

Lund University
Department of Sociology

WPMM42
30 credits
Spring, 2019

Putting out Fires

*The situation of undocumented migrants in Sweden
and the role of civil society activism*

MSc in Welfare Policies and Management

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Abstract

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Master's Thesis WPMM42, 30 Credits
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The migration politics in Sweden have changed drastically within the past years as it has introduced stricter asylum policies and higher securitisation of borders. As a result, an increased number of people are forced to live as undocumented migrants, meaning without a legal permit to stay in the country. This thesis aims to contribute to the analysis of this development by investigating the role of civil society activism in relation to undocumented migrants in Sweden. In order to do this, six semi-structured interviews and one focus group interview were performed with civil society activists active in Malmö and Lund. The interviews focused on the situation of undocumented migrants, how the activists engage in order to improve their situations and what challenges they could identify within their support. The empirical material gained from the interviews have been analysed by using critical border theory and critical citizenship theory. The main findings of this study demonstrate that a life in undocumentedness is severely restrained by the fear of becoming subject for control and deported. Further, the acts of professionals within the welfare field have significant effect on the lives of undocumented migrants. As for civil society activists, their support plays a crucial role in improving the situation of undocumented migrants, since they have become the main provider of fulfilling the basic needs of undocumented migrants. Their support also has a political character as they engage in combating restricted migration policies through demonstrations, protests and campaigns. However, their aim to act politically becomes challenged by the heavy workload they carry.

Keywords: undocumented migrants, civil society activism, migration, borders

Popular science summary

In 2015, high numbers of asylum-seekers came to Sweden and the rest of Europe. A lot of these people received rejections on their asylum applications and are therefore, according to law, not allowed to stay in Sweden anymore. However, because it is not possible for many of them to go back to the country they came from, they still choose to live in Sweden. They are called undocumented migrants in English, and *papperslösa* in Swedish. In order to learn more about how their situation is and what support they may get, I have interviewed ten civil society activists that are engaged in supporting them.

From the interviews, I found out that the situation of undocumented migrants living in Sweden is very difficult. They do not have the rights that other citizens have, and they can also be found by the police anytime and in the worst case deported. When undocumented migrants come in contact with professionals within the welfare sector, for examples social workers at the social services, this can also be a risk because the police can be present at these places.

Civil society activists support undocumented migrants a lot. One example is that they fulfill their basic needs by helping them to survive financially, finding accommodation and offering them help in their legal process with the Migration Agency. Another important aspect of civil society activism is that they criticise the strict migration politics by demonstrating, protesting and campaigning. By doing this, they hope to put pressure on the politicians and through this, create a better situation for undocumented migrants. However, as they put so much time and energy in helping the undocumented migrants practically, they do not have much time and energy left to act politically. This is one of the biggest challenges within their engagement.

Thanks to all of you, who are every day fighting, for humane migration politics.

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1. Introduction

The recent decades of globalisation of the economy and movement of people across nation borders has led to changes within the European welfare states. One of these changes concerns increased securitisation and restrictions in migration policies (Rumford 2008). This means that people who are forced to leave their countries due to wars, conflicts or other matters face many difficulties when moving between geographical spaces since the borders between the nation states are controlled (Djampour 2018:31). Within the past years, these borders have become increasingly surveilled by military forces and guardians in order to keep certain groups and individuals out (Sager 2011:48). This development has been conceptualised as *the European border regime* which can be described as a regime characterised by securitisation, surveillance, border controls and deportations (Djampour 2018, Andersen 2013, Düvell 2011, Nyers 2008).

Taking the Swedish example, it has long been known for its social democratic welfare regime characterised by inclusive policies and social equality (Esping Andersen 1990). This approach has been mirrored in the attitude towards migration that has been rather inclusive and offered generous asylum policies in comparison with other EU countries (Schierup, Hansen & Castles 2006:109). However, this has changed within the past years and especially since 2015 when a growing number of asylum seekers came to Sweden. To begin with, the Swedish government had a welcoming approach towards the asylum-seekers and the prime minister held a famous speech in September 2015 saying that “my Sweden does not build walls” (Regeringen 2015). The central stations and refugee camps were filled with volunteers who wanted to help and offer their support. However, this did not last for a long time as the politics changed drastically in November 2016. First, border controls were introduced between Denmark and Sweden in order to keep asylum seekers out (Nielsen 2017:46). At this point, the migration streams were described as “a serious threat to the public order and security of the nation” (Regeringen 2015). This approach continued to dominate politics during the following year when the asylum policies became even harsher and an interim three years legislation was implemented in June 2016. The new legislation introduced temporary residence permits to asylum seekers (instead of permanent ones) and severely restricted the right to family reunification (FARR 2016). These changes during 2015 and 2016 adjusted the asylum policies in Sweden to the minimum standard of EU (Migrationsinfo 2018).

The sudden shift in the migration policies and the general attitude towards migration resulted in consequences for those asylum seekers who had come to Sweden - both in terms of how their asylum applications were handled and how they were treated by the society. One consequence is that a high number of asylum applications were rejected which resulted in an increased number of people staying in Sweden without a legal status - as undocumented migrants (Nordling 2017:46). The situation of undocumented migrants has been described as difficult as they cannot find accommodation, their access to welfare services is extremely limited and they live under the constant risk of being deported (Nordling 2017, Nielsen 2016, Sager 2011). Their vulnerable position has caused reactions among some parts of the population and especially among civil society. Activists have organised and mobilised themselves and offered their support to migrants in multidimensional ways. Their actions have been understood as ways to challenge exclusionary politics and finding new forms of inclusion (Nyers 2008).

From a welfare perspective, this topic becomes relevant to study because there is a clear tendency that civil society has taken over many of the responsibilities that used to belong to the welfare state, and not least when it comes to those subject to irregular migration. Scholars have argued that the emergence of civil society can be understood as the effect of an eroding welfare state caused by the introduction of neoliberal policies. This has changed the way marginalised groups such as migrants are dealt with; by putting economic interests in the forefront, rather than humanitarian principles (Morel 2012:65). Therefore, it becomes highly relevant to discuss the situation of undocumented migrants in Sweden today as it highlights how the welfare state and civil society stand in relation to each other and affect each other.

1.1 Aims and questions of research

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the situation of undocumented migrants in Sweden¹ and what possibilities, as well as challenges, civil society activists identify in their support given to undocumented migrants. The thesis departs from these following questions,

- How do civil society activists describe the situation of undocumented migrants?

¹ Even though the context of this thesis is Sweden, it should be noted that the study has been carried out in Malmö and Lund.

- How do civil society activists engage in order to improve the situation of undocumented migrants?
- What challenges can civil society activists identify in their engagement with undocumented migrants?

1.2 Structure of the text

This text will proceed as follows. The *introduction*, which is this section, has provided an introduction of the topic as well as the research purpose and the research questions that the study departs from. *Previous research* will go through the core concepts of the thesis and contextualise them. There will also be a historical overview of irregular migration and the role of civil society in supporting undocumented migrants. *Theoretical perspectives* will present a theoretical discussion on borders and how borders can be challenged through acts of citizenship. Thereafter, the *methodology* will present the selection of method (semi-structured interviews and focus group interview) and how the process of analysing the empirical material has proceeded. Further, there will be a discussion on the role as a researcher and the ethical considerations when performing this study. Then, a *presentation of the informants* will be provided. The chapter *findings and analysis* is the fundamental part of the thesis as it presents the findings of the study and how these can be analysed and understood. Here, it should be noted that the empirical material is analysed with the concepts and literature presented in both the theory section and previous research section as I see these parts as feeding into, and integrating with, each other. The last chapter, *concluding remarks and discussion*, summarises the findings and aims to provide a further discussion of the themes presented in the analysis. This part also entails a discussion of the limitations of the thesis and how these can be further developed for future works.

2. Previous research

This section will present a discussion on different concepts such as irregular migration, undocumented migrants and civil society. I find it crucial to not only present these concepts, but also to provide a critical discussion on how they have occurred, and why they should be understood as discursive ones. Further, an overview will be presented on studies investigating the role of civil society support for undocumented migrants.

2.1 The emergence of irregular migration

The International Council on Human Rights Policy (ICHR) defines an irregular migrant, or undocumented migrant, as someone who does not have a legal status within a transit- or hosting country. It is someone who has travelled into the country illegally, or legally, and thereafter lost their permission to stay. Those who have not applied for asylum thus also count in to the group of irregular migrants (Migrationsinfo 2019). Even though this definition might appear as a concrete one, it is argued that the concept of irregular migration should be understood as a discursive one (Nielsen 2016, Düvell 2011, Khosravi 2010). This means that irregularity is not an objective status *per se* but rather a status that is constructed by the political discourses and legislations aiming at regulating the movement of certain people (Düvell 2011:276) Therefore, it is the settings of a certain time and place that determines whether the movement of a person is considered irregular or regular. However, the emergence of irregular migration should be understood as the result of migration law and how it has evolved historically (Nielsen 2016:12).

According to Frank Düvell (2006:21), the concept of irregularity has become so frequent in today's public discourse that it tends to be forgotten that it is a rather new, late-modern phenomenon. Historians argue that it was first during the 1920s that governments started to put immigration restrictions into practice with the invention of passports and deportation procedures (ibid. 23). Therefore, it was first during this period that the concept of an 'illegal alien' was constructed, referring to someone becoming 'illegal' due to the lack of citizenship or nationality within a certain territory. The birth of this idea can be associated with the political processes of nation building after the First World War. However, this development changed direction in the post-Second World War growth period when there was a huge demand for labor. This changed the attitude towards migration. Recruitment schemes were set up which allowed people to cross nation borders in order to work in other countries. During this time, entry was

legal, and residence not intended and therefore many movements occurred outside the recruitment schemes. However, living in a country and working outside the recruitment schemes was not considered particularly problematic and many of the migrants could regularise their status afterward (ibid). Nielsen (2016:13) argues that the inclusive approach during this period was partly due to the structural dependency on migrating workers in the economies of the European countries. It was first in 1972 that the first regulations were issued that penalised undeclared working among immigrants and thereby transforming irregular work into illegal work (Düvell 2006:24). In the wake of the recessions in the 1970s and 1980s, the policies became increasingly restrictive, and almost all industrialised countries abandoned their recruitment schemes and replaced them by generally more restrictive immigration policies (ibid. 25).

This shift towards restricted migration politics must be understood in the light of the changing character of migration during this time, as those arriving were mainly asylum-seekers seeking protection and not labor migrants. Castles (2014:324) argues that this sort of migration was considered *unwanted* and therefore not received as positively. It resulted in the OECD countries imposing harder regulations which reduced the freedom of movement for people from certain countries severely (Düvell 2006:25). For example, VISA requirements become a key component in keeping the number of asylum seekers down, as it made it much more difficult for people to cross borders. Taking Sweden in consideration, this process became intensified along with the membership in the EU as the Schengen Agreement² expanded the list of countries with visa requirements (Nielsen 2016:71). Another agreement within EU that demonstrates the increasingly restrictive approach towards migration is the Dublin Regulation (Sager 2011:48). The regulation is a central component of EU common asylum policies and states that an asylum seeker has to fill in an asylum application in the first country of arrival (Migrationsinfo 2019). In Sweden, this regulation has resulted in a rise in rejection rates as it has opened for a re-assignment of responsibility to the other member states within the EU (Nielsen 2016:71).

