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Competitive Activism

An investigation of the activists and volunteers in the 2015 refugee crisis

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I Abstract

Competitive Activism: An investigation of the activists and volunteers in the 2015 refugee crisis

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This thesis investigates the situation of the activists and volunteers working with refugees in the context of the 2015 refugee crisis in Sweden.

By employing ethnographic methods, especially qualitative interviews with the individuals engaged in helping the refugees, I argue that different activist groups having the same aim are exhibiting a competitive behavior. I illustrate that the role of activist is one that is performed, resulting in the construction of a standard in activism. Furthermore, by using an intersectional angle, I also suggest that competitiveness is the result of overlapping social identities.

What is often expressed by activists as something “coming from within” when defining activism, is a precise set of behaviors and qualities one needs to exhibit in order to earn the title of an ideal activist. The standard of an ideal activist has implications on the effectiveness of the activists’ work, as well as on their well-being; additionally, it leads to further competitiveness with other activists, as well as a tendency of branding in order to achieve the before-mentioned standard through a set of marketing-like practices.

In light of these findings, I suggest that activists should reflexively employ an intersectional approach in their own work, resulting in a better dialogue with the actors involved in humanitarian aid, as well as a greater awareness of the reality behind the activist standard the community is self constructing.

Keywords: activism; volunteering; competition; performativity; intersectionality; identity; refugee crisis; humanitarian aid; cultural analysis

II Abstract (Swedish/ Svenska)

Konkurrerande aktivism: en undersökning av aktivisterna och volontärerna under flyktingkrisen 2015

Cristina Ghita

I den här uppsatsen undersöks aktivisternas och volontärernas situation i deras arbete med flyktingarna under flyktingkrisen 2015 i Sverige.

Genom att använda etnografiska metoder, i synnerhet kvalitativa intervjuer med individer engagerade i att hjälpa flyktingarna, argumenterar jag för att olika aktivistgrupper, trots att de har samma mål, uppvisar ett konkurrerande beteende. Genom en intersektionell vinkel, föreslår jag att konkurrensen är ett resultat av överlappande sociala identiteter. Dessutom hävdar jag att aktivistrollen är performativ, vilket resulterar i att det skapas en standard inom aktivism.

Det som oftast uttrycks av aktivister som något som ”kommer inifrån” när de definierar aktivism, är egentligen en specifik uppsättning av beteenden och egenskaper som de bör uppvisa för att framstå som en ”ideal aktivist”. Föreställningen om den ideala aktivisten får implikationer på effektiviteten av aktivisternas arbete, liksom på deras hälsa. Dessutom leder detta till ytterligare konkurrens med andra aktivister, samt till tendensen att de, genom ett antal marknadsförningslika handlingar, bygger sitt eget varumärke för att leva upp till idealet.

Med tanke på dessa resultat, föreslår jag att aktivister bör använda en intersektionell synvinkel på det egna arbetet, vilket skulle resultera i en bättre dialog mellan aktörerna som är involverade i humanitär hjälp, samt en större medvetenhet om verkligheten bakom aktiviststandarden som de själva skapar.

Nyckelord: aktivism; frivilligarbete; konkurrens; performativitet; intersektionalitet; identitet; flyktingkris, humanitär hjälp; kulturanalys

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Kristianstad, 2015-05-19

Cristina Ghita

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background on the refugee crisis

In 2015, as a result of war and persecution in their native countries, a large number of people chose to flee to Europe in the search for a safer and more stable life. The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) reported in a press release dated December 2015 that a million people have fled to Europe only that year, the number of people crossing the Mediterranean rising from 5,500 in January to over 221,000 in October (UNCHR, 2015). The large number of people searching for refuge has led the European countries having to handle the situation at the best of their abilities in a short time, leading to what has been since named by the media as *the European refugee crisis*[i]. A large number of refugees started arriving in Sweden by September 2015, mostly through Denmark via the Öresund Bridge, which connects the two countries. As a result, the first city on Swedish soil that the refugees were received in was Malmö, in the municipality of Scania (Skåne). The Swedish Migration Board's statistics (Migrationsverket, 2016) show that in September 2015 the total amount of asylum seekers in Sweden had more than doubled than the previous month and continued in such a manner until the end of the year; from September to December 2015, a number of 114,101 individuals applied for asylum (from the total of 162,877 that year).

The city of Malmö had to receive and provide shelter to the large number of refugees arriving every day. As a result, many private individuals had arrived to the Malmö central station (Malmö C) in order to assist the refugees and organize the help needed. Although the municipality assisted the refugees, the first months starting from late August were overwhelming, as the number of refugees was large and the needs accordingly. The private individuals soon started organizing and collecting the needed items, such as warm clothes, food and cooking equipment, hygiene products, etc.

During the unfolding refugee crisis I was undergoing an internship, together with three university colleagues, at the Regionmuseet Kristianstad (Kristianstad Regional Museum) as a cultural analyst. In the light of the crisis, our group's task became that of documenting the work of activists and volunteers that came together to help the refugees. During our fieldwork, we have found that soon after the large number of refugees started to arrive in Malmö, two major aid groups were formed: one comprised by private individuals, and one comprised in its majority by members of a social and cultural center.

The first group, Refugees Welcome to Malmö, was formed ad-hoc by private individuals who tried to organize help by collecting money, buying transportation tickets, collecting donations of needed items, cooking, coordinating the volunteers, etc. The group was initially started on the social media platform Facebook and continued communicating through its public channel through which they could write what items were needed and what was not considered an emergency, as well as through a sign-up page where volunteers could state what day they could work in helping at Malmö C and at what times. Together, the group members took shifts in running a wardrobe where donated clothes were being distributed to the refugees according to their needs. There was also a functioning kitchen at the start of the crisis, as well as volunteers who would transport the refugees to the Migration Board's office in the city (in order to register and apply for asylum). The organization of the group was a large scale one, as the number of activists for human rights and volunteers working together was, according to their Facebook group count in January 2016, of 10,099 members.

The second group, Kontrapunkt, was formed by members of an already established social and cultural center that was politically engaged, placing itself on the left wing political scene. The group, having a functioning building in the city for their normal activities, chose to temporarily dedicate itself to the cause of helping the refugees and as a result decided to use their available locations as accommodation for the refugees, a wardrobe to distribute donated clothes, a kitchen where warm food was prepared, showers, etc. The two groups functioned with the aim of immediately and to the best of their abilities helping the refugees with everything needed by collecting donations, distributing them, providing shelter and food, medical and legal advice, but also by organizing events and protests in which the issue of the refugees' rights was to be raised.

The Kristianstad Regional Museum saw the unfolding refugee crisis as a historical moment, and our group's task became that of providing ethnographic insights and documentation about the coordination of aid by activists. Therefore, during the months of September-December we had gathered ethnographic data on activists and volunteers helping the refugees in Skåne, especially in the city of Malmö, and delivered the promised insights to the Museum regarding the work of the involved activist groups. Although I worked in a group aiming to deliver ethnographic insights about the activists and volunteers to a museum institution, I personally became interested in one particular theme that was arising, namely the way the interviewed activists and volunteers were referring to each other in a competitive manner. Moreover, many activists within the same organization seemed to be working increasingly more, leading to further competitive practices with their peers. It initially seemed contradictory why such competition was exhibited by the interviewees since both groups had, despite one being political and the other not, the same goal, that of providing immediate help to the newly arrived refugees.

1.2 Aim and Research Question

Although the definition of activism as "the use of vigorous campaigning to bring about political or social change" ("activism", 2010) implies an understanding that activists compete against groups of people whose views or actions they oppose (for example governments, political parties, institutions, etc.), it is not this kind of competition that is of interest in the current thesis. Instead, I choose to focus on the investigation of the activists' competitiveness *with each other* in the context of the 2015 refugee crisis. Even if the media often portrays activists working as a homogenous group, it is valuable to ponder over the fact that humanitarian organizations are formed by multiple individuals with different sets of values. Therefore, the dynamics within the groups working to help the refugees arriving in Malmö are worthy of investigation, especially since the members of the groups exhibited competitive behavior through their statements and actions. The competition was even more puzzling since the groups involved saw their aim to be identical (helping to receive the refugees), and shared the same activist cause (to fight for the refugees' rights).

By investigating the reasons behind the competition between activists with the same aim, I am looking to understand how this is performed, why it is happening, and what are the consequences of this situation. Answering these questions can then help point out the implications of the competitiveness on the activists' goals and formulate ways in which their work can be more effective in the future.

1.3 Thesis Overview

In the following section I will present previous research on the subject of activism and competition. Although I find that not much has been written on the subject of the activists and volunteers in the refugee crisis, as the focus tends to be on the refugees themselves, I will show my position within this field by referring to similar or closely related previously published material that I find relevant.

The third section is dedicated to the theoretical frameworks that I chose to use in my analysis. I will, therefore, explain my understanding of Intersectional Theory, Performativity, and the Myth Theory, as well as my intended way of using them in connection to my material.

The fourth section focuses on the way fieldwork was done, what material is used in the thesis and the methods by which it was collected and analyzed. This section includes ethical considerations in working with the subject of the refugee crisis.

The fifth section illustrates first how activism is defined within the activist community. I then discuss my first finding, namely that there is a standard in activism that activists and volunteers adhere to and try to reach in their work, as well as in the way they describe their role. Furthermore, I argue that the ideal activist standard is something that activists perform in order to be perceived as being a positive example within their group.

The sixth section analyses the competitive behavior of activists. Here I investigate the competitiveness between different activist organizations, as well as the competitive behavior of activists and volunteer within the same group. I further discuss the link between activism and belonging, as well as marketing-like practices of activists that employ such methods as a result of the emerging competition.

The seventh section problematizes the implications of the competitive behavior of activists, arguing that this competitiveness affects the activist' work and well-being. Furthermore, I show ways in which my current findings can be applied in a constructive manner in the future work of activists.

In the eighth section, I conclude my main points by underlining the main findings and reflecting on the limitations and strengths of the study. Lastly, I suggest possible further directions for research on the subject of activism that I consider to be relevant and interesting to the field.

2. Previous Research

Several authors have tackled the subject of competitiveness between different actors within the humanitarian aid sector. One of the most useful such literature has been, for the purpose of my own current work, the article of communication scholars Simon Cottle and David Nolan, "Global humanitarianism and the changing aid-media field". In their work, Cottle and Nolan illustrate how the large NGOs and humanitarian organizations are competing for resources, mainly because of their increased number in a globalized world (2007, p. 865). A consequence of this competition is the fact that the NGOs need to transmit a certain image to the media who is only interested in a specific model, and are strategically branding themselves, using celebrities to transmit their ideas, and integrating brand risk strategies in their practices in order to obtain resources that are now shared between the many humanitarian organizations existent today (Cottle & Nolan, 2007, p. 864). The work of Cottle and Nolan is particularly relevant to the purpose of this thesis, since much of the competitive behavior of the NGOs occurs also in the case of the individual activists. Moreover, the practice of branding that the NGOs resort to in order to stay competitive is also emerging in my own research on activists.

Another author that problematizes the competitiveness in humanitarian work is international relations scholar Anne Hammerstad, who in her book, *The Rise and Decline of a Global Security Actor: UNHCR, Refugee Protection and Security,* presents the situation of the UNHCR (United Nations Refugee Agency) in the Kosovo refugee crisis. Hammerstad calls the humanitarian aid in Kosovo a "free for all", where organizations such as NATO, UNICEF, World Food Organisation, as well as a plethora of newly funded NGOs directly competed with UNHCR for resources and visibility in the media, undermining its coordinating authority at the cost of efficiency (2014, p. 235-8).

Ethnologist Gabriella Nilsson also describes competitive practices between women rights activists in Sweden in her article "Kampen om Kvinnohuset: Om Splittring som Strategi eller Eftergift" [The Struggle for a Women' House: Ideological Dividing as Strategy or Remission]. Starting from the decision of several members to separate from the women rights organization "Kvinnohusgruppen" and form their own organization called "Alla Kvinnors Hus", the two organizations started competing for the rights to a women's center location given by the Stockholm municipality. Although once part of the same group, and continuing to have as aim the well-being of women and women's rights, the two groups engaged in a conflict that was especially represented and kept alive in the media (Nilsson, 2010, p. 88). This situation is similar in the way the activists described in my thesis have the same aim, but continue expressing their rivalry to each other.

Researchers at the Center for the Advancement of Well-Being, George Mason University, Cher Weixia Chen and Paul C. Gorski have shown in their study "Burnout in Social Justice and Human Rights Activists: Symptoms, Causes and Implications" that activists are especially prone to burnouts, this having a direct effect on their efficiency. The subject of burnout has also appeared in my own interview with activists.

