triggered a response in his body (staring, verbal utterance, and then movement), which created a lived space in which his body responded negatively to my body (or at least, I perceived his response as negative). I cannot know if this lived space was experienced as unpleasant, outrageous, scary, or something else for him, but I can know that this lived space was a space in which his body did not longer want to stay in. The lived space for me was ambiguous. On the one hand his spatial practice, which I interpreted as rude and unkind, was not a good experience for me. However, I perceived his spatial practice to be highly uncomfortable, and thus his leaving was a welcome outcome of this episode for me. As noted in the narrative I felt relieved by him leaving. Clearly, the lived space created by my veiled body inside Deli Deluca and his body responding to my body in the way he did, was an uncomfortable space for me, and therefore when his body moved out from that space my veiled body could relax.

#### **5.3.4 Summary**

This chapter has analyzed the veiled body through the theoretical framework of spatio-corporeal feminist theory. The benefit of using spatio-corporeal feminist perspective in the analysis of veiled bodies in public space has been to illuminate the specificity of female veiled embodiment, and further to engage in the gendered nature of space. Through a feminist reading of Lefebvre's spatial triad the modality of lived space has proven to be a fruitful analytical category for analyzing the veiled body in public space by virtue of this category's attentiveness to lived experience and the body. The lens of corporeal feminism and Beauvoir's phenomenological perspective has revealed the analytical category of lived space as ripe for feminist analysis of veiled female embodiment. The space of Grønland torg has been investigated as a male dominated space, and possible destabilizations of this gender structure have been suggested. The veiled body has been analyzed as a lived space, as the other and a no-body, and as a religious space. By means of Lefebvre's category of lived space and feminist corporeal theory the veiled body in public space has been interpreted as an active producer of space.

## 6.0 Conclusions

The main objective of this thesis was to explore the various ways in which bodies and space intersect, in particular Muslim female veiled bodies and my own embodiment. Furthermore, the thesis set out to investigate the various ways in which veiled bodies are enacted and policed in public space.

The theoretical platform of the thesis has been spatial theory and feminist theory. The thesis has aimed at developing a framework through which these theories meaningfully interact so as to engage a spatio-corporeal feminist perspective. This theoretical merging has been fruitful as it illuminates the specificities of female veiled embodiment.

The method that has been employed is autoethnography. This method has proven to be suitable for this project as it emphasizes the vulnerable researcher and encourages evocative writing. Furthermore, autoethnography has allowed me to explore the narratives by means of my entire body and sensory apparatus. Accordingly, this enfolded method sits well with the overarching feminist perspective of the thesis.

I have argued that Lefebvre's spatio-corporeality is a suitable analytical tool for analyzing the various ways in which the different modalities of space and bodies in space intersect. Through three analytical sections I have explored the research question I set out initially. First, I opened up Grønland torg for spatial analysis by investigating the space through the portal of Lefebvre's three levels of space. I revealed how the perceived, conceived, and lived modalities of space intermingle, and how this produces the social space of Grønland torg. Furthermore, I argued that the bodies inhabiting Grønland torg constantly and continuously contribute to the social production of space. Second, I demonstrated how the presence of the autoethnographic subject in the narratives can reveal new aspects of the lived space of Grønland torg. By means of the phenomenological approach, veiling my own body, I explored how my veiled body in public space was subject to policing and harassment, and I have showed how this produce a certain type of space. I have demonstrated how the embodied situation of the researcher informs the research. Third, I set out to analyze veiled bodies through a spatio-corporeal feminist perspective. I argued that a feminist appropriation of the analytical category of lived space presents a fruitful tool for analyzing female veiled bodies in public space. Furthermore, I argued that Grønland torg can be perceived and conceived as a space dominated by

maleness, and that by investigating Grønland torg as a lived space we can find ruptures in this gender dynamic. I have demonstrated that in lived space power is negotiated differently, and thus who is other in lived space is not pre-given. Finally, I explored to what extent we can talk about a veiled body as a religious body, and I have argued that no spatial practices are inherently religious or non-religious.

One of the purposes of this thesis has been to explore and challenge theory through concrete cases. By appropriating Henri Lefebvre's spatiology, especially his mode of lived space, I have demonstrated how subjectivity is embodied and produced by and in space. The modality of lived space was particularly suited for feminist appropriation as this mode emphasizes lived experience and the body. Furthermore, as Lefebvre's spatial project is in many ways a re-materialization of space, a feminist appropriation of his theories has foregrounded the ways in which space is utilized and lived by material bodies.

This thesis invites to further research on female veiled bodies in public space. By combining the theoretical framework and methodology developed in this thesis with semi-structured in-depth interviews, for example, studies could bring to the fore the various ways in which Muslim veiled women in Norway experience body politics in public space. Also, as the thesis has argued and showed, theoretical and personal writing is not only possible and enriching for the analysis: it is a fundamental feminist commitment.

By reading *The Second Sex* I have discovered that to write theory in a way that does not neglect the personal entails, among other things, finding a voice of one's own and a way to write that acknowledges the presence of others. It also entails being able to stake one's own experience (subjectivity) in one's general claims, and to do so in a way that addresses the subject's freedom. (Moi 2005, 245)

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