These regulations within the past decades have resulted in irregular migration emerging in virtually all of the wealthiest nations states (De Genova 2002). As Nielsen (2016) argues it

² The Schengen Agreement opened up for free movement within the Schengen area. The members of the Schengen agreement have therefore dismantled all internal borders and replaced them with a common external border (Migrationsinfo 2019).

therefore becomes necessary to understand the emergence of irregular migration as a result of migration policies. Consequently, the development after 2015 becomes relevant to study, as the high streams of migrants to the European countries have resulted in increasing border controls and harsher policies. In Sweden, this can be demonstrated by the border controls that was introduced between Denmark and Sweden in November 2015 in order to keep asylum seekers out (Nielsen 2017:46). Further, it is demonstrated by an interim three-years legislation implemented in 2016 that introduced temporary residence permit and restricted the right to family reunification (FARR 2016).

2.2 Undocumented migrants: definitions and counting

The understanding of different groups is highly dependent on the words and definitions used in order to address the people within the group. There is a wide range of terminology used when addressing migrants without a legal status and the words used can be linked to a certain discursive strategy or political position (Anderson 2013). Critics who are opposed to a certain type of migration, such as far right or racist parties, usually choose the word “illegal migrants” (Nyers 2008). Such a definition has been criticised due to its criminalising and stigmatising connotations and scholars have argued that migrants who cross borders illegally does not become illegal persons (Nordling 2017:39, Sager 2011:22). Most researchers and policymakers aim at employing a more neutral language. However, the definitions used rarely bring a positive or affirmative light to the group but rather portrays them as lacking something. Commonly used terms such as irregular migrants (marked difference from being regular), undocumented migrants (lack of documents) and clandestine workers (lack of visibility) all emphasise the absence of papers or status within the group (Nyers 2008:132). Further these definitions are based on a binary relationship and puts the group in opposition to what is considered normal or desirable (Nielsen 2016:11). Even though these definitions are problematic due to their negative connotations, they do capture the excludedness of being in absence of a legal status. In this study, the definition *undocumented migrant* is used. One of the reasons behind such a decision is that the word in the most similar way translates to the Swedish word *papperslös* which is the most commonly used word by civil society activists. Further, there is a certain neutralising dimension to the word since it refers to the lack of required documents being the problem and not personal characteristics of the migrant (Nordling 2017:40).

There are both practical and ethical risks with announcing numbers when it comes to undocumented migrants. First, there are difficulties in counting a group that are not registered

in population statistics and tend to stay away from public authorities (Migrationsinfo 2018). Second, as Nordling (2017:40) points out, there is an ethical concern in regard to the question: Whose interest are we counting for? This indicates that there needs to be an awareness of what purposes, and for whom, numbers are being produced and used. As irregular migration is a politicised issue and undocumented migrants are often portrayed as a threat, numbers play a discursive role in upholding certain points-of-views (Triandafyllidou 2009:17). At the same time, numbers play an important role when arguing for stronger protection for undocumented migrants (ibid.). Looking at Sweden, the rate of which asylum applications are rejected and people are becoming undocumented, has increased steadily since the beginning of the 1990s (Sager 2012: 20). As undocumentedness is connected to asylum policies, more restricted regulations on international level as well as national level, have resulted in a drastic rise of undocumented migrants (Nielsen 2016:15). In 2010, the estimated number of undocumented migrants was between 10,000 and 50,000 in Sweden, and 2000-3000 of there were children. In the EU the estimated number at this time was around 3 million people (Socialstyrelsen 2010). However, these numbers may not be representative today as it is believed that the number has raised within the past years.

2.3 Living as undocumented in Sweden

An undocumented migrant is often described as someone who does not have the legal permission to stay within a certain territory (Migrationsinfo 2018). This is a simplified definition since it neither explains the reason behind why someone becomes undocumented, nor provides any information on the unclarities that the status in reality carries. According to Khosravi (2010:98) the group is generally assumed to consist of three main categories; those who have overstayed their visa, received an order of expulsion or have entered the country illegally. However, there is no easy way to distinguish between the different subsets of the group since the status of migrants tends to be blurred (Nielsen 2016:10). This is due to various reasons such as shifts in policies and legislation. As an example, former asylum seekers in Sweden are able to renew their asylum applications (if they are not discovered by the police or other authorities) after four years when the decision is prescribed – and after 18 months for those subject to the Dublin Regulation (Nordling 2017:43). Such legislations make it possible for an undocumented migrant to regain a legal status after a certain amount of time and thereafter apply for asylum again. Another example is *The Law on Upper Secondary Education*³

³ Translates to *Gymnasielagen* in Swedish.

passed in Sweden in June 2018. According to this new law, those who had or were about to get an order of expulsion, could apply for and be given temporary residence permit if they were in upper secondary education and could meet certain requirements (Migrationsinfo 2019). This law therefore also becomes an example of how someone can move in and out of undocumentedness.

Even though the reasons behind why someone becomes undocumented can vary, scholars have emphasised that their status is characterised by deportability (Djampour 2018, Nyers 2008, De Genova 2002). This means that undocumented migrants live under the constant risk of being removed from the space of the nation state (De Genova 2002:439). If the police finds someone who is undocumented, the person will most likely be put in a detention center, and deported (Jansson 2016). As there has been an increased focus on the search for undocumented migrants and deportations, their lives have become more and more restrained by the fear of getting stopped and controlled by the police (Sager 2016). Further, Sigvardsdotter (2016:153) points out that this fear of getting deported puts the undocumented migrants in a situation of fear and ambivalence as they lose control over their lives and what may happen to them. This fear becomes present in their everyday life, in everything they do. As they do not have the legal permission to stay in the country, they do not have the right to the space they are in and become alienated from this space (ibid.). However, many still choose to continue their lives under these circumstances because it is not an option to go back.

A report from Socialstyrelsen (2010) demonstrates that even though the number of undocumented migrants in Sweden is constantly rising, the conditions they live under remains difficult. They often live crowded, lack occupation and income and often have physical or mental problems. Sager (2011:195) points out that because undocumented migrants in most cases do not get any support from the welfare state with accommodation, they need to find it themselves through friends or activists. This puts them in a vulnerable position as they sometimes do not have anywhere to live, and if they do often have to move around from place to place. Sigvardsdotter (2016:143) stresses that the lives of undocumented migrants are characterised by everyday exclusion. According to her, Sweden can be described as an especially difficult country to live in compared with other countries, as the Swedish system is based on a strong bureaucracy. The photo-identification and the personal number is always necessary to identify oneself, with both authorities as well as organisations and associations (ibid. 144). This means that even 'simple' things such as having a library card, or be a member

in a sport club, becomes problematic. As a result, every contact with a person that requires an identification is a potential risk of exposure for undocumented migrants, as they may have to reveal that they do not have a residence permit (ibid.). Having stated this, it should be noted that the situation of undocumented migrants in Sweden have changed slightly within the past years as they have been given access to certain social rights. However, as these rights are partly the result of negotiations from civil society, they will be presented further down.

2.4 Conceptualising civil society

To further understand the situation of undocumented migrants and how their situation has evolved in Sweden, it is necessary to discuss the role of civil society as it has been an important actor in improving their access to welfare services. Before doing this however, there needs to be some clarifications on how civil society is conceptualised within the frames of this thesis.

According to Mary Kaldor (2003:16), there is no easy way to conceptualise civil society as it has functioned differently depending on the geographical place and historical context. Generally, it has functioned as a reaction to political authority, however as authorities have been shaped and reshaped through history the discourse of civil society has changed alongside it. Further, Kaldor argues, civil society has gained a more political character within the recent decade as it has become a reaction to the ruling powers within the modern states. In contemporary time, self-organisation and civic autonomy has been important factors in order to create independent spaces where new cultures and ideologies have been born (ibid. 20-21). Further, Kaldor stresses that civil society cannot be conceptualised as *one unit* but should rather be divided into different categories depending on the specific aim and goal of each movement. For example, people tend to associate civil society with those actors that provide services as a substitute to the state and the market – such as non-governmental and non-profit organisations (ibid. 22). Within this understanding, other parts of civil society such as social movements and protest groups are easily forgotten.

This thesis departs from the part of civil society that has more of a social movement character, what Kaldor (2003:8) defines as the *activist perspective*. The perspective is sometimes described as the post-Marxist version, because it is based on the idea of redistribution of power. The foundation of the perspective is that self-organisation and mobilisation is a political strategy to expand certain spaces within society in order to improve the societal conditions for certain people (ibid.). Within the frames of this thesis, this political

dimension is crucial as there are significant differences in how established non-governmental organisations (such as the Red Cross) and smaller organisations, having a more social movement character, subject themselves politically and thereby handle their support to migrants (Youkhana & Sutter 2017, De Jong & Atac 2017, Kaldor 2003) Hence, the conceptualisation of civil society in this thesis concerns a more ‘narrowed down’ one in the sense that it only represents the stories of those engaged in more autonomous organisations and movements. Therefore, the informants are called *civil society activists*. However, the term ‘civil society’ is still used, mainly because it was the most frequent word used by the informants and therefore came along as the most appropriate word to use in the thesis.

Further, some clarifications should be made about the role of civil society in Sweden. As Sweden has followed the social democratic welfare model, the state has had the main responsibility of providing welfare and support to vulnerable groups (Esping Andersen 1990). Thereby, the role of civil society has been rather insignificant when comparing with other European countries. However, the introduction of neoliberal policies during the 1980s changed the conditions for how, and by whom, welfare was produced (Harju, Hjort & Montesino 2010:29-30). As the neoliberal transformation was led by economic rationales such as efficiency and flexibility, many of the welfare services were delegated to market-oriented actors such as private companies. One of the effects of the “hollowing” out of the welfare state in Sweden is that civil society has become an increasingly important actor on the social arena and in providing services to marginalised groups (Lundström & Wijkström 2002).

2.5 Negotiations for the rights of undocumented migrants

Harju, Hjort & Montesino (2002:30) stress that one crucial aspect of civil society is to participate in the public debate by defining and redefining new areas of social protection. Taking undocumented migrants in consideration, Nordling (2017:189) points out that civil society has played a significant role in distinguishing them as a category and campaigning for their rights. Social movements taking place in the beginning of the 21st century can be seen as a starting point for this. One important event took place during 2001 when activists, journalists and professionals started to pay attention to the inhumane circumstances undocumented families and children were living under (Sager 2011:36). During this time, an increased number of children in asylum seeking families had developed deep depressions and were in apathetic conditions. As civil society drew attention to the situation of these children, a movement for their rights grew bigger and led to discussions all over the country. These groups demanded

changes within the asylum legislation, practice and process. The movements reached its peak during 2005 when a broad range of organisations campaigned for general amnesty⁴ (ibid. 37). In September 2005, the government voted on the demand for amnesty, but the proposal was dismissed (ibid. 39). However, the engagement and mobilisation for the rights of asylum seekers and undocumented migrants continued among civil society.

Another aspect that has been emphasised is the role of civil society in negotiating with the state concerning the social rights of undocumented migrants. Even though undocumented migrants in Sweden lack a legal status within a country, they still have access to certain social rights (Nordling 2017, Nielsen 2016, Sigvardsdotter 2016, Sager 2011). In 2013, a new legislation was adopted, granting undocumented children the right to health care and schooling, and adult undocumented migrants the right to urgent health care⁵ (Nordling 2017:22). This legislation should be understood as the result of years of campaigning among civil society as well as among professionals such as teachers, nurses and social workers (ibid. 53). When these negotiations took place, it was argued that “rights that are human rights (...) are universal and consequently all residents should be entitled to them regardless of their legal status” (Nielsen 2016:173). Another example is *The Malmö Guidelines* for social assistance⁶ implemented in January 2014 (Nordling 2017:149). The guidelines led to an expansion of social assistance – and specifically addressed the case of undocumented migrants (and children). The guidelines stated that all undocumented migrants residing in the municipality of Malmö should have the right to social assistance in acute situations. What is considered acute should, as for anyone applying for social assistance, be assessed through individual assessment. The reason for introducing the paragraph on undocumented migrants in the Malmö guidelines was partly due to a request and negotiations from professionals within the social services (ibid. 154). The implementation caused a media debate because it diverged from the usual practice and was therefore seen as controversial (ibid. 160). In the meantime, it resulted in local efforts to encourage other municipalities to adopt similar rules even though these were not as successful (ibid. 163).