On a more general note, the work of Professor in Political Studies Donatella della Porta and Professor in Sociology Mario Diani on social movement, *Social Movements : An Introduction* serves as a good base for the investigation of activism. Although taking a more general view of social movements, Della Porta and Diani's chapter on social movements and organizations (2006, p. 135) is especially relevant to my own work. Although organizations are often seen and presented as loosely structured, Della Porta and Diani (2006) show how there are numerous models of social movements organization that can co-exist (p.161). This is on pair with my own findings of organizations with completely different structures and values that do, however, join forces for the same or similar aims. However, my findings show that this does not necessarily happen without conflict, and effectiveness, the well-being of members, and the members activities, can be negatively influenced in this process.

The common denominator for most of the previous research on the topic of my thesis is the fact that the competition practices between activists and activist organizations (large and small) happened because of resources. The resources, visibility in the media, or the occasion to take responsibility for a humanitarian action of a large scale, have resulted in practices that have many times distracted the actors from their main humanitarian scope and at times threatened their success. What my topic brings new to the field is precisely the fact that the competition practices do not happen because of a race for resources, but because of something completely different, namely a struggle to stay within the frame of what is considered an effective activist.

3. Methods of data collection and analysis

3.1 Fieldwork and data collection

As mentioned previously, the fieldwork was originally conducted for the purpose of an internship at the Kristianstad Regional Museum. Working in a group with three other university colleagues, the internship was an integral part of our Master's program in Applied Cultural Analysis at Lund University, which has an emphasis on applicable ways ethnography could be used inside and outside academia. Therefore, there was an underlying attention to applicability throughout the fieldwork and data collection stage, which resulted in selecting ethnographic methods that would result in material that could be of use for a museum institution (for example problematizing representation issues in a future exhibition, collecting photographic material, etc.)

The data was collected from September 2015 to late November 2015, in the southern Swedish region of Skåne, and consisted in observations (including participatory), interviews, a focus group, visual and audio recordings of relevant events, and netnography. Because the initial research was done in a group of four, tasks have been divided in order to collect more material: interviews, observations, and netnography have been conducted by the members of the research group individually, while the focus group had several moderators. Therefore, for the purpose of the thesis I am using the interviews conducted by my colleagues and myself, but only refer to observation fieldnotes that I have personally collected and know the context of.

Observations were done mostly in public gatherings and events: a manifestation for the humane treatment of refugees, a photography seminar on the theme of contemporary activism, as well as on numerous occasions at the Malmö C (the place where many refugees were welcomed by volunteers and activists). My observations were followed immediately by note-taking, as well as the occasional photographic documentation. One of the many reasons why I find observations to be an important ethnographic method is the fact that it allows the researcher(s) to visualize practices as they occur, and which will not necessarily be re-told in interviews by the participants. However, there are not only benefits to be had from conducting observations. As British anthropologist John Middleton notes, one of the problems of conducting observations is that the researcher is trying to "live as a human being among other human beings yet also having to act as an objective observer” (as cited in O'Reilly, 2004, p. 101). This has lead sociologist Karen O'Reilly to describe observations as a contradiction of terms: “the tension is in the fact that you can only really understand a group when you act within it without thinking, but the very fact of trying to do that prevents you from ever truly becoming a member“ (2004, p.102). Accordingly, observations have not been my main source of ethnographic material because of their contradictory nature for the researchers and have been supplemented by interviews and other means of data collection. Having this in mind while conducting observations, I have seen this method as a good opportunity to engage in short conversation with individuals on subjects that interested me for the present thesis. For example, a manifestation was a good opportunity to see activism being performed, but also a good occasion to engage in conversation with the people present there with their children, something that I use in my further analysis.

My colleagues and I conducted interviews in public spaces (cafés, Malmö C, or manifestations) with activists and volunteers that worked directly with the newly arrived refugees. All the participants were informed about audio recording being conducted and gave their consent in this sense. The interviews were approximately one hour in length each and were semi-structured, meaning that they all had a direction of topic (mostly about how the interviewees saw themselves as activists, what their role was in the refugee crisis, what they did and why, etc.) but became focused on a particular topic that was most relevant to the participant in question and were resulting, therefore, in a more free-flowing discussion.

Although noting that interviews are a popular method of investigation in ethnography, sociologist and anthropologist Charlotte Aull-Davies notes that "at a practical level, the goal of own and free-flowing discussion is not readily attainable when one party to the discussion is clearly holding back, not expressing any opinions, or even interacting except in the most minimalist form" (2008, p. 105- 107). What Davies warns about then, is that interviewing may not be as productive if the participant is reluctant to interact. This has not proven to be a problem in my own interviews, as activists and volunteers proved to be very passionate about their work and were happy to share their experiences. However, having in mind there was a strong possibility that participants might be reluctant in sharing information about their work, we have also decided to conduct what sociologist Margarethe Kusenbach (2003) has named "go-alongs", namely interviews conducted as the researcher and participant engage together in activities (such as walking, driving, working, etc.) In our case this was conducted as the interviewer and participant volunteered together, helped bring donations to refugee shelters, or attended events together. Kusenbach names as one of the main benefits of go-alongs the fact that they "render visible some of the filters that shape individual environmental perception" (2003, p. 478). In this sense, it is a unique way to be able to observe the participants in the way they interact with the refugees or other activists and volunteers, and not only listen to their recollection of these situations. Seeing a person interact in the environment that is the very subject of the interview is making visible a whole new interesting angle that can only enrich the subsequent analysis.

Another method of data collection was conducting a focus group with individuals who were not engaged with activism or volunteering of any kind, in order to get an outsider's perspective on activism. This was necessary in order to explain to our then-client, the Kristianstad Regional Museum, what the public sees activism to be and their associations with it, a bottom-up perspective that is often achieved through focus groups. Furthermore, it was important for our research to know what activism is perceived to be by individuals who were not engaged in any cause themselves. This has proven to be a wise choice as many of the topics that arose at the focus group were often reoccurring in the activists' own discourse (for example what is considered good or bad activism).

The photography was collected throughout the city of Malmö whenever something that was deemed relevant to the topic occurred: protests, manifestations, graffiti, posters, etc. Although sparingly used in the current thesis, the purpose for this collection is grounded in the Museum's wish for documentation of a historical event, and subsequently my own interest in the way activists and volunteers performed their identity (which sometimes is harder to explain and easier to capture by the camera). Sarah Pink (2011) describes in her article "Images, Senses, and Applications: Engaging Visual Anthropology" the power that visual anthropology can have in directly communicating experience of people that are "normally invisible to be seen and their voices and feelings to be heard" (p. 450).

Lastly, another method used was netnography, with a particular focus on the social media. Social media played a very important role in the organization of individual activists, but especially activist groups. Facebook has been a platform where one of the groups, Refugees Welcome to Malmö, was started and later developed into a fully-fledged organization. It was important for the fieldwork that I would observe and take note of posts, comments, and discussions that took place on social media on the subject of activism in the refugee crisis. As anthropologist Robert Kozinets notes on the subject of netnography, ". . . it can inform about social life online, it can inform about particular practices, it can inform about particular aspects of social life that have all kinds of offline implications" (2011). The idea of the online representation of offline practices was motivation enough to further pursue employing this method by looking into the way activists and volunteers were communicating on Facebook channels, as well as how other users reacted to content posted about the refugee crisis and the humanitarian aid around it.

Accordingly, the ethnographic material collected through the above-listed methods was as follows: seventeen semi-structured interviews with activists and volunteers engaged in helping newly-arrived refugees in Malmö; one focus group with individuals that were not engaged in activism; a variety of fieldnotes resulting from observations conducted at Malmö C, demonstrations, and events on the theme of activism; a collection of comments and posts from Facebook channels of activist organizations; video material collected at manifestations for the refugees' rights, as well as Malmö C and Kontrapunkt; articles published in the media on the subject of the refugee crisis; and collected flyers spread by the groups asking for donations for the refugees.

3.2 Analysis

After the data collection stage, the ethnographic material was scrutinized, firstly in a general manner that would allow me to observe initial emergent patterns. The interviews, for example, were translated verbatim, resulting in texts that could then be read and re-read for an in-depth analysis that would include coding. In his work on coding in qualitative research, Professor Emeritus Johnny Saldana (2009) defines coding as “most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or a visual data” (p.3). Saldana sees coding as an analysis process that is divided in two cycles: the first cycle includes initial coding that tends to be more exploratory, while the second cycle is a type of coding that is meant to classify according to patterns or theory (2009. p. 46).

Saldana’s classification of coding was integrated in my own analysis of the material as follows: the interviews’ transcriptions were first subjected to a first cycle of coding according to their topics, called “thematic coding” (p. 139) where short words described their corresponding passage according to themes (for example “identity” code would be indicative of the interviewee’s statements about their activist or volunteer identity). In the second cycle, after I could see the emergence of patterns based on the first cycle coding, I proceeded to code the transcripts again with codes that mostly made an appearance in the first cycle (for example passages where the interviewees talked about the rivalry between different activists or activist organizations were coded with “competition”).

As a result of the first cycle coding, several initial patterns have emerged, like the often-mentioned importance of how much time is spend working for the refugees, or the idea that there is a clear image of what it means to be an ideal activist. Having therefore set on the patterns that would be included in my analysis, I then proceeded in coding my field notes in a similar way, this time using only the second cycle coding method and integrating coding relevant to the use of theory. The analysis of the data was a stage where, as a researcher, I was aware of the fact that the results I would achieve will be very much based on the choice I made in the use of theories and ways to approach it. Although I have chosen intersectional theory, performativity, and myth as my three main tools for analysis, I have to underline the fact that other ways of investigating my topic are equally interesting and valid (other frameworks could be, for example, Actor-Network Theory in order to analyze the use of social media by activists, or a Foucauldian analysis of the power relations between activists and refugees).

3.3 Ethical Considerations

It would be superficial to approach the statistics showing the number of refugees that arrived in Malmö between the months when my fieldwork was done and neglect the fact that every single number stands for a human being. Therefore, I believe that special ethical considerations must be made when conducting research that involves people who have gone through a tremendous journey to safety. It is equally important to understand that, even though the activists and not the refugees were direct participants for the data collection for this thesis, they have also been exposed to strong emotional distress because of the subject of their work. The refugee crisis had a powerful emotional impact on all the agents involved, and therefore the ethics surrounding the conducting of research on the activists and volunteers have to be especially emphasized.

In both the stages of planning the research and actually conducting it, ethical considerations have been taken due to the special nature of the environment where interviews were taken (often public spaces) and the subject (refugees are individuals in a vulnerable position and talking about that often resulted in strong emotional responses from activists). As a result, both I and my colleagues who interviewed activists had a set of ethical rules that were enforced throughout our data gathering process. The ethical guidelines for conducting fieldwork with human subjects are clear but often offer certain flexibility to the research depending on the situation. In a report for the European Commission, Dr. Ron Iphofen (n.d) details on the common understanding of ethical behavior in research for ethnographers and anthropologists:

> ”that anthropologists should ensure that their research does not harm the safety, dignity, or privacy of the people with whom they work, conduct research on, or with whom they perform other professional activities. They must seek to ensure the psychological wellbeing, or even the survival of those they are studying, carefully and respectfully negotiating the limits of the relationship between researchers and those being researched. They should maintain as objective as possible a comparative analytical stance and avoid ethnocentricity. They should not normally deceive their subjects without good reason. Nor should they knowingly misrepresent (i.e., fabricate

evidence, falsify, plagiarize), or attempt to prevent the reporting of misconduct, or obstruct the scientific/scholarly research of others." (p. 11)

Accordingly, in order to ensure that the before-mentioned guidelines have been respected, all participants in the data collection stage (interviewees, participants in observations, social-media communications, etc.) have been given anonymity; this was respected by not mentioning any real names in the transcriptions of interviews or field notes. Accordingly, the anonymity of the interviewees is respected in the present thesis by assigning fictitious names. Interviews were conducted in public places such as cafes, and at times while the activist/volunteer was working with/for the refugees. All participants were asked permission for audio recording and were either informed about the purpose of the recording, or depending on case given more information about the research project. Permission was always asked in the case of video recording or photography, with the exception of public protests and gatherings were the overwhelming number of people present in the photography frame, as well as the public location made it impossible.

4. Theoretical Framework

4.1 Intersectional Theory

Intersectional Theory refers to the investigation of an individual's different social identities (for example race, ethnicity, gender, etc.), suggesting that they can overlap and lead to enforcing different systems of oppression. The intersection of two (or more) identity elements can lead, according to the intersectional theory, to enforcing systems of discrimination and oppression if they are not seen equally as the cause and instead treated as completely separate units. The main point intersectional theory proposes is that it is important to look at different aspects of one's identity as being in a close connection (as opposed to functioning separately) in order to understand the cause of oppression and discrimination of one individual, and not only the ones that at first might seem the most important. The term was coined first by American civil rights advocate Kimberle Crenshaw in the context of feminist theory, who argued that the violence against Afro-American women in USA was not only the result of race *or* gender, but more importantly the result of how these categories intertwined, a combination that would often work against the women who were being persecuted; Crenshaw (1991) showed in her article how focusing only on one separate identity can work against the persecuted women, and have a negative effect than the one desired: “The failure of feminism to interrogate race means that the resistance strategies of feminism will often replicate and reinforce the subordination of people of color, and the failure of antiracism to interrogate patriarchy means that antiracism will frequently reproduce the subordination of women.” (p.1252). This is the case where feminist theory focuses on the fact that a person was being discriminated on the grounds of being a woman, completely neglecting race, and therefore subordinating that cause, or vice-versa when antiracism sees race as the cause of the violence, ignoring gender. Crenshaw (1991) points out that in the case of violence against women of color, the reason for it was not race *or* gender, but the intersection of both, and emphasized that intersectionality “might be more broadly useful as a way of mediating the tension between assertions of multiple identity and the ongoing necessity of group politics” (p. 1296). I interpret this assertion as an encouragement and wish for the use of intersectionality in a wider context, as a tool that can be used in the study of other situations also, outside that of gender and race. My interpretation is further reinforced by an article in which Sumi Cho, Kimberle Crenshaw, and Leslie McCall revisit intersectionality, this time from a methodological approach. In their work, Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall (2013) discuss three ways in which intersectionality can be engaged with in praxis, one of them being the use of an intersectional framework in a wide variety of research projects; here it is emphasized the fact that the use of intersectionality is always contextually-based (p.785), meaning that it is dependent on the context in which it is applied. Therefore, even though intersectionality is largely used in gender studies, in a tradition that mostly uses the theory as a way to investigate the overlapping identities of gender, race, and class, I choose to use it as a tool in order to investigate identities that are relevant to the context at hand (the activists engaged in the help of refugees).

For the purpose of this thesis I will use intersectionality to investigate the effects that identities such as political alignment and humanitarianism have on the activists, and what happens when these two elements of the identity of activists meet in their work in the refugee crisis. Intersectionality is of particular use in analyzing my topic when investigating the competition that takes place between different activist organizations. Although these organizations have the same aim, their values and members’ identities differ, and lead to tensions and rivalry, which in turn lead to discrimination and exclusion practices.

4.2 Performativity

The linguist John Langshaw Austin first discussed "performative utterances" in a series of lectures that aimed at illustrating the difference between acts of speech that reported something and those that are uttered as part of an action. For example, the sentence "It is cold today" reports on the state of the weather, while a sentence like "I pronounce you man and wife" is uttered in the context of a wedding and is in fact leading to performing the act of marrying a couple (Austin, 1975, p. 5-6). Austin (1975) named statements that perform an action rather than just stating something as *performative utterances* and further classified them into "happy" or "infelicitous" (p. 12-16) based on their effect (for a wedding performative utterance to be happy, the wedding has to be a genuine one as opposed to, for example, a staged one played by actors, which would be infelicitous). As Austin developed his theory, he further noted that the intricacies of language make it difficult to be only categorized as being performative or not, and proposed a three-level system: locutionary acts (uttering a sentence), illocutionary acts (uttering a sentence that conveys something like an information, order, warning, etc.), and perlocutionary acts (utterances that are made in order to achieve something *by* saying them), (1975, p. 107-108). Perlocution is, therefore, the effect one desires to achieve by uttering a sentence. This is the level that is most relevant for the analysis of my data, because of the effect that is achieved by the interviewees' utterances in relation to their work for the refugees.

American philosopher John Searle transformed Austin's framework into a method. Searle worked on the classification of Austin's speech acts, forming a taxonomy: he divided speech acts into assertives (descriptions and reports), directives (orders and requests), paradigmatics (promises and swearing), expressives (congratulations and apologies), and declarations (when saying makes it so) (as cited in Loxley, 2007, p. 50). The last type, declarations, are the type most close to Austin's view of performative utterances and they can be observed in their simplest form when interviewees are asked if they are or not activists. In using both Austin's framework and Searle's taxonomy, I can then investigate what is being achieved by the activists' utterances of (sometimes common) expressions, i.e. how activists perform their identity through spoken language.

Building on the grounds of Austin's work, other theorists have developed performative theories according to their own field of interest. Famous for her application of performativity in gender studies, American philosopher Judith Butler argues that gender is not a stable identity, but a performance, as we repeat gestures, expressions, ways of dressing and acting, throughout our lives according to the gender assigned: “gender ought not to be constructed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts” (2006, p.191). Therefore, Butler states that is not our gender that dictates our identity, but our performance of it. Butler’s conceptualization of gender as performance can also be applied in analyzing the activists’ way of referring to themselves (or to other activists), and in investigating how activists learn to be activists (what it means to be an activist in the refugee crisis and what needs to be performed in this sense).

James Loxely, in his book *Performativity,* writes a linear history of the concept from its inception in the linguistic context of J. L. Austin, and to its more well-known J. Bulter use of the term. Loxley shows how performativity is used as a tool, rather than a rigid one-way use of the concept, throughout time. It is, therefore, my intention to use the term as a theoretical framework for the purpose of analyzing my material by combining the way Butler uses performativity and Austin’s application of the term in linguistics. In a similar way that Butler understands gender as a performance, performative theory can be used to look at the ways in which activists perform their role. Moreover, the use of performativity in linguistics is equally relevant because of the fact that the majority of data collected is in the form of verbal communications, something that corresponds to Austin’s application in speech acts.

4.3 Roland Barthes’ Myth Theory

French philosopher Roland Barthes, building on a strong semiotics foundation constructed before him by Ferdinand de Saussure, explores the notion of myth, in his renowned work, *Mythologies*. Barthes starts from the linguistic level where a concept is uttered/written/drawn, called *the signifier,* which has a meaning in the mind of the individuals who share the language and recognize it (*signified*). Therefore, the word “rose” (signifier) means the flower we all have learned to call rose (signified). Barthes brings another level to concepts, a connotative level in which the rose does not always only signifies the plant, but also, for example, passion (Barthes, 2009, p. 135). Barthes notes that the second level of signification, called *sign,* is “full, it is a meaning” (2009, p. 136). This meaning, where the myth resides, has a tendency to be, according to Barthes, naturalized when the reality is that is historically constructed (there is nothing natural in the connotation of passion in a rose, but this is something that has been propagated through history to the point in where it is recognized by everyone and perceived as such). Barthes notes that the very principle of myth is that it transforms history into nature (2009, p. 154), further noting that “what the world supplies to myth is an historical reality, defined, even if it goes back quite a while, by the way in which men have produced or used it; and what myth gives in return is a *natural* image of this reality” (p. 169). Barthes (2009) also underlines the fact that the myth is situational and if the circumstances change, its scope will follow change (p. 172); for example, in the right circumstances a rose can change its connotation from passion to political affiliation, religion, etc.

Barthes’ concept of myth is an appropriate framework to use for analyzing my data due to the way some interviewees have chosen to use particular symbols and express certain ideas in very similar ways. What is often described as “coming from within” when defining activism, is being naturalized as “the natural/good/only thing to do in such a situation” by the individuals helping the refugees. Certain ideas are found throughout interviews, with a strong tendency of seeing helping as an innate ability rather than a learned moral value. What many consider then to be a natural idea (activism) is historically a concept very close to Sweden as a nation. By using Barthes’ myth, I propose to investigate the notion of activism as a Swedish element, by following it historically, and observing its manifestations in the activists and volunteers’ behavior and ways of referring to it. By understanding what activism is today understood as to be by the activists themselves, will help to better clarify where and why the tensions between activists happen and competition arises.

Other theorists that I have chosen to briefly use in my analysis are Professor of Sociology Beverley Skeggs, and sociologist Marcel Mauss. Although Skeggs (2004) does not explicitly use the term intersectional theory in her work, her book *Formations of Class and Gender* takes an intersectional angle; especially relevant is her analysis of white working class women attempting to pass as middle class, as some of the interviewees in my own research are attempting to pass as ideal activists.

Mauss’ theory of the gift exchange focuses on the act of giving that often leads to an obligation to reciprocate in societies: “In Scandinavian and many other civilizations contracts are fulfilled and exchanges of goods are made by means of gifts. In theory such gifts are voluntary but in fact they are given and repaid under obligation”(2002, p.3). As I will later argue, activists and volunteers sacrifice a large portion of their time and resources in order to help the refugees, and are reciprocated indirectly by gaining reputation and a higher status within their organizations.

According to the above, I have chosen to use intersectional theory in order to examine *why* the competitive practices between activists occur, performativity in order to illustrate *how* they manifest, and myth to uncover *what* elements are used to connote Swedish humanitarian aid are.

5. The ideal activist standard

5.1 Defining activism in a Swedish context

To begin understanding the dynamics between different activist groups, I would like to first define activism from a historical point, as well as later from the activists' own perspective.

The word *activist,* as we today recognize it in its political sense, was first used in 1915 in relation to the First World War; it was originally used to refer to Sweden who was supporting the Central Powers and desired the abandonment of neutrality ("activist", n.d.). The connection between Sweden and activism has then formed a long tradition of fighting for human rights, gender equality, and sustainability. Sweden is recognized today as a country with a long history of activism; this is reflected in sweden.se, the country's official portal, where it is stated that "Sweden aspires to be a clear voice for human rights around the world – not just in words but also in actions." (Diab, 2015), implying the fact that Sweden embraces social change which is made possible by the many NGOs as well as by individual activists. The strong historical connection between Sweden and activism has led to an image of the country that is internationally recognized, and especially brought up in the media in light of the refugee crisis under titles such as "Migrant crisis: Sweden doubles asylum seeker forecast" (BBC, 2015) and later, when the country imposed identification controls at the border with Denmark, "Even Europe's humanitarian superpower is turning its back on refugees" (Witte & Faiola, 2015).

Although the refugee crisis has been quite visible in the city of Malmö, where a large number of refugees arrived, this is not the first time the city has provided shelter. An example of a similar situation happened in the War World II, when a Swedish Red Cross operation called “The White Busses” saved a large number of prisoners from Nazi-occupied territories and brought them to Sweden. Out of the total number of 15, 345 individuals rescued from concentration camps, 3 960 were brought to Malmö where they were given shelter (Red Cross, n.d). During the 2015 refugee crisis, the Malmö Museum chose to prolong its exhibition on this topic, Welcome to Sweden, which showed stories told by the people who were rescued and brought to Malmö. Sweden has also been involved in receiving approximately 8 000 Danish Jews, as well as 70, 000 Finnish children in an effort to protect them from the war, as the country maintained its neutrality (Byström, and Frohnert, 2013).

When asked to define what an activist is, activists themselves bring up this historical angle, insisting on the idea that it is part of a common understanding of what Swedes do. For example, in a short discussion with a activist present at a refugees’ rights manifestation, it is mentioned that:

> “It’s what we do here [in Sweden]. It’s what I did anyway. When I was small, with my parents we used to go to protests and fight for human rights. My mother has pictures from demonstrations. I think it was against a war. And you see all this in history books and in documentaries. Like how we helped in the war [The Second World War]. I think it’s Swedish. Yes, it’s very Swedish.”
>
> (Annette, personal communication, November 2015)

In this sense, the definition of an activist is grounded in a historical background of Sweden that includes activism. The interviewee quoted above, a person who helped the refugees by volunteering and attending talks and demonstrations for the refugee’s rights motivates her will to do such actions because of it being a Swedish tradition (at the family level and nation), hence the participant’s definition of activism as being “very Swedish”.

When specifically asked to define what an activist is, there is a certain vagueness in the activists’ responses. Some interviewees see activists within a certain stereotypical frame when asked what a typical activist is. One of the first questions that activists were asked in interviews was to try and define what an activist is. Physical appearance was a common way to start the definition at its most basic level. For example, the next interviewee mentioned that she felt ashamed that she was mentioning stereotypical terms, but nonetheless continued defining a typical activist as such:

> "A typical activist has a nose ring . . . someone who buys clothes at H&M cannot be an environmental activist."
>
> (Jan, personal communication, October, 2015)

The "typical activist" is largely described by other activists in the way they appear (dress code, piercings, hairstyle) only then followed by their actions. The fact that the activists are seen as young, dressing in a non-conformist way, and have an increase ethic code for where they shop is a common description of activists. What is interesting is the emphasis on the aesthetics of an activist (nose-rings, does not wear H&M clothes). Another similar instance where an activist is this time recognized by their appearance, is in a social media posting where a video of a protest in Malmö (not related to the refugee crisis) shows a woman dressed in a simple black winter coat. In the video's comments section a Facebook user is describing the woman as as a "civilian girl dressed like an activist" (Facebook, November 2015). Although it is unclear what exactly in the dress code signals activism, it is notable that the person is perceived as such. In this sense, it matters equally if the person is trying to signal through their dress code that she is an activist and if she is perceived as such by others. Judith Butler, although referring to gender, when stating that it is, "real to the extent that it is performed" (1990, p. 278-9) marks the idea that gender is a social construction that is being perpetuated through its performance. Replacing "gender" with "activism", Butler's idea still stands: common traits of activists are performed, which in turn are recognized as such by an audience who then naturalizes what it means to be an activist. Regarding the dress code, large activist organizations share advice on what would make a person a better activist, for example the activist organization People for Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) who in an article published on their official website, mention that one should "ditch the Yankees tee and sport an animal-friendly message instead" (PETA, n.d). This implies the unwanted use of a shirt displaying the name of a sport team in favor of one with an activist message. As the interviewee above mentions, an activist should not buy clothes in stores such as H&M (implying that they should shop at stores that are more environmentally friendly). Activism, therefore, is not visible through one's actions only, but also, at a basic level, through what one chooses to wear, since this is the first stage when someone can recognize a person as being (or not) an activist.