⁴ All asylum seekers that were waiting for the assessment of their asylum applications as well as those with turned down applications (living as undocumented) would be granted permanent residence permits.

⁵ Urgent defined as care that cannot *be deferred* (Swedish translation: *vård som inte kan anstå*).

⁶ Social assistance is a means-tested cash program used as a last resort for those who cannot support themselves in any other way (Socialstyrelsen 2019).

2.6 Contradictory tendencies

National and municipal decisions to explicitly address undocumented migrants' need for economic assistance, health care and education means institutionalising a responsibility for the group (Nordling 2017:177). In this sense, civil society activists and professionals have been successful in negotiating and demanding social rights of a vulnerable group. However, it should be noted that the access to welfare services does not come without risks for the undocumented person. Lundberg and Söderman (2015) point out that the actual access to health care should be criticised due to the presence of police at health centers and hospitals. In the same way, the actual access to social assistance can be questioned since the social workers are obliged to give out addresses of undocumented migrants if the police require so (Nordling 2017:148). As a consequence, undocumented migrants who are in need of health care or economic assistance may not dare to seek the help they, according to law, are entitled to due to their fear of the police. In this sense, as Lundberg and Söderman (2015:261) argue "the gap between human rights on paper and human rights in practice is a bleak reality as long as deportation is an alternative". Further, this demonstrates a contradiction within the welfare state; as it at one hand manifest an inclusive approach by offering the services and on the other hand, manifest an exclusionary approach through the presence of the police.

Sager, Holgersson and Öberg (2016:30) describes these contradictory tendencies as a double development that has been ongoing since the beginning of the 21st century. Initiatives focusing on the rights of undocumented migrants has grown and specific social movements such as the *Refugee Amnesty in 2005* and *Right to Healthcare in 2008* has resulted in certain improvements. In the meantime, there has been a shift in the political landscape as the right-winged streams has become more influential and the Swedish Democratic Party has grown to be the third biggest party in Sweden. They argue that the presence of this double developments has become even more distinct since 2015. At one hand, politicians have introduced restricted migration policies and more resources on finding and deporting undocumented migrants. On the other hand, civil society movements all over the country have been active in supporting those subject to these new migration policies (ibid.).

Both Sager (2011) and Nordling (2017) recognises the role of these civil society movements as crucial as they are constantly negotiating the boundaries of the welfare state, and the obstacles undocumented migrants are forced to handle in their every-day life. However, they also argue that the helping and solidarity movement within Sweden has given rise to a dilemma. As civil

society continues to carry the responsibility of the support to undocumented migrants it may reproduce the passivity of the welfare state. Further, Nordling (2017:78) argues that it upholds the image of a generous Swedish welfare state, as people might have a hard time distinguishing between the actors within the welfare state and civil society (ibid.). For example, the stopping of a deportation due to campaigning from civil society activists, may result in people thinking that it is thanks to the solidarity of the welfare state. Another aspect, that is pointed out by Andersen, Sharma and Wright (2009) is that the social movements supporting undocumented migrants often have an individual focus, which can be understood as problematic as it does not question the sovereignty and nationalism within the nation states. Returning to the example of stopping a deportation, it has a great value per se, however it only results in a change on the individual level but may not challenge the deportation regime as a whole. This indicates that the role of the welfare state, as well as the role of civil society, for undocumented migrants consists of contradictions and conflicts.

3. Theoretical perspectives

This section will present a theoretical discussion on the border; what the border is, what the border does and what the border means. Departing from these questions, the ambition is to capture the complexity of borders and how they operate in a system of discursive practices. Further, challenging of borders will be discussed, by departing from the concept of ‘acts of citizenship’ and how civil society, as well as professionals within the welfare field, can engage in these acts in order to challenge the border regime. When reading this section, it should be kept in mind that I understand the previous research and theoretical framework as close to each other, and sometimes feeding into each other.

3.1 Borders

3.1.1. What is a border?

A border is commonly imagined as a geographical line that divides countries, regions and other spaces on the world map (Djampour 2018:58). This is a natural image as our perception of the world is mainly based on a territorial one; meaning that we categorise the physical world by its continents, nation states and the languages spoken within each territory. However, as this thesis will argue, the border is not only a territorial divider but needs to be understood from a multidimensional perspective (Djampour 2018, Rumford 2012).

The political philosopher Étienne Balibar (2002:76) is one of the important scholars discussing the nature of the border, and according to him we cannot theoretically define a border without relating it to the establishment of other concepts such as nation states, identities and power mechanisms. Therefore, the discussion on borders must also contain a discussion of history and the inequalities it has produced (ibid. 77). For example, a postcolonial perspective becomes necessary in order to understand produced national identities within Europe and differences made among people (Solano 2017). According to Kinvall (2016:152) colonialism never left Europe unaffected but is still present in European reality and is clearly manifested through the attitude towards immigration. She argues that the asylum-seeker is portrayed as the reason for discontent in many European societies and thereby the member states within EU aim at producing borders in order to restrict the movement of certain migrants. These restrictions, as the Dublin regulation mentioned earlier, must be analysed through a postcolonial lens as we know that the asylum seeker is not European. If the case would be so, the person would not be

treated differently, and not be subject to Dublin Regulation and moved from country to country (ibid. 161). Hence, the non-European refugees is in a sense post-colonial refugees as he or she is likely to come from an ex-colonial territory, and therefore will be treated as inferior to Europeans (ibid.). In the same line, Djampour (2018:72) argues that non-white bodies more often become questioned and subject for control, and therefore ethnicity is one of the reasons behind why someone becomes restricted in his or her mobility (ibid.). This indicates that the border is not only an external line between countries, but also a manifestation of how people historically have been treated differently and are still treated differently today.

3.1.2. What does the border mean?

According to Balibar (2002) the border, besides marking geographical space, has become a marker between human beings. He argues:

Nothing is less like a material thing than a border, even though it is officially ‘the same’ (identical to itself, and therefore well defined) whichever way you cross it – whether you do so as a businessman or an academic travelling to a conference, or as a young unemployed person. In this latter case, a border becomes almost two distinct entities, which have nothing in common but a *name*. Today’s borders (though in reality this has long been the case) are, to some extent, designed to perform precisely this task: not merely to give individuals from different social classes different experiences of the law, the civil administration, the police and elementary rights, such as the freedom of circulation and freedom of enterprise, but actively to differentiate between individuals in terms of social class (Balibar 2002: 82-82).

As the quotation indicates, Balibar identifies a *polysemic nature* of the border, meaning that it does not have the same meaning for everyone. For example, privileged people from Western countries (such as Swedish citizens) have a passport that signifies not only national belonging, protection and a right of citizenship, but also a surplus of rights – meaning a world that they can access unhindered. For these people, the border merely has the function of a formality, that becomes visible at certain places such as airports. This means that there are certain places where they might be subject for control. However, for other people from non-Western countries who do not have an advantageous passport, or a passport at all, the external border becomes problematic (ibid. 83).

Further, some people are not only subject for control at the external borders, such as the airports and the train stations, but can be targeted by sites of control anywhere. As Balibar (2002:84) puts it “some of the borders are no longer situated at the border at all” and further he says, “they

are in fact found elsewhere”. Therefore, the lives of certain people, such as undocumented migrants, becomes restricted by both external borders (situated between the nation states) and the internal borders (situated anywhere in society). The border can emerge at places such as health care centers, social housing cooperatives, schools, welfare offices and police stations (Nyers 2008:132). As the border appears at different places for different people, it indicates that the border does not have the same meaning, or experience, for everyone. Therefore, scholars (Djampour 2018, Rumford 2008, Balibar 2002) have been rather interested in investigating what a border does, rather than what it is.

3.1.3 What does the border do?

Within recent years, this question has been picked up by Critical Border Studies (CBS), which is a field of research that discusses the doing of borders and why these doings must be reflected upon critically. Parker & Vaughan-William (2009), the founders of CBS, describes the concept of borders as a series of *practices*. They argue that the border is not static or territorially fixed, but rather appear as practices performed, produced and sustained by certain actors. Hence, borders are not ‘natural’ phenomena that pre-existed human civilisation but are constructed in the interaction between people, communities, states, corporations and institutions (Djampour 2018:61). An understanding of the border as constructed in a certain time and place also means understanding its character as constantly changing. This partly concerns the role of the actors involved in producing, as well as sustaining the borders. Analysing the situation of undocumented migrants, this perspective becomes crucial, as there is a series of actors involved in the borderwork that restrains their everyday life. In order to get close to such an analysis, it is necessary to provide a picture of how the borderwork in Europe is constructed at the time being.

According to Rumford (2008:2), the nature of the borderwork in Europe has changed within the recent years as the numbers of actors involved in borderwork has increased. This is argued to be connected to the shift towards securitisation and surveillance that has been present since September 11. Several scholars have highlighted that the ‘war on terror’ politics has tied restricted migration policies to questions of global security, which has become the rationale behind the increasing border controls within Europe (Debono et al. 2015, Rumford 2008). However, as the borderwork has become harsher, there has been a parallel tendency resulting in a ‘loosening’ up of borders. This is what Rumford (2008:8) defines as a multiplicity of borders, meaning that the borders of Europe are no longer always found on the national level

but rather on the European level. For example, Sweden's entrance into the Schengen Agreement in 2001 resulted in a re-localisation of the border, as they were placed at the EU-border rather than at the geographical border of Sweden (Djampour 2018:44). These two examples of borderwork demonstrate how borders can be performed in contradictory ways. Rumford (2008:3) therefore defines borderwork as 'asymmetric membranes' as it benefits the movement of certain groups and restrict the movement of other groups. This means that the borderwork in Europe works in parallel ways: on one hand it is designed to allow the free flow of capital, goods and certain people while it on the other hand is designed as barriers in order to keep out the undesirables (such as the global poor). It also demonstrates that borders are inherently political as the borders are governed by political actors and authorities and become a tool to exercise power and control (ibid.).

3.2 Challenging borders

In the section above, the European border regime has been described as a series of exclusionary practices, aiming at restricting the movement of certain people and the presence of these people within certain spaces. However, scholars have highlighted that the border regime should not only be described as these exclusionary tendencies, but also in the light of challenging practices aiming at creating resistance. Youkhana and Sutter (2017:1) argue:

In the wake of the "long summer of migration" in 2015 when growing numbers of refugees headed to Europe, it became significantly clear that the European border regime does not only consists of discourses, legislation, security politics and practices of integration executed by the European Union (EU) and different member states, combining processes of sociopolitical inclusion of citizens and exclusion of non-communitarians and minorities within the EU. Instead, it should be conceived as a temporary and dynamic arrangement, permanently challenged and contested by migrants, political activists, civil society initiatives and acts of citizenship.

So, it is argued that the border regime has created a sort of resistance among society, where individuals are every day involved in challenging the border regime in different ways, by offering a more inclusive approach towards migrants.