However, the more specific details are being asked for, the more the interviewees are using in-depth descriptions about the actions required to be an activist. These descriptions contained common elements such as: being passionate about a cause, being engaged and spending time for the cause, having a good network of other activists in order to have a platform for discussion, having experience, being a good communicator and strategist in order to bring others to join the cause, etc.

An important distinction made when defining activism is that between activists and volunteers. The interviewees were asked if they consider themselves to be activists; most of the individuals interviewed answered yes, while some declared that they are volunteers instead. This is problematic because the distinction is a difficult one to pinpoint in the context of humanitarian aid in the refugee crisis. If we are to look at the definition of an activist as someone who is actively taking action to help the refugee (such as have talks, raise awareness, bring more individuals to this cause, be a good ambassador for the refugee's rights, etc.) many of the volunteers are doing that. Accordingly, most of the interviewees who see themselves as activists are engaged in volunteering activities. From an intersectional angle, the separation of these two categories is problematic as it creates a certain hierarchy (activists are seen as more engaged than volunteers). Nonetheless, the distinction between activists and volunteers is mentioned, albeit indirectly, when attempting to define activism: activism is seen as encompassing volunteering practices, while volunteering is seen as non-political, less engaging in organizational practices, and tending to focus mostly on the direct help to the refugees (cooking or delivering donations).

I have so far shown that when asked to define what activism is, interviewees often bring into discussion Sweden's history of activism, as well as a set of stereotypical elements that deal mostly with how the activists look rather than what they do. Furthermore, there is a distinction between volunteers and activists that is very clear in defining the latter. In the next section I will argue that not all activism is seen as positive, and illustrate what is considered to be positive and negative activism.

5.2 Conceptualizations of positive and negative activism

One of the most common activist qualities was expressed by interviewees as being "something that comes from within". This immaterial quality was often quantified in the amount of time a person was seen actually working. Time was therefore a useful tool in determining if a person was an effective activist or not. The more the person was spending time in helping the refugees, the better he/she was seen by the others and respected. For example, while doing observations at a manifestation for the refugees' rights, someone answered when asked what they consider to be good activism:

> "It's hard to explain. I feel like this [manifestation] is great; look how many people are here. But that's not everything. Yesterday I was at Malmö C and talked to this guy who told me he was helping [the refugees] for 30 hours in a row or something. He looked so tired. I mean…that guy is a hero, he is a real activist, I think".
>
> (Maya, personal communication, September 13, 2015)

The use of "hero" and "real activist" by the interviewee, connote positive traits of what is generally seen as a good activist, derived from the fact that the individual helping at Malmö C was spending a large number of hours helping and looking very tired. Tiredness, in this context, functions as a signifier in the Barthes' myth tradition: looking tired signifies lack of sleep, but in the context described above inherits another level of connotation, namely that of a deep engagement to the cause. Activists that look tired are symbols for the ideal activist, since lack of sleep implies in this example that the person has sacrificed his rest time in order to help the refugees more. This complete devotion is then quantified in how much the person looks tired and becomes a signifier for what is considered to be an ideal activist by the community.

In connection to how a tired a person looks, another important factor that defined a good activist was the engagement. As someone interested in documenting the humanitarian efforts at Kontrapunkt related, "the sicker they look, the better they are seen by everyone else. I have a cold now and people treated me different [better]" (Richard, personal communication, November, 2015). The more an activist seemed to sacrifice in order to be more with the other volunteers and help the refugees, the better image he/she had in the eyes of others. As the participant above stated, even though he only had a banal flu, the perception of others around him, mistaking him for another activist, had changed and he was treated in a more welcoming and respectful manner. This image of an ill person further connotes engagement (the person is working despite the fact that he is not feeling well) and is a performative act. The performance of an activist so engaged that not even illness can stop him from helping the refugees, finds a strong resonance in what Stephen Greenblatt (1980) called self-fashioning, namely "the power to impose a certain look upon oneself and in the process of doing so, creating a particular desired identity (p. 1). Although not directly mentioning self-fashioning in connection to performative acts, Greenblatt's view of this is very much what Butler describes as performative in her own work on gender. In Butler's view, self-fashioning is at the very core of the performative gender: our bodies are *means* through which we perform gender or sexuality (2006). The sacrifices visible in the performance of the engaged activists vary from health, time spent with their family (family time is seen as precious and therefore an important sacrifice), or economic (activists generally frowned upon people that helped and received compensation by the municipality, and therefore a day when someone has to take unpaid leave form their work was seen as a proof of dedication).

This was especially problematic because the activists helping in shelters and at the train station were often complaining that they were lacking sleep and constantly felt tired, while at the same time finding that it was often hard to stop helping and going home. This lead to situations of burnouts that were, paradoxically, frowned upon by the interviewees who felt that the activists who suffered burnouts were not organized properly. Although more time spent helping was considered a good example of activism, extreme situations like burnouts were seen as weakness of people who were not well prepared for the given situation.

The sacrifices that activists have to make in order to achieve the status of a good activist can be explained through what Marcel Mauss called "the gift exchange", who described how in many civilizations the act of gifting obliges the receiver the reciprocate: "In Scandinavian and many other civilizations contracts are fulfilled and exchanges of goods are made by means of gifts. In theory such gifts are voluntary but in fact they are given and repaid under obligation" (2002, p.3). In the current case, the refugees are the receivers of help, but are not in a situation where they can give something back to the activists and volunteers. However, the gifts do not have to be material objects, and in this sense the gift that is being given back is precisely the possibility for activists to achieve the humanitarian model that is perceived as being positive especially in Sweden. Therefore, while refugees receive humanitarian help, they are repaying this help in the sense that the helpers are ascending in their role as good activists, gaining more reputation and prestige within their group. As an interviewee involved in human rights activism at a legal level mentions:

> "I know two people, lawyers, who say that what I do is really impressive. I don't do anything really, I just think differently."
>
> (Kris, personal communication, September 2015).

Although the interviewee is modest in saying that she does not do anything when mentioning her peers' appreciation over her actions, she later continues stating that everyone should do this (fight for the refugees' rights). This is a common expression that activists and volunteers use throughout interviews, a proof of the naturalization of activism, as I will later argue.

Asking the question "what do you think a good activist is?" to a focus group comprised of individuals that do not engage in volunteering activities or activism, the responses were similar to what the activists exhibited in their behavior: someone that wants social change, non-violent, passionate, with a motivation that comes from within, a person that is willing to sacrifice a lot for the cause (Focus Group, personal communication, September 22, 2015). This model of a good activist is an underlying idea in most of the interviews where the individuals are all careful in pointing out the sacrifices that are made in order to help more, and the amount of time that is invested. For example, a volunteer mentions that:

> "When I graduated everyone in my class went to Greece, but I went to Uganda all by myself. And everyone just got used to me going after what I believe in and what I burn for, and they support me very much".
>
> (Johan, personal communication, 2015)

Here, the interviewee is implying that while his colleagues went to the fun and exotic Greece, he chose to go to Uganda, a less popular destination to freshly high school graduates, because he is more engaged with what happens in developing countries and actively helping. Other often-occurring comments from the interviewees were hinting at the large amount of hours they were spending helping and the ensuring tiredness. Again, this can be argued to be a performative speech act by means of which more is achieved than just relating a story about the interviewee's traveling habits. As Austin explains, the perlocution level of the performative speech acts is the effect one desires to achieve by uttering a sentence (1975, p.107); in our case the interviewee achieves the desired effect of communicating his self-constructed image of a humanitarian person that does not only think about what would be fun, but what he could do in order to help others, a value standing at the core of the ideal activist. Furthermore, the expression used "what I burn for", meaning what he is passionate about in activism, is a highly common expression amongst interviewed activists, which I later argue is part of a series of performances of activism.

In contrast, negative activism is perceived by the public as a practice that results in violence, conducted through extreme methods, or which is not efficient in reaching the respective cause. In the conducted focus group, extreme activism was one of the main topics the participants engaged in discussion about, mentioning that:

> "they [activist groups] started climbing and destroying other people's proprieties; they used to block the Japanese boats to stop them to get to the whales and now I think at some point they were throwing Molotov cocktails at some of the ships "
>
> (Focus group, personal communication, September 22, 2015)

Extreme activism is seen as having a bad reputation and generally criticized by the non-activist people present at the focus group. The activists themselves see extreme acts like violent protests or destroying /damaging of property with a critical eye as well. A good example of the effect such extreme activism can have on the public was noted in one of my fieldwork observations when, attending a photography seminar on contemporary activism, the leader of FEMEN Sweden held a talk. FEMEN is a feminist organization that actively protests using nudity and slogans written on their bodies. In their own words "FEMEN is an international women's movement of brave topless female activists painted with the slogans and crowned with flowers" (Femen Sweden, n.d). Often referring to their practices as "sextremism" the leader of the Swedish FEMEN branch held the talk at the seminar with the help of visual materials showing protests that included semi-nude women demonstrating in churches, or governmental buildings. Even though the speaker was listed in the program of the seminar, she was not, however, suppose to have the talk at that particular time but did so because of an unforeseen cancelation of another speaker. As a result, her talk took by surprise some of the audience who was expecting a different content at that particular time segment. The result of displaying the "sextremism" protests in the background was that several people stood up in the middle of her speech and left the room. The speaker attended afterwards a demonstration for the rights of the refugees in Malmö. Upon asking a participant who I thought had recognized her about their feelings over FEMEN's presence at the protest they answered:

> "Yes I know who she is. I mean, I think what they do is just for attention.
> It's disrespectful. And why is she here? I have not seen her helping at

> Malmö C so why would she even come here today and pretend to be an activist? I think it's so fake. Just for the image. For saying that she did it."
>
> (Maya, personal communication, September 13, 2015)

The recognition of the FEMEN activist as a "bad activist" was the result, therefore, of a combination of factors like the type of activism that was considered by some as being too extreme and therefore seen as negative, and the absence of the person from actively helping the refugees upon arriving in Sweden. This idea was further reinforced by the offended audience who left the room during her talk when photography containing nudity was shown to illustrate FEMEN's activist practices. Although to activists of FEMEN "sextremism", namely the use of nudity and their bodies as canvas for protest messages signifies a positive example of effective activism, this signifier is not decoded in a similar way by everyone. The disagreement of the decoding of the sign by different activists implies the underlying idea that positive and negative activism is seen as such depending on the side one is on, and is not approved even if the aim or the cause is a common one; for example, some people might find the fact that FEMEN is fighting for women rights as positive but disapprove of their methods (Murphy, 2012).

In this section I have, therefore, showed what is considered to be a positive and a negative example of activist. In the next section I argue that this clear delimitation leads to the creation of a standard in activism.

5.3 The ideal activist. The creation of a standard in activism.

What is commonly understood and expressed as a positive activism has proven to appear often in interviews and observations. Participants are well aware of the sets of qualities mentioned in the precious section that one should have and exhibit in order to be perceived as an ideal activist. As there is a common understanding of these qualities within the activist community, this had led to what I propose to name the creation of "the ideal activist standard".

By holding this standard in activism means to automatically exclude a number of individuals who do not meet the requirements. Here I already exclude the individuals who do not engage in activism, but refer specifically to the people who would appear to be activists (they are actively engaged, they talk about the refugees issues, they bring more individuals to help, etc.), but do not *themselves* consider to be part of the group, or are not considered so by their peers. The interviewees who would adhere to this model answered positively when asked if they consider themselves activists. However, the individuals who were not in the position to spend that many hours helping, or who did not help the refugees from the beginning of the crisis, hesitated in answering.