3.2.1 Acts of citizenship

Engin Isin (2008) argues, that in order to challenge borders, we must first redefine and reshape our understanding of citizenship. This means that it is necessary to be critical on the view on

citizenship as connected to a legal status, as there is a number of people lacking this status, who should still be given rights and the ability to participate in society. Departing from this argument, Isin develops a concept called ‘acts of citizenship’. The concept can be understood as a series of practices aiming at constituting someone as a citizen, disconnected to someone’s legal status within a country. Further, Isin argues that the status of the person performing the act is not important (citizen, refugee, non-status migrants) rather it is the act *itself* that should be considered important. Nyers (2008) argues that these acts can be of various sorts but have the purpose of challenging how nation state’s distinguish between citizens and non-citizens.

3.2.2. Responsibility and answerability

According to Isin (2008), acts of citizenship proceed from the concepts of *responsibility* and *answerability*. Isin (2008:39) argues that inherent in an act of citizenship is to question the established rules and laws, and sometimes breaking them. This means that the making of decisions cannot be reduced to principles such as calculability, intentionality and responsibility. Therefore, the person who wants to engage in an act of citizenship must also abandon the idea of responsibility. The rationale behind certain decisions then becomes something else, what Isin describes as an orientation towards principles of justice (ibid. 38-39) By moving beyond the responsibilities established in rules and laws and instead doing something else, or something *more*, the person becomes *answerable* of the decision he or she is making. In this sense, people who are engaged in supporting undocumented migrants can challenge borders by making decisions based on the wellbeing and security of the undocumented migrant, instead of following the given rules or practices. Considering professionals within the welfare state that are involved in service provision to undocumented migrants, Nordling (2017) argues that they through their practices position themselves within the border regime. They can both take part in decisions based on responsibility, and decisions based on answerability. Depending on how professionals choose to position themselves within these decisions, it will have certain effects on the situation of the undocumented migrant.

3.2.3. Civil society challenging the border regime

Further, there is a wide scope of studies elaborating on how actors within civil society have engaged in challenging the European border regime. The reason why these studies are presented in this chapter, and not in the previous research chapter, is because they provide a certain clarity to the theoretical framework on borders and how borders are challenged.

One aspect of challenging borders is becoming a political subject, which both citizens and non-citizens are becoming, when taking part in demonstrations and campaigning (Nyers 2008). Another aspect concerns the services carried out by civil society in order to compensate for the absence of the welfare state. De Jong & Atac (2017) argue that organisations within civil society have been a crucial actor in service provision for refugees (such as shelter) but also to give them the right to enjoy life through self-development and creativity. The organisations work in political ways by presenting system critique, but also by creating new spaces where non-citizens can meet other people, engage in activities and feel included in society (ibid.). Another aspect that has been recognised, is the responsibility civil society takes in giving legal guidance to non-citizens and finding good lawyers that can represent them (Tonkiss 2018:127). It is argued that one of the weaknesses of the national-level policies is the legal representation for asylum cases. Since many asylum seekers have to navigate through the asylum system without any help, a lot of them are denied a fair trial (ibid.). Therefore, offering legal guidance creates better chances for non-citizens to get residence permits and thereby becomes a way for civil society to negotiate with the boundaries of the asylum system. This has shown to be successful in some cases, as most of the overturned decisions are when there is a good lawyer involved in order to represent the person (ibid.).

However, scholars have stressed that a distinction should be made between how different organisations and movements engage to challenge the border regime. It is argued that aid organisations, represented by charity groups or established non-governmental organisations, struggle with a clear positioning on how to deal with questions concerning migration. However, parts of civil society that have the character of social movements (such as the “refugees welcome” and “no border” movement”) are clearly positioning themselves politically by challenging and contesting border practices (Youkhana & Sutter 2017, De Jong & Atac 2017). Since the larger organisations are dependent on state funding there is always a risk that they carry out their support in accordance with state interests. The smaller organisations/movements on the other hand have a more autonomous character and can more easily politically position themselves against the interests of the state. As a result, the autonomous organisation sometimes avoid integrating in the existing NGO sector, because they want to ensure that they are completely free in their mobilisation (De Jong & Atac 2017:31). Therefore, how civil society organisations choose to carry out their work can determine whether their acts are on behalf of the state, or on behalf of the non-citizens.

4. Methodology

This section of methodology aims to provide a transparent description of how this study has been performed, from beginning to end. The choice of method as well as the analysis of the material will be presented and discussed. Further, I find it important to provide a discussion on how I situate myself within this study and the ethical considerations made when planning and performing the study.

4.1 Choice of method

The purpose of this study is to examine the situation of undocumented migrants and how the practices of activists aiming to support them can be understood. Departing from such a purpose, there was an interest to qualitatively access the experiences and points-of-views of those organised in the movement. In order to do this, it came along as necessary to meet them in person and listen to their stories. Therefore the choice to conduct qualitative interviews was considered an appropriate method, as the qualitative method aims to empirically describe and understand the reality the researcher is interested in (Alvesson and Deetz 2000:215). Further, the strength of the method is that the researcher has the opportunity to get close to its subjects of study (Holme & Solvang 1991:93). Another aspect of the qualitative interview is that it opens up for a flexibility for the parts to engage in a dialogue, rather than directing the interview through a standardised questionnaire (ibid. p. 100). Being able to apply such a flexibility was important because the aim was to let the experiences of the informants be in focus. Further, the purpose of the thesis was not fully determined at the time for the first interviews but has been a work-in-progress as I have gathered the empirical material. In this sense, the approach has been an inductive one. This means that the focus has been on the stories of the informants and my interpretation of them rather than having a clear point of departure in a hypothesis or research question.

4.2 Preparing and performing the interviews

Svensson & Starrin (1996:63) describe the qualitative interview as being characterised by both openness and structure. This means that the researcher has to find a balance between letting the informant make free associations and at the same time having a clear direction during the interview. In order to find this balance in a desirable way, a semi-structured interview was constructed consisting of certain themes and questions. The advantage of the semi-structured

interview is that it handles the combination of openness and structure in a way that can please both the researcher and the informant (Bryman 2016). When performing the interviews, the interview guide sometimes ended up in the shadow of the informant's stories. However, this was not considered a problem as the ambition was to let the informants feel free to speak about their thoughts and experiences. Further, the interview guide was partly changed during the process because it came along as necessary to focus on some in-depth aspect of certain themes. Six interviews were performed with people engaged in civil society organisations supporting undocumented migrants. The interviews were between 1-1,5 hour. The interviews were performed in February, March and April 2019. Two of the informants were people I had already met during asylum rights campaigns and meetings while the four others were people that I met for the first time during the interview. The informants were contacted through e-mail groups, web sites and through friends and contacts. Some of the interviews were performed in my home and some of them in a group room at the School of Social Work in Lund. The number of interviews was decided upon along the way and after the sixth one I felt that, in combination with the focus group interview (see below), enough material was gathered in order to be able to answer the questions in a desirable way.

Besides for the semi-structured interviews, one focus group interview was performed during January 2019 when I was doing research for a methodology paper with a similar topic as this thesis. The empirical material from this interview mainly focused on social movements and activism and less on the situation of undocumented migrants. However, as the semi-structured interviews already had provided a lot of information on the situation of undocumented migrants it came along as useful to include the focus group interview as a complement to the question concerning civil society engagement. The advantage of the focus group interview is that it enables an interaction between the informants that gives rise to new questions and discussion. As the participants are able to share perspectives and point-of-views it brings a deeper dimension to the dialogue (Hollstein & Gulbrium 1995:70). The interview guide constructed for the focus group interview had a "loose" character and only consisted of a few questions. During the interview, the guide was almost not used at all, besides for in the beginning and the end of the interview. The reason was that the informants were independent in discussing the topic and actively brought the discussion forward with the help of each other. Therefore I felt no need to interrupt, besides for a few times in order to ask a new question, or a follow-up question. The interview took place in my home and was 1.5 hour long.

All interviews were transcribed to Swedish. In the transcription process the ambition has been to stay as closely as possible to the interviews, however confirming words such as “mm” and pauses has been removed in order to make the quotes more readable. The quotes from all interviews transcriptions has been translated into English. As all words and expressions could not be directly translated, the translations are partly a result of my interpretation. In some examples (in the analysis), I have chosen to put the Swedish translation into brackets in order not to lose the exact meaning. Sometimes an English explanation is also put in the brackets.

4.3 Analysing the material

Analysing the empirical material, or coding it as some methodologists call it, is generally understood as a process that takes place after the material has been gathered. Holstein & Gulbrium (1995:56-57) argue that analysing the material should not be understood as something that takes place afterward, but rather as an integral part of the whole process. As the researcher has already designed an interview guide and picked out certain questions and themes, it is considered to be one part of the process as the informants are led in certain directions.

The process taking place after having performed all interviews was to read through the transcripts a couple of times in order to create a closeness to the empirical material. This was helpful as I got an overview of the material and could distinguish details and links between the different interviews (Rennstam & Wästerfors 2015:80). Thereafter, I started to organise the material by making different clusters of quotes that were similar to each other and relating these clusters to the focus of research. Eventually, this analysing process resulted in certain themes that was present in several of the interviews and was also relating to the questions the study departs from. In this sense, the process of analysing the empirical material can be understood as a thematic analysis, because it as Bryman (2016:586) argues, both was looking for repetitions and was relating back to the research questions and focus. The process of finding themes, that was ongoing for a long time, resulted in four themes relating back to the different research questions. The four themes that could be identified were *exclusion through border work*, *the practices of professionals*, *fulfilling the basic needs* and *political resistance and challenges*.

The process of analysing the material was a complex process as significant parts of the material had to be reduced, either because it was not relevant for the purpose of the research or because there was not enough space to include all relevant quotations. Rennstam & Wästerfors (2015:103) describe this as *the representation problem*, which is described as a methodological

dilemma, since the researcher needs to reduce big parts of the material but in the meantime aims to give a fair picture of the informants and the transcripts. I see this as a limitation, in my research, and in research overall. My way to cope with this dilemma in this study has been to provide a short presentation of all the informants and thereby hoping to offer a more comprehensive understanding of the persons behind the study. I consider these presentations to be an integral part of the findings and analysis, even though they are presented in an independent chapter.

4.4 The active role as a researcher

It is not uncommon that scholars within the field of irregular migration participate in giving support to undocumented migrants (Nordling 2017, Khosravi 2010, De Genova 2002). In the same way, the reason behind the choice of studying civil society activism derives from my own participation within the asylum rights movement. Therefore, I too, situate myself as a civil society activist. Subsequently, there is a certain closeness to the field. Some researchers would argue that this is problematic since the researcher is supposed to have a neutral position in relation to the informants. One short answer to such a criticism is that the role of the researcher within qualitative interviewing can never be understood as neutral since the researcher is the constructor of the question and therefore a part of the dialogue (Svensson & Starrin 1996:58). A more comprehending answer is that this thesis departs from a feminist tradition within methodology arguing that the whole concept of neutral knowledge should be dismissed. According to both Donna Haraway (1988) and Patricia Collins (1986) the role of the researcher should be underlined since the researcher always has an active role in producing knowledge. In this sense knowledge is both partial and situated. This means that I understand the closeness to the field, in contrast to positivist thinkers who would criticise it for its low validity, as an advantage as it has helped me to better understand and contextualise the informants (Djampour 2018:87). However, having a closeness to the field has not been uncomplicated, it is rather a complex methodological issue as the researcher has to be constantly aware of its own position. One way to address this has been to show transparency in this methodology section; by describing every step of the way and also by situating myself within the frames of this research.