> “ I think it’s hard to find your place in the activists’ context. I don’t know, I feel like I am not enough, and I feel like there is always someone who knows better than me what to do here.”
>
> (Ada, personal communication, October 2015)

The interviewee was working in the Kontrapunkt kitchen, helping with the meals for the refugees, and although she was spending a lot of hours working and feeling tired at the end of the day, she also felt like she could not reach the standard that the activists held, and therefore did not belong to that community. Even though the person did not consider herself to be part of the activists’ category, it is clear that she is nonetheless well aware of what it means to be an effective activist or volunteer. Many of the interviewees who did not see themselves as activists (even though they could be considered as such by the standard definition) claimed instead to be volunteers. Asked if she would call herself an activist, a participant answered

> “Oh, I don’t know. It’s hard to…I mean, maybe. In some situations I would perhaps call myself that. But I don’t know, it feels more like volunteer work maybe. I don’t know, I don’t know. I mean it is political I think, but I wouldn’t say activist in this case. I don’t know.”
>
> (Marie, personal communication, October, 2015)

The interviewee’s hesitancy in calling herself “activist” comes from the fact that the standard that is imposed within the community has not, in her opinion, been reached by her. In her case, it was the fact that she was doing more practical work, rather than being more politically engaged with a cause that lead to the choice in not using “activist” to describe herself. Therefore, by not wanting to use the word ‘activist’, she is “downgrading” it to the level of volunteer. The difference made between activists and volunteers is, like mentioned previously, problematic. To be able to call oneself an activist means then, to be able to do much more than a volunteer (in the interviewee’s conceptualization). To then look at these two categories as separate might seem natural first, but it is exactly what intersectionality warns against, namely treating different identity layers as separate and not see them as part as one large unit. Furthermore, to separate the two identities and insist on the creation of inequality as a consequence would be a mistake. University psychologist Lisa Bowleg, notes this mistake in her own work, noting that adding stigmatized identities would increase the social inequality of the individual or group in question. Bowleg calls this approach “additive” and further notes that additive questions lead to additive answers, illustrating how in her study the questions that involved listing different identities (black, woman, bisexual) were responded by participants ranking their identities (as cited in Grzanka, 2014, p. 317). Although this is the case when one specifically mentions different identities, participants responding were not given the choice to list or rank, but simply answered that they were volunteers when they were asked if they considered themselves activists. The fact that they saw this as a lower rank than the activist identity was identified through the fact that they would supplement their statement with expressions that implied that they were not what the other activists saw as the activist standard:

> “I have helped here and there. Volunteer work. Wouldn’t call myself an activist. I think that it takes more than I can ever do and then to just go around and say that I’m an activist… It would be unfair to the people who are there 24/7 and organize things and… No, I don’t think I could do that so…”
>
> (Sam, personal communication, December, 2015)

Through an intersectional perspective the different identities can be also counted as different categories (good activist, bad activist, political, apolitical, religious, non-religious, etc). The difference, at times, it not made by the actual practices of the person, but by the placement of the person within what is considered an ideal activist standard. We are talking, in a sense, about an attempt of the individuals to pass as an ideal activist, an attempt to convince the community that they are located within the standard of what is socially considered to be an effective activist. In her study on working women attempting to be perceived as middle class, Beverley Skeggs argues that what is the main problem with passing as something else than one’s identity (in her own example this being an issue of class) is that one can be discovered by others (2002, p. 86). Therefore, the activists are fearful of being challenged if they were to say that they are activists because they do not meet the same criteria imposed by the ideal standard use of the word “volunteer” at times. Skeggs also argues that passing as something else requires that the respective identity to be an authoritative norm (2002, p. 91). In the case at hand, the ideal activist standard is the authoritative norm, and the individuals are trying to meet its criteria; when this proves to be impossible and passing as an activist is seen as risky, the individuals often describe themselves as *volunteers* arguing that they do not spend as much time or energy into helping (even though in some cases their tiredness from volunteering long hours is evident).

Even though the individuals themselves see a clear delimitation between activists and volunteers, an important factor in this being the clear adherence (or not) to the standard, publications seem to use the two terms interchangeably. For example, in an article published in a political publication with the theme asylum and organization, the author mentions that they have met with "activists in Umeå, Malmö, and Stockholm, to talk about engagement and solidarity" (Kling & Johnsson, 2015, p. 15). Although Kling and Johnsson (2015) name the article "The Volunteers", the cover promises a title called "the activists at the station"; furthermore, the promised activists in the article refer to themselves as volunteers instead when talking about their work (p. 18).

Other than the exclusion of some individuals from the ideal activist category, the standard imposed by the community itself has another effect: members constantly try to improve their actions in order to stay within what is considered acceptable. A consequence of that is not only that the standard becomes increasingly high (members have to do increasingly more), but many are leaning towards suffering burnouts because of the many hours spent helping the refugees. As many other interviewees, someone talks about his lack of sleep:

> "I have not done anything this week. Nothing else than to be here [helping the refugees]. I have not slept at all."
>
> (Monica, personal communication, September 2015)

Lack of sleep because of overworking, together with loss of money caused by taking days off work lead to many individuals choosing to either stop helping or taking a pause:

> "I've taken a couple of steps back...because I was not in good shape a week ago. So I got some rest. I went to my mom. She cooked me dinner. Because if we wear ourselves out, we're not good to help. We need to take care of ourselves. I mean, because it's easy to get caught up when you're here and you really want to help".

(Patrick, personal communication, October, 2015)

The standard of an ideal activist is re-made to be increasingly higher by its own community by increasingly and visibly working more. Although perhaps not consciously aware of its existence, the activists and volunteers are using it as a quantifying method in deciding who is efficient, ethical, or sincere. This is mostly visible in verbal communications where activists mention a series of actions, which I propose naming "performing activism" and discuss in the next section.

5.4 Performing the ideal activist standard

The interviewees often motivate why they chose to help as something that comes from within. Other common expressions include "burning for the cause", "it is natural to help", or "everyone should do it". The underlying tone of this is that humanitarianism is something natural, when the reality is, like illustrated before, heavily grounded in a national past that often included humanitarian aid (especially in WWII). This is what Roland Barthes would argue that is the perfect ground for the construction of the myth. Barthes' main argument regarding the coming into being of the myth is that it transforms history into nature. The task of the analyst, or the mythographer, is "to rediscover the element of history that motivates the myth, to elicit what is specific to a given time and place, asking what interests are served by the naturalization of particular convictions and values" (Belsey, 2002, p. 31). In our case, evidence suggests that the activists often see humanitarianism as a natural and innate characteristic of their personas, when in fact is something that has been learned and historically built in Swedish history through its past actions. To further illustrate this idea, I would like to focus on an interviewee's recount of events:

> "I went to help the refugees in Rostock Central Station. I had with me two large Swedish flags and three bags with winter clothing. So I got the flags up and waited there until someone approached me, refugees, and I started helping them by giving them information".

(Johan, personal communication, 2015)

The striking element in the interviewee's description is the presence of the two large Swedish flags. By applying Barthes' myth theory as a method, I identify the actual flag (material and combination of colors) as signifying the Swedish flag, which in turn signifies Sweden. As Barthes argues, the myth attracts more attention outside its normal context (2009, p.148-149).

In a German train station with incoming refugees, the flag, due to Sweden's history of humanitarian aid signifies humanitarianism. The presence of the Swedish flag in that particular context is seen as the fact that the person is from Sweden and wants to help. As he further recollects,

> "I installed myself there and put the flags up at the central station and stood there, and peopled looked weird at me saying 'what is this?'. But soon enough there came some refugees who looked so lost and I gave them all the information I could and bought them some train tickets, which was my aim".
>
> (Johan, personal communication, 2015)

The recognition of the Swedish flag as connoting aid by the refugees is equally important as the person flying the flags: Swedish humanitarianism is naturalized, and deciphered as such in that particular context by the presence of the flags. The flags are not only functioning in his example to attract attention to him, but also as their original purpose: to symbolize Swedishness. In this sense, the flags symbolize one of the elements of a good Swedish citizen: humanitarian aid. It is interesting, though, that the flags are used (and in this sense also deciphered as such) by the activist and the refugees as to connote Swedish humanitarianism, but not by the travelers at the station who "looked weird" at him, as he mentions in the interview. One can argue that not everyone knows what Sweden's flag looks like, or the fact that they disapprove of his actions; in either case his formulation is equally vague, "weird" having a wide range of possible meanings. However, I would argue that it is the most important and valuable to my analysis that he *himself* deciphered the flag as a signifier of Swedish humanitarian aid and used as such in a performative way. Using the flag is not only a practice through which Johan signified Sweden, but also a performative act in itself: it is not *only* performative of activism, but it is more precisely performative of Swedish activism. This identity element is found in other interviews, where the expression "a proud Swede" is often used in the context of the tradition of humanitarian aid and human rights activism in Sweden.

While conducting observations at a manifestation for the refugees' rights, a striking point was the large number of parents that brought their children to the event. In strollers, raised on their parent's shoulders so that they could see better over the crowd, playing together at the Gustav Adolf statue in Malmö, or raising their own protest banners, children were present. Asking a parent why they chose to bring their little daughter to the protest, they answered:

> "I try to show her this side of life. That things don't just happen and sometimes many people need to fight for their rights. I mean, I don't think I do much in this sense [help refugees] but I think it's important for her to be part of this. I used to go to protests with my parents when I was small. I think I went to one against nuclear power. These are things she will remember and it's part of a family tradition now, I guess."
>
> (Maya, personal communication, September 2015)

The sudden realization, while answering, that it is now "part of a family tradition", together with statements such as "it is important to be part of this" is testimony to two points: firstly, that there is a nostalgic element in taking her daughter to protests since the same happened when the parent was a child (becoming therefore a tradition), secondly that there is a certain duty in doing the same thing in the her posture of a parent now. The large amount of children present at protests is by no means new in Sweden. In figure 1 we can observe a woman pushing a stroller in an Swedish anti-Vietnam War demonstration in 1970. In figure 2 we can observe a more contemporary view at the September 2015 manifestation for the refugees' rights, where a father was holding his child on his shoulders, offering a better view over the stage where talks by activists were taking place. The historical presence of children at protests can be seen as serving an educational purpose, in what is later seen as "the right thing to do".

Activism is therefore, learned, and then enacted in the adult life though a model of Swedish citizenship that includes and puts great value on humanitarianism. As Judith Butler sees gender as something learned through a "stylized repetition of acts such as a certain selection of toys or clothes that are gender specific" (2006, p.191), so do activists perform their role by repeating a set of learned behaviors such as

Figure 1 Manifestation in 1970

Figure 2 Manifestation in 2015

the common repetition of the phrase "comes from within", or "burning for the cause". The learning of what it means to be a good activist is done through the observation of what other established good activists do and repeating, or trying to repeat, in the same manner. As a result, activists are *performing* a rehearsed role, one that is based on a well spread and established model of what it means to be a good activist. For example, phrases such as "an activist for me means to burn for something, it is a feeling, it is an engagement" are common and expressed in almost every interview several times by people who do not know each other.

Verbal utterances help individuals "perform" their identity, through using expressions largely acceptable as belonging to people who are passionate about a cause, people who are within the ideal activist model. Searle's taxonomy which divided speech acts in assertives, directives, paradigmatics, expressives, and declarations is especially useful for the cases when activists say that they are, or not, activists. Declarations, or when saying something makes it so, are to be observed when interviewees are asked if they consider themselves to be activists. By answering "yes", they do not only make an assertion, but choose to construct themselves that way, presenting themselves to the interviewer as such. In this case, saying makes it so[ii]. Searle's contribution lies beyond this, when he states that our knowledge of the world is in reality knowledge of two facts: brute facts and institutional facts (as cited in Loxley, 2007, p. 53-54). While brute facts may be as simple as "the stone is blue", institutional facts are only possible under certain conditions ("I gave you 10 Euros" for example is a statement possible only because of the institution of money). By applying this framework, we can understand that the activists' utterances are only possible because of the existence of such institutions like charity, Swedish citizenship, nationality, etc. The common denominator discussed before, Swedish humanitarianism, is only possible to be performed because of a common understanding of what it is, which has been historically learned and naturalized. This is something that all the interviewees have in common and exhibit in very similar ways through identical expressions, or similar ways of understanding what an activist is. However, there are tensions when different identities intertwine with humanitarianism and, as I argue in the next section, can lead to competitive practices between activists.

6. Competitive activism

6.1 Competitive activism between different groups

Although both Refugees Welcome to Malmö and Kontrapunkt's members that were helping the refugees saw themselves as humanitarian people, who were (or trying to be) within the activist standard discussed before, the groups' main difference was political engagement. While Refugees Welcome to Malmö saw itself as politically neutral, Kontrapunkt was based on a heavily political cultural organization. Although in the first months of the crisis development in Malmö both groups had similar activities (cooking food, collecting needed items, providing guidance, etc.) the members soon chose to join the organization that best matched their own ideology (for example, left-wing political-engaged activists would join Kontrapunkt, while right wing or non-political activists would join Refugees Welcome to Malmö). The clear separation of the two groups led to a set of discriminatory practices and competitive behavior based on the fact that while all the members of the groups were identified as humanitarian, not all of them saw political-engagement as the best ingredient to the refugee crisis.