4.5 Ethical considerations

One central aspect of performing research concerns certain ethical dilemmas the researcher has to handle. The field of irregular migration should be understood as a highly sensitive one since

undocumented migrants live under the constant risk of deportation and many of the practices surrounding them therefore occur in the hidden. Knowing this, having an ethical perspective and never putting anyone at risk becomes crucial in all steps of the study. Performing this study, there was one main ethical dilemma which concerned: *who is ethically acceptable to study?* (compare Nordling 2017). At first, there was a will to hear the perspective of the undocumented migrants themselves in order to access their experiences of living in Sweden and how they handle the situation they are in. After some considerations however, it became evident that interviewing undocumented migrants within the frames of this study would mean certain ethical violations that I was not able to defend. This was mainly due to two reasons. The first one concerns the precarious conditions undocumented are forced to live under and whether talking about certain experiences (such as traumas and discrimination) might have increased feelings of fear and worry. Svensson & Starrin (1996:71) argue that researchers conducting interviews with vulnerable groups might find themselves in a situation where they feel a desire, or obligation, to help or give advice to the other person. As my role during the interviews would mainly have been a researcher, and not an activist, it came along as problematic to ask for their stories without being able to guarantee enough help or support back.

The second reason concerns the ethical dilemma of taking the personal experiences of someone else and putting it in an academic context. Fangen and Sellberg (2011:68) argue that theorising an empirical material always come with the risk of ethical violation - because the researcher is telling a story that belongs to someone else. Such a dilemma becomes increasingly problematic when the power relation between the researcher and the informant is unequal (ibid.). The latter becomes relevant in the context of interviewing undocumented migrants since their lack of residence permit puts them in a highly vulnerable position. Further, it had been difficult for them to access the thesis due to language barriers, something that would have made the dilemma even more problematic because they would be excluded from their own stories. By considering these aspects a decision was made to access the situation of undocumented migrants through secondary experiences – which is the stories of the activists. When having made this decision, an interest to explore the role of civil society support emerged. The reason why I have dedicated a fairly extensive part of this section to discuss the ethical dilemmas of something I decided not to do, is because I find it relevant to discuss the process of the research and what decisions the ethical considerations resulted in. Having said this, it should be noted that I do not see it as unproblematic to describe the situation of undocumented migrants through secondary experiences and not primary ones. However, as the informants had a closeness to the

situation of the person's they were describing (by being their friends or family homes⁷) and were actively engaged to improve their situation, their descriptions came along as honest and trustworthy.

The Swedish Research Councils (1990) suggests four main principles that are important to respect when performing research within social sciences. The ethical requirements concern *information, informed consent, utilisation of the interview material* and *confidentiality*. The requirement of information and utilisation of the material was adhered by sending out an information letter (se Appendix I) before the interview took place. The informants gave their consent by reading the letter and confirming that they wanted to participate. As for those informants participating in the focus group interview, they have also been informed and approved that the interview will be used again for this purpose. Concerning confidentiality, the informants have been guaranteed this by the use of pseudonyms. Further, the names of some of the organisations that the informants were active in have been left out in order to ensure that the informants cannot be traced. The reason why some of the other organisations have not been anonymised, such as Asylgruppen, is because the number of members in this organisation is so high that it would be impossible to trace the specific persons taking part in this study.

⁷ It should be noted that family home in the context of this thesis does not refer to placements within family homes that the social services are responsible for. It refers to family homes that are arranged within civil society organisations.

⁸ Vetenskapsrådet, in Swedish.

5. Presentation of informants

This section will provide a presentation of the informants. There will also be a presentation of Asylgruppen, as a majority of the informants were in some way active in Asylgruppen, and therefore it comes along as necessary to provide a more comprehensive view of this particular organisation. As for the other organisations or movements the informants were involved in, the description of them have been integrated into the presentation of the informants.

5.1 Asylgruppen Malmö

Asylgruppen Malmö is a nonprofit organisation that has been working with, and for, asylum-seekers and undocumented migrants since 1991. The organisation can be found in different cities around Sweden, however the informants in this study all represent Asylgruppen Malmö. On their website they describe themselves with following words:

We see this as a part of the global struggle for freedom, equality and solidarity. Until this vision is realised, we will continue to work practically in order to change the life situation of those affected by Sweden's restrictive migration politics (Asylgruppen Malmö, 2019).

Their work is practical in the sense that they have direct contact with people in need and offer them help and support in different ways. Further, their work is political as they organise demonstrations, write articles, hold seminars and participate in debates. The organisation is financed through its members that contribute with money every month.

5.2 Informants from the semi-structured interviews

Thelma's engagement started in 2015 when she was helping out at *Kontrapunkt* in Malmö (an organisation that was active in the reception of refugees) with doing laundry and delivering food. At the moment, she and her family, is family home to a person who is subject to the Dublin Regulation and therefore not allowed to stay in Sweden.

Maya has been active in the asylum rights movement for a long time, and especially since 2015. She is mainly active in Lund and Malmö but has been around in other municipalities in Skåne as well. She is family home to a person who today has residence permit. She is also politically active by giving speeches at demonstrations and by being active on social media platforms. She is also active in Asylgruppen.

Veras engagement started in 2015 at the central station in Malmö where she spent her nights in order to help organising the streams of refugees arriving. She has been family home for two persons; one of them has been deported and one of them is in a detention center at the moment being. She is active in Asylgruppen as a contact person and also through other channels.

Ediths engagement started during the fall of 2017 when she was participating in the manifestation outside of Stadshuset in Malmö. The reason for the manifestation was to stop all deportations to Afghanistan. After this, Edith became family home to a person who is in the middle of an asylum process at the moment, after being undocumented for a long time. Edith is also engaged as contact person through Asylgruppen.

Cleo is one of the starters of an organisation in Lund that gives different kind of support to undocumented migrants. The organisation started for those unaccompanied minors over 18 who had been classified as adults⁹ or gotten a rejection on their asylum application and were evicted from the municipality housings. Further, she is a contact person through Asylgruppen. She also works at *Save the Children* in a project that concerns newcomers and their activation in organisations.

Emmanuel works for an organisation in Lund that creates social meeting places and activities for youths. Since 2015, the organisation has mainly focused on unaccompanied minors.

5.3 Informants from the focus groups interview

Bonnie has been engaged in *Folkkampanjen för Asylrätt*, which was a movement aiming at stopping the interim three-year legislation (see chapter 2) that was voted through in the summer of 2016. Today, Bonnie is a contact person through Asylgruppen and has been supporting undocumented migrants in various ways: by raising money for rents, helping out in the asylum process and by taking part in demonstrations.

Iris works for *Ensamkommandes förbund*, which is a nonprofit organisation aiming at helping and supporting newly arrived and unaccompanied minors. She is also active in HBTQ-questions related to unaccompanied minors and undocumented migrants. Further, Iris is active

⁹ Åldersuppskrivna, in Swedish.

in arranging demonstrations and supporting undocumented migrants financially. She is also a member in Asylgruppen.

Amelie is also working for Ensamkommandes förbund. She mainly works with questions concerning sexual health and sexual rights, but also other questions concerning asylum and migration. She is also active by taking part in demonstrations and helping people to find accommodation. She is also a contact person through Asylgruppen.

Salomon is mainly engaged in accommodating undocumented migrants, giving emotional support to his undocumented friends and collecting money for rents on Facebook. He is not a member of any organisation.

6. Findings and analysis

The departure point for the analysis is the research questions which are following. How do civil society activists describe the situation of undocumented migrants? How do civil society activists engage in order to improve the situation of undocumented migrants? What challenges can civil society activists identify in their engagement for undocumented migrants? The analysis aims at answering these questions by analysing the experiences of the informants through the use of theoretical perspectives and previous research presented earlier. The first two themes will address the first research question.

6.1 Exclusion through border work

All civil society activists that were interviewed had a close relationship to many of the undocumented migrants they were supporting; being their friends or family homes. As they had known each other for a long time, many of the informants felt that they had a fairly good picture of the situation of undocumented migrants and how they are treated by the society, even though they themselves did not have primary experience of being undocumented. One aspect discussed by the informants was that the life of undocumented migrants, as well as asylum seekers, can be described as difficult because they have little control of their lives and what might happen to them in the future. However, being undocumented brings another dimension to this precarious situation since the person does not longer have the formal right to stay within the country. When asking Edith, who is family home to an unaccompanied minor, how his life changed from being an asylum seeker to becoming undocumented, she answered:

He has been holding a pretty low profile because he has been undocumented. Before, he was very active. But when he became undocumented, he started to keep away. He was basically hidden for 1,5 years. He went to school in the beginning but wasn't even able to do that after a while. He was terrified that the police were going to find him, and I got scared too. (Edith)

She describes that the change mainly concerned going from an active life to a passive life. Becoming undocumented created a fear of being stopped by the police and deported and therefore he had to stay away from spaces he before used to have access to. This indicates that becoming undocumented leads to becoming subject to borders that was not present as long as a person have a legal status within the country. The situation Edith describes demonstrates Balibars (2002:84) argument that “some of the borders are no longer situated at the border at all” but can in fact be found anywhere in society. This means that undocumented migrants

everyday life become restricted by an uncertainty since they cannot predict where or when, the border might appear. Another of the informants confirmed this by describing that they can basically be stopped and subject for control at any public place. She described:

At Södervärn [*bus terminal in Malmö*] there was someone. And in Lund, close to a school. On open places. And since they are not allowed to racially profile, they approach someone and say, “I think you have committed a crime, you are standing here and selling something, can I see your ID?” (Cleo)

Cleo describes that one problem for the police when trying to find undocumented migrants is that they are not allowed to racially profile, meaning asking someone for identification just based on their ethnicity. Therefore, the police try to come around this by instead accusing someone of having done something criminal, and then asking for identification. However, this still means that the police can stop people and accuse them for something they have not done, in order to get access to their identification. This practice demonstrates how certain people, based on their ethnicity, may become subject for controls by the police even though they are innocent. This confirms Djampours (2018:72) argument that non-white bodies more often become subject for control, and therefore people who are not white become restricted in their mobility. An analysis is then that the police becomes an actor involved in producing and reproducing border practices, and thereby upholding a system that treats people differently depending on their ethnicity. Further, this border practice becomes a manifestation on how people historically have been treated differently and continue to be today (Kinvall 2016). Moving back to Cleo, she continued to describe how her undocumented friends have been affected by these unofficial border controls, by saying:

Right now, a lot of them are leaving [*Sweden*] and a lot of them are talking about leaving. Just now the past weeks when they have started to look after undocumented migrants for real – with the Norouz celebration in Folkets park [*park in Malmö*] The place was full of civil policemen and several people were found in both Malmö and Lund. (Cleo)