As Crenshaw (1991) notes, there are many social identities that can together create tensions that might lead to discrimination of different groups (p. 1299). In the case of the activists working in the refugee crisis at Malmö C, political alignment was one factor. Even though Refugees Welcome to Malmö was situated in the neutral political zone, where not much interest was given to different political scenes, Kontrapunkt found itself in the left-wing. Although united by the same cause, to help the refugees, the two groups often found themselves competing for platforms to express their ideas, visibility, members, etc. The sudden incompatibility of political engagement and humanitarian aid is illustrated in an interviewee's answer regarding the eventual bad reputation of activism:

> "We live in a time when it [activism] is seen as something communist. It became so, as soon as someone says 'activism' they say 'damn communists'. Of course there are communists but there are surely more activists."
>
> (Jan, personal communication, October, 2015)

The interviewee not only connects the left-wing political affiliation to the bad reputation of activism but completely separates them stating that surely there are more activists than communists, alluding at the impossibility of co-existing. By seeing this type of political engagement as “bad activism” Kontrapunkt is therefore seen by Refugees Welcome to Malmö as not sincere, because they have a political agenda, or effective in their role in the refugee crisis. Another instance in which sincerity was doubted because of the existence of political agenda was in the case of the struggle of two feminist groups over a location offered by the Stockholm municipality (Nilsson, 2010). As Nilsson explains, “since the politicians were more willing to finance social caretaking than political struggle, this difference was used rhetorically in the media and towards the local politicians to gain access to the specific house in question” (2010, p. 96). Similarly, the difference in ideology between the two groups were used as a rhetorical tool, by making the other group look inferior, but gaining themselves a superior position. Proof of this rhetoric is found in interviewees’ own discourse, when they confess they prefer one group over the other because of a match in political alignment, values, or a better organization like in the following example:

> “I haven’t been helping at Kontrapunkt, I’ve been at Refugees Welcome [to Malmö]. … I was there the first, the second week and it was… the atmosphere is different definitely. I guess the difference is it’s more organized here than it’s over there.”
>
> (Sara, personal communication, 2015).

Burnouts as a result of poor organization were seen in a negative light. Burnout examples were given almost exclusively from the other activist group than the one the interviewee was part of, giving away the emerging competitiveness. When asked what happened to a different group of left wing politically oriented activists that were working at Malmö C and that later disappeared, an interviewee responded:

> “They are not here anymore. They burnt out. If you don’t get organized, you’re going to burn out. So they’re probably home licking their wounds.”
>
> (Patrick, personal communication, October, 2015)

The expression “licking their wounds”, is especially reminiscent of a fighting scene, of a scenario where two or more parties were competing for something and the defeated side is now recovering. Indeed, the same interviewee then continues saying that

> "They will be there in the front lines the next time something like this happens."
>
> (Patrick, personal communication, October, 2015)

The language used, "front lines", is also alluding to a fighting scenario adding to the idea that the two activist parties are not only competing, but are in a war-like situation. This is a similar situation to what Charlotte Fridolfsson (2005) describes in her article on the use of metaphors in political protests, where demonstrators in Sweden would often describe their action in connection to war metaphors such as "the feeling of war", "the battle of Gothenburg, or "the besieged city"; Fridolfsson mentions the metaphors as being "so obvious and established that protest becomes very similar to war in the discourse" (p. 7). The losing party, in this case the activists who suffered burnouts are then victims of their own poor organization and are portrayed are individuals who are not engaged enough for a cause but are just looking for the next "time something happens".

Because of social identities, such as different political affiliations, the activists are often divided between Refugees Welcome to Malmö and Kontrapunkt. In one of the most noteworthy examples of conflicting overlapping identities, an activist noted that

> "there were certain activist groups that I wouldn't normally associate with. Extreme left-wing activists. Groups that are know to be violent. That's the kind of activism I don't subscribe to. We had some cooperation with them in the first weeks but…associating themselves with the authorities is definitely not on their agenda. So they were upset when we started talking to the city about moving to a bigger scale."
>
> (Lars, personal communication, October 2015)

Although referred to as activism, the interviewee also notes that it is not the kind of activism he wants to take part of. In this sense, he sees the Kontrapunkt as left-wing, with a political agenda. Their reputation as being violent makes them an undesirable type of activists, and therefore the wrong type. In this sense, the political right-wing identity of the activist overlaps the humanitarian one: it doesn't matter that both groups have the same purpose, they also have a different political affiliation. This led to instances where Kontrapunkt was seen as being less effective as activists because of their political affiliations: many newly arrived volunteers did not want to associate themselves with them, and when a meeting was convoked with the many NGOs and smaller groups helping the refugees, in order to obtain a better communication between the different actors engaged, the organization was not invited. It then became clear that Kontrapunkt, although having the same agenda as everyone else (namely to help the refugees), was openly discriminated against by the Refugees Welcome to Malmö members as well as other NGOs who did not want to associate their names with political organizations. This was the result of the two intersecting identities, namely the humanitarian and the political, that gave way to the activists' competition: both groups were efficient at helping but their members were trying to disprove of the other's practices. This is evident in the way the activists refer to the competition by highlighting faults such as political agendas, lack of organization, burnouts, etc. The political identity of many members has a strong impact on much of their actions, as it functions at times as a filter through which they take decisions. In the case of Kontrapunkt, the majority of the group's members were positioned in a left-oriented culture that appeared visible in their language (for example through expressions such as "I have been red all my life"), ways of dressing (wearing shirts with leftist messages), or displaying the groups' logo (the organization's political alignment is publicly known). This display of Kontrapunkt member's collective identity has led to a tension between their humanitarian identities which they share with other activists who instead disapprove of their political values. It is here that intersectionality proposes to try and not select one identity over the other: the conflict created did not result because of the political alignment of Kontrapunkt, or because of the non-political stance of Refugees Welcome to Malmö; it was instead the product of the fact that both groups shared one identity, namely humanitarianism, but not the same political values. This overlap has resulted in both groups competing over reputation and status, and was displayed through statements such as the ones previously illustrated in this section.

As shown so far, competition arises between two groups as a result of overlapping identities, in this case humanitarian and political alignment. In the next section I will argue that competition also happens within the same group, as a result of the before-mentioned ideal activist standard.

6.2 Competitive activism within the same group

The competition between activists who are part of the same group is a tacit one, in comparison with the one between groups. The competition is not something that is aimed at, or that is performed intentionally, but a bi-product of the standard of activism previously discussed. As mentioned before, time is a key element in establishing if a person is an effective activist or a volunteer. The more time is spent helping the refugees the more the person is seen as belonging to the group of effective and engaged activists. For example a person with a history of working for both groups, mentions that

> "I believe I am doing very little in comparison with those people that I have met. People who have taken a leave from their jobs. I… I can't do that so…"
>
> (Maria, personal communication, October 2015)

The idea that they are not doing enough is commonly expressed by activists and volunteers. Many mention the fact that they are not doing enough, the always-implied possibility that they could do more, the fact that there is always someone that is better at helping than they are. In this sense, they see themselves as subordinate to other activists, implying the idea of hierarchy in effective activism.

Other activists express their distrust to other peers' ways of doing their job, mentioning how their own approach is the right one, even within the same group. An interviewee mentions that

> "If I now go from here, and if someone else takes over and organizes it… If there is a person that replaces me that does not understand how the situation is, she will not be able to handle it the same way"
>
> (Monica, personal communication, September 2015)

The interviewee implies the impossibility that a new volunteer can perform their role at the quality at which they perform it. New individuals that have just started volunteering in the group are often seen as inexperienced and underperforming, or even poorly organized. This is reflected in one activist's statement when asked if there is any competition between the members of the organization:

> "I believe that it's something that comes with time. Because some activists that I had been in contact and have been active for a long time don't have any problems because they have had burnouts, have been excluded and included, and have learned that the cause is the most important. But between the new activists there I have seen these tendencies [to compete]"

(Johan, personal communication, 2015)

The interviewee sees being included and excluded, or having burnouts, almost as a rite of passage for the established activists who have learned the hard way how to be effective and that the cause is the most important. This idea is transmitted to the new activists and volunteers who feel that it is difficult to fall within the framework established by the more experienced activists. Therefore, they attempt to do what is considered to be "real activists" (as expressed by a volunteer) actions: spend more time helping, taking work leave, bringing more members to the group, gathering more donations, etc. However, this creates a hierarchy depending on who does more, and therefore who is perceived as a better activist. In this sense, the competition within the group is a race for reputation and visibility within their own organization.

6.3 Competitive activism and belonging

In their work on NGOs competitiveness in the media, Cottle and Nolan (2007) note that it is a well established fact that different organizations compete for resources in a globalized world that has brought many humanitarian organizations to life (p.865). In their work, quoting the National Media and Public Affair Officer of Save the Children Australia, they underline the idea of competitiveness as a normalized practice in NGOs:

> "I don't think it [the crowded field] creates tension, I just think it creates competitiveness. I think you become aware of, you know, we need to make sure that we're getting our name out there . . . When it all boils down, we're basically all trying to do the same thing. But we are aware that we're all competing for the same dollar. Really, you can't do what we need to do without funding.

(as cited in Cottle & Nolan, 2007, p. 865) .

The competitiveness between large organizations was also put into context when an interviewee working for the UNHCR (the United Nations Refugee Agency) mentioned the fact that the people are more interested in talking to him about the UN as an organization than the cause of donating money for the refugees. The interviewee later mentioned that although it is good to be part of a big organization like the UN, it is also difficult at times when people associate the UN with corruption scandals, upon which he mentioned

> "I have seen other organizations who employ people who don't seem to be so motivated. They are just trying to get money. We want good representatives, we feel like you have to be genuinely interested."
>
> (David, personal communication, 25 September, 2015)

In this example the interviewee was not an independent activist (or saw himself as an activist) and was affiliated to the UNCHR, working on convincing the pedestrians in Malmö to become members and donate for the refugee fund. He is the only person who referred to himself and the organization as "we". This was not the case with other interviewees who would talk about the organizations they were part of as separate entities even if they were their members. This might be the case because he was compensated and therefore might have been additionally motivated or because of the nature of the organizational culture of UN that leads to their employees' fidelity. Nonetheless, there is an issue of *belonging* to the organization. As sociologist Nira Yuval-Davis (2006) notes, "constructions of self and identity can, however, in certain historical contexts, be forced on some people. In such cases, identities and belongings become important dimensions of people's social location and positioning, and the relationships between locations and identification can become empirically more closely intertwined." (p. 203). Belonging is therefore, another reason for the performance of the activist role, as part of a Swedish context. As mentioned in the introduction section, Sweden has a history of activism and fighting for the human rights that is seen by many as tradition now. A consequence of that is fact that the activist identity in Sweden incorporates a humanitarian element that is inherent in the notion of Swedishness. Davis (2006) notes that "using a common set of values, such as 'democracy' or 'human rights', as the signifiers of belonging can be seen as having the most permeable boundaries of all" (p. 209). Therefore, as a democratic country, most of the Sweden's citizens share values related to democracy and human rights.

6.4 Branding practices

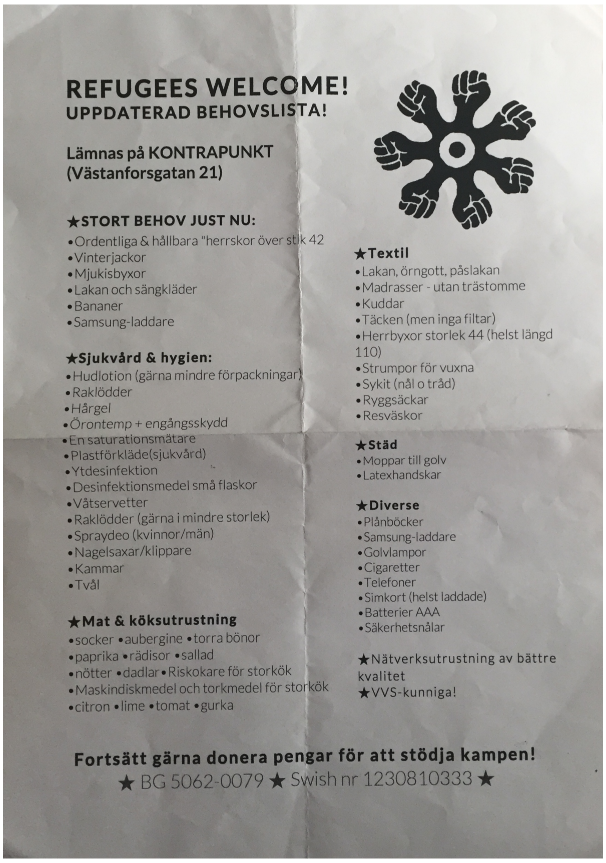
The existence of competitive activism leads to the activists' tendency to create a brand. A brand, generally defined as something that would distinguish a product, company, or service from others is seen in this case in the will of Refugees Welcome to Malmö to distance themselves from Kontrapunkt and vice-versa. The brand creation is seen as a necessity for large NGOs that take a further step and employ brand risk strategies in order to protect their image and stay competitive in a globalized world where they are dependent on resources from donations; in this sense, Cottle and Nolan (2007) mention that “the contemporary feel of humanitarian NGOs, then, is characterized by risk, repetition and a media logic disposed to mediated scandals with NGOs reflexively responding in ways that are designed to “protect the brand” through professionalized communication strategies” (p. 874). The same idea can be argued in the case of the activists who, finding themselves in competition with other peers, attempt to “brand” themselves as best activists, efficient, passionate, and engaged, according to the standard imposed by their own community.