Cleo describes that ID-checks have become more frequent within the past weeks and that the police is present at places around the city in order to check people’s status. What Cleo describes as “they have started to look after undocumented migrants for real” indicates that there is an increased focus on finding undocumented migrants and deporting them, which has resulted in many of them leaving voluntarily. The situation of undocumented migrants and their safety therefore can be understood as dependent on how present the “deportability” mechanism is in

their lives. This also demonstrates the constructive character of the border, meaning that the border is not in any way a ‘natural’ phenomenon, but rather has a changing nature as it is constructed in an interaction between people, states and institutions (Djampour 2018:61). This also means that actors, such as the police, become more or less active in borderwork depending on the political discourse and policies set up by the politicians. Further, Cleo says that several persons were found by civil policemen and put in detention centers at the Norouz¹⁰ celebration in Folkets Park in Malmö. At Malmö Folkets Parks website, there was an invitation to the celebration stating that “everyone, independent on nationality, age, religion and ethnicity should feel welcome to participate in the celebration” (Malmö Folkets Park 2019). The message can be understood as an inclusive one as it highlights that *everyone* should feel welcome. However, the presence of civil police men checking identification made people feel unwelcome, as they were stopped and controlled. Several of the informants described this as disturbing because an event that is presented as welcoming for everyone became an event that did the opposite. This demonstrates what Sager, Holgersson & Öberg (2016:30) recognises as the double development that has been ongoing in Sweden since the beginning of the 21st century and intensified during the past years. This double development represents a system that is both inclusive and exclusive at the same time. The Norouz celebration can be seen as a manifestation of this, as a space that is supposed to be a protected one becomes contested by the threat of authorities and their power. When discussing the situation of undocumented migrants with another one of the informants, Maya, she described:

And they should be law-abiding [*laglydiga*]. They can never ride the bike without lamps or safety reflectors, and they cannot do anything wrong. Cause I would get a ticket, but they would be deported. So, they have to learn these things in order not to be afraid constantly. (Maya)

Maya talked a lot about how her undocumented friends always are aware of how they appear in public places. She stressed that they never can take the risk of doing anything wrong. This indicates that while citizens are able to take certain risk, such as biking without safety reflectors, non-citizens are not able to do these things without taking the huge risk of being deported. Maya also said that learning these things becomes a strategy in order not having to be afraid constantly. This indicates that undocumented migrants are aware of the presence of borders and

¹⁰ Nouruz is the name of the Persian new year that is celebrated every year by Persians, Afghanis, Tadzhihs, Azerbaijanis and Kurds all around the world.

border practices that restricts their chances to a normal life, however they also become aware of the strategies that can be useful in order to come around the borders. In this sense, the different meaning of the border (Balibar 2002) is demonstrated, as the border might change meaning for someone who has been exposed for it many times. In the case of undocumented migrants, this could mean that someone who has lived a life in undocumentedness for a long time may become less restricted by the border, as he or she have found the right strategies to avoid it.

Another aspect of how a life in undocumentedness becomes restricted by borders, concerns their exclusion from social activities. Emmanuel, working for an organisation in Lund that organises activities, explained:

You might be interested in playing football, but the sport clubs are excluding in some ways because they demand member fees. And that is something that is completely normal for them because that is how the structure is: they have member, they pay fees and that's how the club goes around. But it becomes an obstacle. (Emmanuel)

Emmanuel's experience was that organisations or clubs in Sweden have a rigid structure as they often require memberships and fees. He also said that in order to become a member and be able to participate, it is almost always required to have a personal number. Therefore, undocumented migrants who do not have a personal number, becomes excluded from participating in these clubs and the social activities they provide. This confirms Sigvarsdotters (2016:143) argument that undocumented migrants may have an especially hard time in Sweden as they are excluded from the social life due to their lack of personal number or identification. Having a rigid system where a personal number becomes a way into society can be understood as a borderwork as it intentionally excludes certain groups from being able to participate in society.

This part of the analysis has described the situation of undocumented migrants in relation to how their lives become restrained by different border practices. The next part of the analysis will continue the discussion by putting their situation in relation to the professionals and practices within the welfare field.

6.2 The practices of professionals

As described previously, undocumented migrants in Sweden have, after negotiations from civil society and professionals, been given the right to emergency health care and schooling for

children. In Malmö, they also have right to social assistance in acute situations, however this is only the case in Malmö and no other municipalities in Sweden. Therefore, it was only the informants representing Malmö that were able to comment this, and not the informants from Lund. Further, this implies that the situation of undocumented migrants living in Malmö may differ from those living in other cities around the country, as their access to economic resources differs. This should be kept in mind when reading this part of the analysis.

Discussing the situation of undocumented migrants in terms of their access to these social rights, several of the informants argued that even when there exists a policy it is often up to the professional to decide how the policy should be interpreted and practiced in a specific situation. On the question “what experience do you have of authorities handling undocumented migrants?”, one of the informants responded:

It is mixed experiences. There are nurses and doctors who have treated them really badly, and then there are nurses and dentists that have been amazing. And the social workers have been of both sorts. There was one social worker who did everything, she went against her boss, in order to help. I think she was at one point close to losing her job because she was too helpful. And then there is social workers who have informed the police. (Vera)

As Vera, argues, the access to social rights (health care and social assistance) becomes dependent on the practices of the professionals within the field. While some may go beyond their responsibility in order to help, other professionals may become the reason to why someone is found by the police. How the professionals choose to act can be understood as the contradictoriness characterising the access to social rights. As Nordling (2017:148) argues the actual access to social assistance becomes questionable as the social worker are obliged to give out addresses of undocumented migrants if the police require so. This is confirmed by Vera when she describes that she has experience of social workers who have informed the police. Doing this, the social worker acts according to the established rules, which according to Isin (2008) means that the social worker acts within the frames of responsibility. In this sense, the social worker becomes part of an exclusionary approach by acting on behalf of the police's order instead on acting on the behalf of the undocumented migrant's safety. As mentioned in the previous section, this becomes problematic as it threatens spaces where they are supposed to feel safe. Further, the social services' obligation to give out the addresses of undocumented migrants if the police require so can be understood as a border practice (Parker & Vaughan-

William 2009) performed by the welfare state. In this sense, the social services become one of the institutions involved in producing and sustaining border work.

However, this does not always have to be the case. Going back to Vera's description of the social worker who almost lost her job, we can see that professionals can also choose to act on behalf of the undocumented migrants. In this sense they can challenge the border regime by taking part in what Isin (2008) defines as acts of citizenship. Inherent in this act is sometimes having to break established rules and law, which the social worker does, when taking the risk to lose his or her job. This means that the situation of undocumented migrants can also be improved by the acts of professionals. Another of the informants, Maya, also described this by saying:

You have a choice as an employee. Because there are ways to go around it. For example, if the police would call to BUP [*psychiatry reception for children and youths*] or to the social services and ask for a person, then you can say "I will go and check" and then you ask for the number to call back. Then you go to the person and say, "you need to go" and then you call back and tell the police that the person is not there. And then you have protected yourself if you want to continue working. There are always ways to go. It is about this agency thing. To be respectful towards authorities or to respectful towards human rights. You need to make a choice. (Maya)

What Maya describes is that the professionals meeting undocumented migrants always have a choice. Even though they are obliged, according to law, to give out the address of undocumented migrants to the police if the police ask there are ways to come around it. By doing as Maya describes, the professional will not act on the logic of migration control, but instead act on the logic of protecting his or her client. The decision of the professional then becomes based on, what Isin (2008) defines as, *answerability* as the social worker is acting on behalf of the security of the undocumented migrants. Maya refers to this as agency. This demonstrates that the acts and decisions of professionals becomes a way to either sustain or challenge border work. Edith also confirmed that she had experience of professionals within the welfare state that were actively taking part in supporting and helping the undocumented migrants. She said:

He continued to go to the same school he went to before he became undocumented because it was a great school. They had no problems with having him there when he became undocumented. They were really nice. They had some kind of agreement among the teachers that they would be aware if the police came, in order to get away the undocumented students. They were really great actually. (Edith).

Edith describes that the teachers had an arrangement in order to prevent the risk of undocumented students being found if the police would show up at the school. In best case, this kind of agreement could result in a higher number of students going to school as they would know that their teachers are on their side and will protect them. This arrangement that the teachers have can then be understood as an act of citizenship (Isin 2008) as they are trying to make sure that the students will feel secure and thereby ensuring them their *actual right* to schooling.

This part of the analysis has continued to discuss the situation of undocumented migrants by relating their situation to the acts of professionals within the welfare sector. The analysis will now proceed and address the second research question, which concern the role of civil society activism in supporting undocumented migrants.

6.3 Fulfilling the basic needs

A life in undocumentedness means living under precarious life conditions, as one of the informants Cleo, described it “I feel that they are basically just trying to survive”. Even though they have a certain access to welfare services, the informants agreed that these are far from enough to create a safe life. Further, the informants described that many of those who are new in Sweden and live as undocumented are not aware of the rights they have. Therefore, contacts become crucial, whether being undocumented or being a civil society activist. One of the informants, Thelma, described:

He has gotten the possibility to go to school and learn Swedish, but it is a folk high school [*folkhögskola*] and through contacts, I think. I don't know how the situation would have been without contacts. I would not have known that school even was a possibility. So, it was through contacts at Ensamkommandes förbund he was offered a spot at that school. (Thelma)

This indicates that the network- and contact systems within civil society play a big role in ensuring undocumented migrants the rights they are entitled to, and if not from the welfare state, from somewhere else. Another aspect that was a recurring topic in the interviews was the access to economic resources. As undocumented migrants do not get any economic support from the state (besides from those residing in Malmö) they have to get their source of income from someplace else. Here the support from civil society plays a major role. The informants

who were contact persons through Asylgruppen described that one of the things they did were to apply for money every month.

As contact person we get money from Asylgruppen every month that we give to the undocumented migrants. It is not much, maybe around 400-500 kronor every month, but still it is a good contribution if you are undocumented. (Edith)

Seven of the ten informants were active as contact persons in Asylgruppen and were applying for money every month. Cleo said that she was also applying for coupons every month from Emmaus¹¹. Iris said that she was collecting money every month through Facebook in order to help her undocumented friends pay their rent. Amelie told that during Christmas she collected money in order to be able to buy Christmas presents for unaccompanied minors within her organisation. The informants described that this process, of applying for or collecting money, for the economic survival of the undocumented migrants was very important. Another field that the informants were helping out a lot with was accommodation. Salomon said, “my role has mainly been to accommodate people by letting them stay in my apartment”.

Sager (2011:195) points out that accommodation is a field within the welfare state that is in most cases non-accessible for undocumented migrants. Therefore they need to find a place to live by themselves. During the interviews, the informants talked a lot about the shortage of accommodation being one of the main issues because the migrant’s access to a home becomes completely dependent on whether their friends, contacts or civil society have anything to offer. Therefore, civil society activists put a lot of energy and time in trying to find accommodation so that no one will have to live on the streets. The activists described that one way was to become a family home through an organisation which some of the informants had done. Another way to help with accommodation was to find temporary accommodations, for example if someone was on vacation for a while. Another strategy was to put pressure on other parts of civil society, such as other organisations or the Swedish church, in order to get them to participate in finding more permanent accommodations. However, some of the informants described a frustration when trying to do this, as it was hard to motivate them to help. Maya said:

The bigger organisations got millions from the government in June last year and they were supposed to find accommodations. And nothing happened. Either they had vacations, or they

¹¹ Emmaus (Björkå) is a solidarity organisation working with international solidarity, sustainable development and questions concerning social responsibility (Emmaus Björkå 2019).

had to talk to each other and organise things first. And at the same time, one of my friends found ten places to sleep [for undocumented migrants] by herself during the summer. And it took three months for them to even have their first meeting. (Maya)

Maya was frustrated with how slow and unhelpful the bigger organisations were in trying to solve accommodations for undocumented migrants even though they, as she describes, had been given economic contributions from the government. This frustration also became evident in other interviews, such as the one with Cleo, when she described that her organisation was very active in trying to solve this situation for undocumented migrants.

When we started [*the name of the organisation*], we worked a lot with trying to find accommodation because there was a lot of people who did not have anywhere to live. So, we tried to find family homes and I was around in churches and talked to people and tried to convince them. And it was really difficult. I think we found one or two (...) I was very disappointed with the church. Because I was emailing everyone about this accommodation situation. We had to do something, to open up a place where people could live, there must be someplace they could live. But no one answered. They were like “we are on vacation; we will answer after the vacation”. (Cleo)

The experience of Maya and Cleo indicate that there are differences in how civil society as a whole work with support to undocumented migrants. According to their descriptions it seems as the more established organisations within civil society are more absent in this question – at least when it comes to accommodation. This confirms De Jong & Atacs (2017:31) argument that it is necessary to make a distinction between how the established NGOs and smaller organisations (having a more social movement character) handle their support to migrants. The social movements are often more autonomous whilst the established NGOs work close to state’s interests as their funding often comes from the state (ibid). This could explain the more established organisations absence in certain questions, such as finding accommodation, as it could be argued that it would be against the interest of the state to accommodate a group of people who does not have the state’s permission to be here.

Besides being a provider for economic support and accommodation, the informants described that an important aspect of the support concerns legal advice and guidance in the processes with the Migration Agency. For example, the informants said that there is always lawyers or law students present at Asylgruppen meetings so that those in need of legal advice are able to receive it. The legal advice can concern different aspects such as appealing a rejection decision, finding a lawyer for those in detention centers, stopping a forced deportation and more. Thelma, who is family home to a person who is subject to the Dublin Regulation, said:

And of course, this support we have tried to give him in changing his status from undocumented to something else – it is nothing that is required of us. But it is impossible not to do it. At least for me. If you have someone living as almost your own child, there is no other option than helping with everything you can. (Thelma)

This feeling that Thelma shares concerns an emotional engagement, especially in the asylum case, and could be identified in the other interviews as well. As the informants often had a close relationship to the migrants they were supporting, they were also aware of their grounds for asylum, the unfairness of the asylum process they had gone through and the impossibility to go back to the (home)country.

My point of view is that the whole asylum process is completely arbitrary [*rättsosäker*] and this becomes the reason why they now have to hide. The Migration Agency also know that it is like this. And I know the stories, I have heard hundreds of them, most of them get rejections. (Maya)

If you have once read a rejection from the Migration Agency and understood how.. If you have had some kind of trust to the system and the asylum system and how it works, if you read a rejection and understand how unfair people are treated and on what grounds you get a rejection, then I think that you will engage because it is so upsetting. How can it even work like this and why do we believe that this is some kind of objective assessment [*bedömning*] and that everyone got a fair trial? Cause it is really not true. (Amelie)

Maya and Amelie describe that they have no faith in the asylum process that their friends had to go through and therefore it becomes crucial to support with legal advice if it is possible. Cleo confirmed the same by asking the rhetorical question “And where is the right to asylum?”. This confirms Tonkiss (2018:127) argument that many asylum seekers who have to navigate through a complicated asylum system by themselves are often denied a fair trial. Thereby civil society has become a crucial actor in providing legal guidance, which also has shown to be successful in some cases, as most of the overturned decision are when there is a good lawyer involved in order to represent the person.

So far, this part of the analysis has shown that civil society activists are crucial actors in supporting undocumented migrants in different ways. The central areas concern economic support, accommodation and legal advice. The practices the informants take part in can be understood as *acts of citizenship* as they through their support move beyond the boundaries of what traditionally has constituted citizenship (Isin 2008). Instead they argue that everyone,

independent of citizenship status, should be given certain rights and therefore the purpose of their support is to ensure them these rights. Thereby, the civil society activists play a significant role in fulfilling the basic needs of undocumented migrants. Iris described it by saying “we are everything that society is not”. This further indicates that the support of civil society activists can partly be understood in the light of an absent welfare state. When the welfare state is no longer the provider of fulfilling the fundamental human rights of someone, such as social security and the right to asylum, someone else needs to take this responsibility. To an extent this can be explained by the “hollowing” out of the welfare state in Sweden leading to civil society becoming an increasingly important actor in providing services to marginalised groups (Lundström Wijkström 2002). The case of irregular migration should be understood as a special case, as it is a field that has been increasingly dominated by stricter migration policies, and therefore the responsibility falling on the shoulder of civil society activists becomes even more significant.

However, scholars have argued that the civil society mobilisation in the field of irregular migration moves beyond only providing services, but also aims at creating spaces where non-citizens can meet other people, engage in activities and feel included in society (De Jong & Atac). The interviews also aimed at capturing whether the informants were involved in other activities. Emmanuel, working for an organisation aiming at including everyone in their activities, said that they try to do this by welcoming everyone to participate by not demanding a personal number or an address.

Instead we ask for three things so we can identify that it is a person and that is a name, a birth of date but without the four last numbers and a way to contact the person, either phone number, an email address or an address (...). It is our way to meet them halfway. (Emmanuel).

Emmanuel described that by having an organisation with this structure, no one is excluded due to their lack of legal status. This can be understood as one example of how civil society support also aims at moving beyond the provision of services or the fulfilling of basic needs. This tendency was also partly identified in the other interviews and will be further elaborated on in the following section. This last section will continue the discussion on civil society support to undocumented migrants, however it will mainly address the last research question which concerns the challenges within civil society support.

6.4 Political resistance and challenges

Besides meeting the urgent needs of undocumented migrants, all of the informants described that their support and activism also have a more political character. They were all frustrated with how the migration policies in Sweden have developed for the last couple of years and therefore claimed it necessary to help those who have become subject for these restrictive policies. During the focus group interview, all informants agreed that this is an inherently political question, as the difficult situation of asylum seekers and undocumented migrants must be understood in the light of political decisions. Salomon said:

And also, the whole change in discourse [*diskursförskjutningen*]. Everything is going in the opposite direction than what everyone of us would want it to. Nationalistic opinions are winning ground over the whole world and more inhuman politics are increasing every year. Reforms that restricts refugees' rights are voted through. So that is one motivation, that it engages people to help. (Salomon)

Salomon believes that the increasingly restricted migration policies could be one of the reasons, or motivations, why people have chosen to engage in this question. This highlights the political rationale behind the support. Bonnie and Amelie also described their engagement as political. They were both engaged in a political campaign during 2015-2016, when the government proposed the interim three-years legislation that was going to restrain the right to asylum severely. The political campaign aimed at creating resistance in order to stop the voting through of this legislation.

Folkkampanjen för asylrätt was a movement in order to stop the law that was proposing temporary residence permits for asylum seekers and to limit the right to family reunification. So, from the beginning it was basically a protest list in order to collect names of people who did not want this law to be voted through. And then it grew bigger. Demonstrations, we made a podcast, yes. (Bonnie).

Yes. Different actions. Demonstrations. Support parties. (Amelie)

Even though the legislation was still voted through, they described the campaign as important in order to draw attention to the problematic aspects of the legislation. Further, some of the informants highlighted the importance of going public with their opinions in order to create awareness and demanding other to engage in the movement. This became evident during the focus group interview when Iris described how she uses her Facebook as a political platform

and Bonnie said that one of the reasons why she became involved in the asylum rights movement from the beginning was one of Iris's Facebook posts.

And also to make it easy with my Facebook updates. Usually, I am not a fan of posting things on Facebook but now I have started to see my Facebook as a platform to get things out that otherwise does not get heard. It is my tool – to raise certain voices. And I can see that people have started to follow my posts and engage a lot in what I post. (Iris)

(...)

I have always had a lot of feelings about this topic and been upset about things but I haven't done so much practically. I think it started with a very angry Facebook status Iris posted. The post was something like "a lot of people care but almost no one is doing anything, can everyone who actually cares start doing things?" (Bonnie)

The dialogue between Iris and Bonnie demonstrates that that civil society activists also play a major role in spreading the movement by getting others to engage. This was confirmed by other informants that also described social media as important platforms to send out messages concerning the asylum politics and the situation of undocumented migrants. These actions can be understood as acts of citizenship (Isin 2008), as the informants through their social media platforms become political subjects and demand that others also needs to engage in order to change the asylum politics or to improve the situation of non-citizens. In this sense they become political subjects that take part in challenging the border regime. Another way to do this, as many informants described, was to organise demonstrations or arrange protests outside the detention centers in order to stop deportations. Even though most of the informants were engaged in these practices, some of them expressed frustration with how things have evolved for the past years, and especially since 2015. Iris said:

All of us have been in a hostage drama [*gisslandrama*] since 2015. Because we had to be on the central station 24/7 (...) We couldn't create political strategy, because we had to work practical practical practical all the time and then the racists win. Because they have the time and they don't have to sit and solve emergent accommodations or train tickets or whatever it is. They could create political strategy, we couldn't. And this keeps continuing, all the time. (Iris).

Iris describes the situation since 2015 as a *hostage drama*. The amount of "practical" work, such as solving accommodations and buying train tickets, have been so extensive that there has almost been no time left to engage politically. Understanding Iris right, this hostage drama means that the activists have to carry such a heavy workload that they are restrained from the

political aspects of their movement. In the meantime, racist forces can grow bigger as they do not have to worry about helping people but can instead put all their energy in their political opinions and strategies. When asking one of the informants Vera how she experienced that the movement had changed within the past years, she answered:

Now it is more focused on specific individuals that needs help. Before it was more asylum and the bigger agenda (...) I was family home for someone who is now in a detention center. So, of course I focus a lot on him, and it is the same for many others. So, it is like how should I put it... *it has narrowed down* [italics added]. Because it had to. Cause it is necessary, it is crucial to get them home, these persons who are in detention centers, so they won't be sent back. And then you have to focus more on the individuals than on the bigger picture. I think that is the biggest change. (Vera)

Vera also identifies the intensity of the workload since 2015 as challenging. She experiences that the movement has “narrowed down” as an increased focus has been put on helping individuals, for example with getting them out of detention centers. This reflects back on the previous section concerning the informant’s responsibility of fulfilling the basic needs. As civil society becomes the main actor to support undocumented migrants with their basic needs, less time is put in more political questions. Further, Vera describes that this narrowing down *had to* happen in order to help all the people in urgent situations, indicating that it was not a narrowing down that the activists themselves were working for. According to De Jong & Atac (2017:35) organisations in civil society work parallel with both delivering services and demanding political change. To some extent the experiences of the informants within this study confirm this argument. However, it seems as the demands for political change suffer when the demand for services is as extensive as it is today. This was also confirmed by Amelie, who during the focus group interview responded to Iris’s comment above, by saying:

I really agree with what you said about constantly having to work with *putting out fires* [italics added]. Then there is no time left to change the system. The things we do within the asylum rights movement or to support people may never result in a change of the system. It just fixes things in the moment and the things the state never does. But it never leads to a change. And it is really important on an individual level, to solve these things. But you never reach a change. (Amelie)

Amelie described that the political character of the movement becomes restricted when the engagement mainly goes to helping individuals in their specific situations. Further, Amelie identifies another problematic aspect when explaining that the things that are done may never result in a change of the system. This is in line with the argument that social movements

supporting undocumented migrants often have an individual focus which restrains them from challenging the nationalism and sovereignty within the welfare states (Andersen, Sharma & Wright 2009). Per se, this is extremely important which Amelie also points out by saying that “it is really important on an individual level, to solve these thing”. However, it can be understood as problematic because it does not question the political and structural aspects behind why someone gets deported in the first place. This narrowing down of the movement, and the increased focus put on individual cases instead of the more political questions, can be understood as one of the challenges within civil society support for undocumented migrants. Another aspect mentioned during the interviews were tensions that the informants felt, which concerned both tensions towards the more established organisations (mentioned in the previous section of the analysis) but also tensions within the asylum rights movement.