The brand is not created to produce profit, but to delimit and underline the different type of activism that one adheres to. In the case of Kontrapunkt, interviewees use such expressions as “being red all my life” and “helping society”, or “coming together to help”, while Refugees Welcome to Malmö uses more general notions of helping such as “national duty”, and “setting a good example”. The brand works in a way that transmits and performs the morals and values that the respective group adheres to and attracts new members who are similarly inclined. Therefore, it is not unusual that a political left wing volunteer that started helping in the more general and open Refugees Welcome to Malmö, would go work exclusively to Kontrapunkt upon hearing that they share the same ideology. Following the same logic, someone who does not agree with the underlying political tone of Kontrapunkt would go work in Refugees Welcome to Malmö.

On occasion, the word *marketing* is used, as one interviewee remembers the moment he was considering to apply for a position of organizer in helping of the refugees:

> “I told the municipality that they needed a person that is working well on location and that could express himself/herself in front of a management group. And yes, I thought then that I could market myself to occupy that position. And I hate to say it, but it all comes within the scope of my education.”
>
> (Johan, personal communication, 2015)

Additional hints of one’s capability as an effective activist are uttered in the interviews: long history of fighting for human rights, experienced in holding talks and speeches, working with refugees from day one, have brought their contacts to help and donate, have been sacrificing time and money on order to engage more with the helping



REFUGEES WELCOME!
UPPDATERAD BEHOVSLISTA!

Lämnas på KONTRAPUNKT
(Västanforsgatan 21)

★STORT BEHOV JUST NU:
- Ordentliga & hållbara "herrskor över stlk 42
- Vinterjackor
- Mjukisbyxor
- Lakan och sängkläder
- Bananer
- Samsung-laddare

★Sjukvård & hygien:
- Hudlotion (gärna mindre förpackningar)
- Raklödder
- Hårgel
- Örontemp + engångsskydd
- En saturationsmätare
- Plastförkläde(sjukvård)
- Ytdesinfektion
- Desinfektionsmedel små flaskor
- Våtservetter
- Raklödder (gärna i mindre storlek)
- Spraydeo (kvinnor/män)
- Nagelsaxar/klippare
- Kammar
- Tvål

★Mat & köksutrustning
•socker •aubergine •torra bönor
•paprika •rädisor •sallad
•nötter •dadlar •Riskokare för storkök
•Maskindiskmedel och torkmedel för storkök
•citron •lime •tomat •gurka

★Textil
- Lakan, örngott, påslakan
- Madrasser - utan trästomme
- Kuddar
- Täcken (men inga filtar)
- Herrbyxor storlek 44 (helst längd 110)
- Strumpor för vuxna
- Sykit (nål o tråd)
- Ryggsäckar
- Resväskor

★Städ
- Moppar till golv
- Latexhandskar

★Diverse
- Plånböcker
- Samsung-laddare
- Golvlampor
- Cigaretter
- Telefoner
- Simkort (helst laddade)
- Batterier AAA
- Säkerhetsnålar

★Nätverksutrustning av bättre kvalitet
★VVS-kunniga!

Fortsätt gärna donera pengar för att stödja kampen!
★ BG 5062-0079 ★ Swish nr 1230810333 ★

Figure 3 Kontrapunkt flyer for needed donations

needs, etc. The image of the before-discussed activist model is therefore, performed and used in a similar way to branding and marketing strategies.

Although not an uncommon practice as shown by Cottle and Nolan (2007), the practice of competitiveness in activism, leading to the branding of identities that would suggest selective values and morals, has repercussions on the original aim of the activist, namely the help of the refugees. Primarily, time and energy is spend researching what the other group is doing, continuing to improve one's image in order to attract more members, and putting more strain on members who are aiming to set themselves within a model of an effective activist.

Another branding practice is the usage of the organizations' logo on t-shirts, Facebook profiles, flyers, to denote the individual's ties to the respective group. For example, on a flyer collected in a public space in Malmö, the logo of Kontrapunkt is visible on a list of needed donations (Figure 3).

As I have illustrated so far, the competition between activists happens on two levels, namely between members of different groups, as well as members of the same activist organization. Furthermore, I have argued that there is a link between competing practices and issues of belonging. Lastly, I have shown that a direct way of handling the competition, activists engage in marketing-like practices. In the next section I will discuss the implications of my findings, as well as their applicability.

7. Discussion

The competition, both between members of the same group and between different organizations, had visible effects on the activists and volunteers during the fieldwork conducted. In the next section I discuss the implications of this competition, as well as how my findings can be applicable by individual activists, activist organizations, as well as state institutions.

7.1 Implications

One of the most visible implication of the competitiveness between activists was how this situation was negatively affecting their health**.** As a result of trying to stay within the ideal activist standard, individuals would increasingly work a large number of hours. Extreme cases of activists who had worked thirty hours were often given as positive example of engagement, therefore promoting this idea of working too much. However, the reality was that tiredness among activists and volunteers led to difficulty in focusing on the correct tasks and at times act aggressively to the people around them. Activists mentioned individuals who had to renounce helping the refugees because of burnouts, something that Chen and Gorski (2015) also note in their own study on activist burnout, stating that the some of the activists interviewed had left activism at least temporarily as a direct effect of burnouts (p. 378). Low efficiency, as a consequence in turn of tiredness and burnout, is also rampant amongst the activists. During my fieldwork there were instances were an entire organization withdrew itself from helping at Malmö C, as well as different activists who could not cope with the emotional impact and the increased volunteering hours. Therefore, starting to help the refugees, and then increasingly working more, has lead to the complete cease of actions of people who could not cope with tiredness and burnout symptoms anymore. Moreover, none of the two main groups in Malmö had the psychological support necessary to offer to such cases of burnouts and emotional distress.

To the large amount of hours some volunteers would spend helping was also added the fact that the situation of the refugee crisis has a strong emotional impact on many. This is problematic since human rights activists are especially susceptible to burnouts because they perceive their work as to have an important value to the world and therefore requiring an important emotional investment (Chen & Gorski, 2015). Volunteers would sometimes motivate their choice in the increasingly many hours spent helping in addiction-like terms like “needing to work”, “cannot stop”, or “difficult to not think about it”. Activists, in turn, would spend time directly helping the refugees *and* organizing donations, manifestations, speeches, writing for the media, or working on collaborations, this leading to even more anxiety and stress. To all this is added the fact that many are motivated to do increasingly more in order to stay within the standard of the ideal activist, which is therefore continuously raised and becomes difficult to attain by individuals who cannot spend entire days volunteering and working for the refugees' rights.

Spending many hours working with the refugees in order to attain the activist standard can have the opposite effect to the one originally desired: instead of helping the refugees, the aim is shifted to that of attaining recognition. Although activists and volunteers start as having their only aim that of helping the newly arrived refugees in Sweden, this aim is tacitly shifted slightly in gaining the respect from other activists, the visibility in the media, or the recognition for their efforts and sacrifices. This leads to an instance where the refugees become subordinated to the task of achieving a successful activist reputation.

Activism is generally seen as something everyone can do, as expressed by both activists and non-activists at the conducted focus group. However, the practice of marketing and branding of several activists, can lead to an instance where activism becomes a skill that is acquired through experience, and a large number of time spent for the cause. This discourages new activists and volunteers who feel that they do not have the necessary competence to be effective or offer any substantial help to the refugees. This has led to some cases of individuals who stopped helping altogether because they did not feel like they had the right skills for being activists (for example they felt that they were not political enough, or could not spend enough hours volunteering) and even discouraged potential volunteers from joining activist organizations. Therefore, an action that is perceived initially as being possible to do by everyone interested, becomes less accessible to people who do not have the required experience.

Competition, especially between different organizations, can lead to exclusion and discriminatory practices. This is even more puzzling, as the groups at Malmö C had the same aim, namely that of helping the refugees, but differed politically. The political alignment of Kontrapunkt lead to different instances when they were excluded from meetings with the municipality (they were not invited), or referred to negatively in the press as having their own political agenda, something that implies a less than honest reason to help the refugees. For example, in an article published by the Swedish news magazine Svenska Dagbladet, an official police report on the handling of the refugee crisis was published. In the article Kontrapunkt is reported to allow unregistered migrants to sleep in their accommodation, under the subtitle “Refugee activists with a personal agenda” (Gudmundson, 2015); the article describes the police report’s finding that extreme left organizations are pushing their own political agendas while helping the refugees.

The competition that was most evident in the media was that of the two groups and the state organs. While in the press both organization were critical of the migration bureau and the city municipality’s way of handling the crisis, the actions looked differently at the Malmö C station where organizations were collaborating peacefully and only mentioning this rivalry in interviews and in the media. However, during the crisis, as I then observed and noted in my fieldwork journal, the Migration Office booth installed at the Malmö C in order to guide and register the refugees would often give them business cards with Kontrapunkt’s address because of the possibility of sleeping and eating there while the city lacked spaces for the large amount of refugees. However, officially, Kontrapunkt was excluded from official meetings and later were threatened with a large fine for allowing homeless Roma to sleep in buildings that did not have the right approval, even though the same beds were just months before used for refugees without posing an issue (Mikkelsen, 2016). Although Refugees Welcome to Malmö also faced criticism at times in the press, the news about the organization was generally positive, like for example their nomination and winning of the “Year’s Grassroot Organization” for their tireless work for the refugees (Svensson, 2016).

The competition also created hierarchy. As the activists perceived their own groups and personas as being the best at helping the refugees, through the correct means and ways, it automatically led to an othering effect of the groups who were seen in opposition. In his work on representational practices, cultural theorist Stuart Hall (1997) develops the idea of meaning as made through difference, underlying the fact that categorizing ourselves as part of the given society’s accepted ‘norm’ we distance ourselves from The Other and therefore reinforce our own normality (p. 237). In this sense, being a member of Refugees Welcome to Malmö, Kontrapunkt, UNHCR, Red Cross, or any other organization means that one is part of it, but also that they *are not* part of the *other* organizations- the fact that one is included in one group automatically excludes them from another. Hierarchy is easily formed when the values and practices of the other groups differ from our own. As philosopher Jaques Derrida (2002) notes, difference is seldom neutral, and binary oppositions almost always involve a relation of power. Therefore, the groups that the activists belong to are seen as superior through their practices and illustrated as such in descriptions in interviews, as opposed to the other groups who are seen as less than ideal.

It is equally important to note that not all activists and volunteers suffered burnouts and, in contrast to the above, competition can have a positive effect also. In their work on studying the effects on rivalry in NCAA basketball teams, American researchers Kilduff, Elfenbein, and Staw (2010) take a psychological angle in showing that competition can be linked at times to increase in performance, noting that “rivalry was highest between teams that were similar, had a history of being evenly matched, and had repeatedly competed against each other (2010, p. 961). Although Kilduff, Elfenbein, and Staw’s study is located in the context of sports, where rivalry and competition are considered expected practices, it is difficult not to note the similarities in their findings to my own topic: organizations that are similar compete, and while some members are negatively affected (or not affected in Kilduff, Elfenbein, and Staw’s case), there are always those individuals who thrive from competition and see an increase in their effectiveness.

7.2 Applicability

I have so far shown that activists and volunteers engage in competitive practices while working to help the newly arrived refugees in Sweden. By looking at their motivations and ways of performing these practices I would argue that what is at stake here is the recognition of the activist status, obtaining space for their activities, as well as promoting values and ideals. In my previous section I have shown what are the implications of this situation. As a student of Applied Cultural Analysis, a MA programme with a tradition of focusing on the applicability of the results and not only presenting them, I will now suggest ways in which my findings can be taken into consideration by different actors, and even implemented in future strategies.

Ethnologists Billy Ehn and Orvar Löfgren (2009) discuss the importance of applied ethnographic research in their article “Ethnography in the Marketplace”, arguing for the need of bridging the world of academia and that of the commercial ethnography, stating that “the ultimate goal of all research is of course to provide understandings that can be applied to the world around us” (p. 45). In their work, Ehn and Löfgren illustrate the “so what?” effect, namely the idea that research should always have a clear applicability for the client, something that takes a more theoretical character within academia (2010, p. 44). Although my thesis has problematized the issue of competition within activism, it is important to underline again that the project was initially conceived as a research for Regionmuseet Kristianstad. As a result, clear applicable results were early formulated for their needs, generally consisting in presenting the museum with a series of insights of the ways the activists and volunteers in Malmö helped and the dynamics within their groups. This was thought as a new way for museums to present the refugee crisis from the angle of the humanitarian side, and not the refugees themselves. Although it is important that museums tell the stories of the refugees, what are sometimes hidden are precisely the stories of the helpers: activists, volunteers, and everyday people who had helped. In Sweden the refugee crisis coincided with the Malmö Museums' exhibition ”Welcome to Sweden”, an exhibition telling the stories of refugees from the WWII who had received help from the museum itself. The exhibition took the form of videos that the audience could see in separate sections of a large exhibition room. All the interviews were with former refugees that told their emotional stories of survival. What was lacking was precisely the stories of the nurses, human rights activists, and volunteers who although were seen in the footage were not given a voice. Katherine Goodnow (2008) warns against the museum practices of exhibiting "standard narratives" that have to stand for entire groups, and suggests new approaches, through which museums can tackle the subject of refugees, mentioning the differences in the way refugees have been welcomed in different countries as a viable angle (p. 34). Therefore, I see my findings as applicable in museum contexts that are already interested in capturing the historic moment of the refugee crisis and offering it to the public through future exhibitions and events. This type of applicability would be a way to show the public the challenges of activists in the refugee crisis.

I believe my findings can serve the best purpose as applied by the very people who they focused: activists and activist organizations. For the individual activists it is important to understand that different identities can come in conflict with each other and lead to negative results that can affect both their health and their work. While I use intersectional theory to analyze my data, I also incidentally believe that intersectionality is one way that can lead to avoiding issues of competition in future activism. Bringing awareness through my findings over the negative effects competition can have in the activists' lives is not enough, and I would like to extend it by suggesting an intersectional approach in their work. An intersectional view of activism within its community should be applied, so its members can become aware of the tensions that may arise between different overlapping identities and be better equipped to overcome them, therefore not risking burnouts and members quitting. Intersectionality is often suggested to be used in social work, for example in Crenshaw's example of how different identities need to be taken into account by social workers that help victims of domestic abuse (1991, p. 1253). Used as a method in the context of the refugee crisis, it is important that activists do not only look at refugees as their newly acquired identity, that of the refugee, but also as parents, religious, non-religious, women, men, etc. Although this applicability of intersectionality is important and often advised for the implementation in the activists and the volunteers' work, the point that it also should be implemented *internally* is almost never brought up. I would suggest that through my current findings, activists and volunteers realize the importance of using intersectionality in their own collaboration with other activists, understanding that political alignment, for example, is an important part of who one is and may be expected to emerge through ones' actions. In order to avoid tensions with other activists and emerging rivalries within the same group, intersectionality should be used in the same manner advised, but also within the activist community.

For activist organizations, it is vital that the emerging competitive practices of activists are taken note of, as this has deeper repercussions that may spread to negatively affecting the organizations' reputation and trust capital. In this sense, I would advise that my findings are used by organizations in building workshops and seminars with activists and informing them of the possibility of working with activists that share the same cause but not the same values, ideas, and methods. Advising activists how to negotiate further tensions within their own group, as well as with other groups can only be beneficial in preparing for when competition arise. Furthermore, burnouts as a result of overwhelming emotional work with the refugees, and increased working hours in order to be seen as a better activist, are issues that organizations need to take note of and protect their members from. As Chen and Gorski note, organizations have a tendency to dismiss burnouts and refuse to often tackle the subject (2005, p. 368). It is not enough in imposing a maximum number of hours one can volunteer. For example the Refugees Welcome to Malmö organization clearly stated that they would only allow people to volunteer for a maximum of nine hours per day, but this was not respected in practice. Therefore, it is important for organizations to explain what are the dangers of volunteering for too many hours and what is at risk by doing so. This can be done as part of team-building, meetings with new members, tutorial videos, etc.

Another actor in the refugee crisis that could benefit from my findings is the Migration Office (Migrationsverket) as well as other state institutions that had a word to say in the matter of receiving the refugees. Migrationsverket is especially worthy of attention in my thesis because they had a physical booth at Malmö C where they directly talked to the refugees. This lead, needless to say, to contact with the activists and volunteers also, who seldomly had a positive picture to paint regarding the state organizations. Activists reproduced the discourse that the state was overwhelmed and unprepared to receive the refugees and that their own presence there was necessary. If that was true or not, was never one of my research questions, but it is, nonetheless, important to underline that this was something repeated by a significant number of activists and even illustrated in the media[iii]. In this sense, the competition between activists from organizations and the state institutions was a discourse of the media, but seldom visible in practice. This should be noteworthy for the Migration Office who needs to be aware of this underlying distrust of their practices and actively work on strategies to better communicate with individual activists and private organizations for an increase in the effectiveness of their work. It is also important to note that the distrust of activists to other groups, but especially to the official state bodies in charge of receiving, registering, and providing safety to refugees can lead to the refugees' distrust towards these institutions. If refugees, many of whom are already distrustful of state institutions, are subjected to this distrust from people who are helping them and who they might already form friendship connections with, they might not be correctly informed about their rights.

8. Conclusion

In the subsequent section I will summarize my findings and reflect on their strengths and limitations. As my analysis gave way to a clearer picture of the often-problematic competition between activists, additional questions arise; as a result, I will also reflect on future research that can be conducted on the subject of activism.

8.1 Main findings

The 2015 refugee crisis has lead to the organization in Sweden of a humanitarian effort of large magnitude in order to receive and attend to the refugees. In my thesis, I explored the situation of the individuals that came together to help the newly-arrived refugees in Malmö, Sweden. Although the original research project was part of an internship for Regionmuseet Kristianstad, evidence of competitive behavior between activists has led me to my choice in further investigating this situation in the current thesis. My aim has been to understand the reasons behind the activists' competition with each other, both within the same group and with other group organizations, as well as to analyze how it was performed through their practices as well as expressed in interviews and sometimes media. In analyzing my collected data, I chose to employ a theoretical framework composed on intersectional theory, performativity, and myth theory.

My first finding was that the activist community is building a standard of what is considered an ideal activist. Interviewees have difficulties expressing a clear definition of an activist, but have a clear view of what is considered as positive and negative activism. As a result, many activists are trying to place themselves within what I name a standard of the ideal activist. This standard has clear elements that the individuals need to exhibit to gain the recognition and respect of the others: being passionate about the cause at hand, being engaged, spending a large amount of time helping, having a vast experience, being a good communicator, bringing other individuals to join the cause, etc. Noteworthy were the time spent and the experience needed in order for one to be perceived as being an ideal activist, which led to instances where activists felt they needed to work increasingly more to be perceived as better than their peers, leading therefore to an increasingly high and difficult to attain standard. Furthermore, what many individuals helping the refugees see as a natural thing to do is in fact a set of practices that are learned as part of what is considered to be a good Swedish citizen identity. Sweden's history of humanitarianism has lead to the naturalization of activist practices that are now seen as the norm in some families. Manifestations, protests, and volunteering activities are grounds for educating children in what is considered by many to be part of a Swedish identity and further grounded in family traditions. This leads to common expressions that come out in interviews between people who have never met each other. These reproduced discourses are then also present in the media and lead to further rivalry and competition between state institutions, other group organizations, or members of the same group.

My second and main finding is that the competitive practices between activists happen at two main levels: between members of the same group, and between other groups and organizations. I argue that the competitive practices within the same group are a main consequence of the activist's attempt to position themselves within the ideal activist standard. Furthermore, competitive practices between different groups are a consequence of the overlapping identities (in this case humanitarian and political) that create tensions and lead to rivalry. The competition between activists also leads to branding practices through which activists construct their identity as one that is very close to the ideal activist standard in order to stay within it and also to legitimize what they consider the best way of handling the situation- their way.

In the last section of my thesis I discussed the implications that such a competition between activists with the same goal has: burnouts, low effectiveness, exclusion and discriminatory practices, creation of hierarchy within the activist community, etc. I then illustrated possible applicable ways which different actors engaged in the refugee crisis can use in their work, based on my findings. Applicability is mainly aimed at the ways activists themselves can enrich their work by employing intersectionality within their own community, but also at different ways that organizations (governmental and private) can become more aware of these issues and therefore protect their members from burnouts or leaving their work by providing guidance in the form of workshops, seminars, video materials, etc.

8.2 Concluding reflections

In conclusion, I would like to take the time to reflect on my methods and findings looking at my research's strengths and limitations.

The strength of the research is its uncommon angle. As I mention before, an overwhelming amount of literature has been, and is being, written on the subject of the refugees themselves. Even though the subject of activists has been tackled before, it continues to be an underdeveloped angle in the context of the 2015 refugee crisis. Although articles have started to be published in the non-academic media, it remains a topic that has a large potential to be further investigated. Furthermore, even if we were to argue that the refugee crisis is not a phenomenon that is or should ever be looked at through the lens of the humanitarian help, as the people who we should prioritize are the refugee themselves, I believe we should nonetheless take note over the fact that the better we understand the dynamics between the individuals who are engaged in helping, the better they can prove to be more useful and help more effectively in the future.

A limitation I believe to be important to take into consideration is the fact that the fieldwork was conducted between September and late November. This was purely because of practical reasons, as my colleagues and I had set deadlines for delivering results to the Kristianstad Museum, as well as separate deadlines to deliver our internship reports to our professors at Lund University. Therefore, there had to be a clearly delimited time frame when the data collection was done in order to meet the deadlines. In retrospect, this limited our knowledge about how the activists continued their work, since the refugees continued to arrive to Malmö long after our research project was completed. Therefore, I believe that important information could have been collected from the interviewees who continued to work, or perhaps stopped because of their increased efforts that affected their health and capacity to effectively help. On that note, the limitation also opens the question of what happened to the activists afterwards, something I suggest in the following section as a possible future research.

8.3 Further research

As my research questions are answered in the present thesis, others are born regarding the subject of activism. Competitiveness is, of course, the topic I chose to focus on, but is by no means the only one I have found interesting in my fieldwork.

A possible direction for future research is the idea of activism as a social activity. A theme that has emerged during my observations and interviews with activists and volunteers was the fact that many came to help joined by their friends and family. Therefore, I sometimes asked myself how much importance does the social aspect of activism has and how is this affecting the community as a whole. Although this was not a direction I chose to further analyze, I believe it is important to understand the motivations of activists and how much does the fact that they join manifestations and volunteering activities with their friends matter.

Another topic that I find interesting is what is sacrificed and what is gained by becoming an activist. Although I argue in my paper that activists sacrifice time, money, and health in order to be perceived as ideal activists by the community, a further research in this topic may prove more revealing and more useful for the community itself. Here, I would argue, Marcel Mauss' gift theory would be an especially productive framework.

In my thesis I analyze how activism is performed mainly physically through manifestations, actions, identity-building, etc. However, activism is not only performed physically anymore and has found a good ground on social media platforms. Social media is often used by activists in communication, but also to spread word about needed donations, causes, and recruiting. I would then argue that further research on how the activists have organized themselves on social media would be a fruitful topic to be further investigated.

Finally, I believe a follow-up with activists that have been participants to the current ethnographic research would be an interesting project in the future. Investigating what happened to the activists and volunteers involved with the refugee crisis in 2015 in one year (or more) could provide useful information about the development of these practices on a longer time frame and yield results that could tell us more about the activists, such as if they continued their work or not, if they received any recognition, or if they even continue to be part of the activist community.

9. References

Ethnographic material:

a) List of Figures

Fig. 1 AB Helsingborgs-Bild (Photographer). (1970). Kambodjademonstration [digital image]. Retrieved from http://museum.helsingborg.se/web/object/950372

Fig. 2 C. Ghita. (Photographer). (2015, September). Manifestation for refugees rights in Malmö [digital image].

Fig. 3 C. Ghita (Photographer). (2016, May). Flyer for needed donations for the refugees [digital image]

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[i] it is unclear who first described the large number of refugees arriving in Europe as *the refugee crisis*, and the name itself has proven to be controversial. For example while the news channel CNN chose the usage of *refugee crisis* ("refugee crisis reaching", 2015), BBC preferred *migrant crisis* ("european migrant crisis", 2015). BBC's usage of the term *migrant* was met with criticism at times, with some individuals petitioning the use of "refugee" instead (Zygkostiotis, n.d). In my thesis, I chose to refer to the large numbers of refugees arriving in Europe as the *refugee crisis* because of the difference between a refugee (a person who is fleeing from persecution and risks death upon returning to the origin country) and migrant (who are voluntary movers and do not risk death upon returning to the origin country). Also, I choose to use the term because of the popular usage of the term *flyktingkrisen* in the Swedish media, which is a direct translation of "refugee crisis".

ii although saying one is an activist does not always makes it so, in this case I refer to the way activists perform, construct, and acknowledge their identity. By saying that they are activists they make a choice in becoming that, if only for the time of the interview. The same rationale goes for interviewees who chose to say they are not activists.

[iii] For example, in the newspaper Svenska Dagbladet's article ”Utan oss friviliga hade allt havevererat”, http://www.svd.se/utan-oss-frivilliga-hade-allt-havererat/om/flykten-till-europa