If we look at the autonomous left, we have people who are doing things practically every day – and therefor don’t have time to talk political strategy. And then we have these Marx guys who are like “blabla”, but they never do anything for another human being. But maybe we need them too because they are talking ideology. But should we have to fight with each other? And why? Can’t we just all divide the work? If they would help all women and queers who are doing all the care work [*omsorgsarbete*] then maybe, we would have more time to talk political strategy. And then they could do some of the practical work. And then we would have a better balance. So, this is a thing. But it is also just internal conflicts and I think it will be like that always. (Iris)

Iris describes the division of work within the movement as problematic because some are doing all the practical work whilst other are only engaged in discussing ideological question. She understands this as internal conflicts, and believes, that the support could be carried out in a more constructive way if the division of work was more balanced. Another of the informants, Maya, described a similar experience:

I wouldn’t have continued if I didn’t think that everything will be ok. But I want us to be clear, that the group will get together and that we wouldn’t be as shattered [*splittrad*]. We need to think about the mandate and what we are expressing and what we are satisfied with. I think that is the most important thing. (Maya)

Maya also experiences frustration with the tensions and colliding interests within the movement. The experience of Iris and Maya implies that there are certain internal conflicts within the movements that civil society activists are engaged in that creates friction and becomes challenging. Further, Maya says:

I think like this. I've been standing outside the detention centers.. And we are like hundred. And when there is a demonstration in Lund it is like twenty people, maybe hundred in Malmö and half of them are undocumented (...) And I think if we were 5000 who stood outside the detention centers when they are going to deport someone, so they wouldn't be able to come through with the car. Because they can't move that many people. Then we would stop this craziness (...) But now it is 100. You have to do things where there is an effect. (Maya)

According to Maya, the number of people who attend the demonstrations and protests becomes crucial for what the effects will be, or what message it sends out to others. At the moment, she believes that this number is too small which becomes problematic because, as she also said during the interview, it may send out the message that the reason for the protest is not important enough. Several of the informants confirmed this as being an issue. They described that the political aspect of the engagement becomes challenged when few people choose to participate in protests and demonstrations. One reason for this low participation can then be, as described earlier, a result of the heavy workload on the more practical matters. This could result in less people attending the more political events as most of their time and energy goes to handling the more emergent matters. However, as Amelie said, it also concerns another aspect:

And it is really difficult to get people to join the asylum right movement when it is like "it is chaos, and everyone are tired". It scares people away. I think that people want to help people who it goes well for and when it is easy. And you can see directly that your help makes a difference. And it is not like this now because the asylum system is fucked up. (Amelie)

Amelie said that one problem concerns getting others to join the asylum rights movement. She believes that the reason for this is that the movement is under so much pressure at the moment that it scares people away. This indicates that the combination of the heavy workload and the difficulty to get others to join the movement becomes a challenge as the civil society activists do not have the possibility to unburden themselves.

This section of the analysis has discussed the political aspects of civil society activism as well as the challenges the activists can identify in their everyday engagement. Some of these challenges may paint up a rather dark picture of the situation, however the purpose is not in any way to undermine the work of the activists, but rather to highlight the absence of support from other actors. A further discussion of this will proceed in the following and last section, conclusion and discussion.

7. Concluding remarks and discussion

The purpose of this thesis has been to investigate the situation of undocumented migrants in Sweden and the role of civil society activism in supporting them, as well as the challenges they face in their engagement. This topic was born out of my own participation in the asylum rights movement and personal interest for the issue. Knowing, both from my own experience and from previous research, that undocumented migrants are a growing group that are experiencing many difficulties in their everyday life, there was an interest to explore this further. Therefore, the first research question aimed at capturing the situation of undocumented migrants. As it did not come along as ethically defensible to interview the migrants themselves, I decided to access this information by interviewing civil society activists that had a close relation to them and thereby had secondary experience of their situation. In accordance with previous research, the findings demonstrated that the lives of undocumented migrants are severely restrained by the borders they meet in their everyday life. These borders can present themselves in various ways, however they often take the form of identification controls by the police. As a result, undocumented migrants live under the constant threat of deportation. One conclusion is that their situation and safety is dependent on how present the “deportability” mechanism is in their lives. As argued by Sager, Holgersson & Öberg (2016:30) more resources have been put on executing deportations since 2015 and as a consequence the deportability mechanism can be classified as strong today.

Further, their situation has been described by analysing the acts of professionals within the welfare field. Since undocumented migrants have a certain access to social rights it is highly relevant to investigate how these institutionalised rights are practiced in real life. One factor that was evident, going in line with previous research, is that the actual access to these rights (such as health care, schooling and social assistance) is questionable as the police can appear at these places. Further, professionals within the welfare field can sometimes cooperate with the police, however they can also develop strategies in order to act on behalf of the undocumented migrants. Therefore, undocumented migrants can never anticipate how professionals will act and as a consequence they may never seek the help they according to law, are entitled to. This conclusion highlights the important role professionals have when meeting undocumented migrants. Knowing that a welfare system is upheld through its everyday practices, I would argue that everyone involved in these practices have a responsibility to understand and reflect

upon what the results of their decisions and actions will be. Further, as presented in the previous research, professionals within the welfare field have been one of the actors negotiating for the rights of undocumented migrants. The implementation of the Malmö guidelines, explicitly addressing undocumented migrants, was mainly due to the negotiations of social workers. (Nordling 2017:154). Therefore, professionals can be understood as a crucial actor in demanding political change and I would argue that their opinions are powerful as they have knowledge and competence of the groups they are working with. The work of Vanna Nordling demonstrates important findings when it comes to the subject of social workers meeting undocumented migrants, however I believe that this is a topic that needs to be explored further.

I will now proceed to discuss the second and third questions of the thesis. As the welfare state takes little responsibility for the situation of undocumented migrants and in addition, is an integrated part of the deportation regime, there was an interest to access the role of civil society activists. Therefore, the second research question aimed at capturing how civil society activists can help to improve the situation of undocumented migrants. The main finding was that the activists play a major role in fulfilling their basic needs. The central areas concern economic support, accommodation and legal advice. These areas are to some extent the most urgent areas: as economic support and accommodation are directly connected to the survival of undocumented migrants and the legal advice becomes urgent as it could change the status of a person. By offering this kind of support, the civil society activists hope to ensure that undocumented migrants too will be granted their fundamental human rights, just as anyone else. Another finding was that the civil society activists were frustrated with the passivity of the more established organisation. This is interesting as it manifests the conflicts and tensions between different parts of civil society in how they choose to cope with the question of irregular migration. It also indicates that some organisations situate themselves closer to state's interest than perhaps, the original values of their foundation, as they are sometimes financed by the state. One conclusion is then that both the welfare state and the bigger NGOs are absent actors in supporting undocumented migrants. As a consequence, the smaller organisations having a more autonomous character and often limited resources, becomes the main actor in providing this crucial support. This highlights an interesting structural dimension, as it is those with the most limited economic resources, and probably least authority, that carries a majority of the responsibility for an extremely vulnerable group.

This leads me to the last research question concerning the challenges the civil society activists could identify in their engagement. The answer to this question reflects back on the previous one, as the challenges are partly a consequence of the heavy workload the activists carry in fulfilling the basic needs of undocumented migrants. To start with, the civil society activists all agreed that their engagement have an inherently political character as their actions are reactions to restricted migration policies and an arbitrary asylum system. Therefore taking part in demonstrations, protest and campaign is a crucial part of demonstrating their dissatisfaction with the system and demanding changes in the migration politics. However, this political aspect of the movement becomes restrained by constantly having to solve urgent situations or *putting out fires*, as one of the activists put it. In this sense the support is mainly focused on the individual level and have a short-time character. I would identify this as the biggest challenges within civil society support for undocumented migrants. The danger is that the movement move away from questioning the political structures that has constructed the restricted migration policies from the first place. However, abandoning the more political character of the movement was not something the civil society activist had done voluntarily, but rather something they had been forced to do because their support has been needed elsewhere. Another challenging aspect that was identified was the tensions within civil society, both within the own organisations but also towards the more established ones. Further, the low participation in demonstrations and the difficulty to get others to join the movement was identified as challenges.

I believe that all these challenges are a result of the heavy workload that the civil society activist have had to carry since 2015. Youkhana & Sutter (2017) argue that the European border regime does not only consist of exclusionary discourses and legislations but also of political activists and civil society initiatives constantly challenging and contesting it. This is a rather optimistic observation and I believe that it is a crucial point of departure, especially when engaging in supporting undocumented migrants. To be optimistic. However, it is in the meantime crucial to remember that four years have passed since 2015 and the forces engaged in challenging the border regime have decreased since. The support we could see at the central stations, in the refugee camps and in the demonstrations is not present anymore. Partly this is due to the support taking other forms today, however it should also be understood as result of a changing migration discourse. In the meantime, practices aiming at upholding the border regime keeps growing. As an example, the Swedish government have recently proposed to prolong the interim three-year legislation for two more years, meaning that it would continue until 2021. This is a dangerous development as it continues to restrict the right to asylum and to put human beings

in miserable situations. The civil society activists I have interviewed are all aware of this. However, their awareness and engagement is not enough in order to stop this development and in the meantime, help all the undocumented migrants who need support. It is therefore perhaps necessary to be honest about the heavy workload the activists carry in order to awaken others and hope that they too will take their responsibility.

7.1 Limitations and future research

There are always limitations present when performing research, and especially when writing a master thesis because there are restrictions in time and space, as well as resources. Naturally, there are things that could have been done in a different way, and perhaps in a better way. I will present some of these limitations and also suggest why these could be used for future research.

One aspect concerns the distinction made between how smaller organisations and the more established ones carry out their support in the field of irregular migration. Having this in mind, it could be argued that one of the limitations of this study is that it has not investigated the perspective of those engaged in the more established NGOs. The reason for this is that I predicted that activists from the more autonomous organisations would have a better experience of the lives of undocumented migrants as they work closer to them. Therefore, this aspect was prioritised in this thesis. However, for future research aiming at analysing civil society support in the field of irregular migration, my opinion is that a comparison between different organisations could contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the topic. Another limitation could be that this thesis departs from the experiences of eight activists engaged in Malmö, and two activists engaged in Lund. Therefore, the scope is rather limited as it does not stretch over the whole country. Further, Malmö can be understood as a special case as it offers social assistance to undocumented migrants. The reason for not having a more widespread sample was mainly due to limitations in both time and access. This limitation could as well be used for future research as it would be valuable to explore if there are any differences in civil society support for undocumented migrants across the country, and if yes, how these differences can be analysed. Last, one limitation that has been discussed earlier, is that this study has not accounted for the voices of the undocumented migrants themselves. I do hope that their own stories are told, heard and listened to elsewhere.

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9.List of Appendix

9.1 Appendix I: Information letter

Hi,

My name is Roza and I study a program called Welfare Policies and Management at Lund university. This semester I am writing my master thesis. The topic is the role of civil society support for asylum seekers and undocumented migrants.

I would want to interview you about your engagement and support, because my opinion is that this is a question that needs to be discussed.

To participate in the interview is voluntary and your participation can be interrupted anyway you want. You decide the place where you want to be interviewed. Anonymity is guaranteed. The interview will be recorded with a mobile phone and transcribed. A copy of the transcript can be sent if you wish so. It is only me who will have access to the interviews, and they will be deleted after the thesis is handed in.

If you have any questions or thoughts, do not hesitate to contact me.

Best Wishes,
Roza Baygi
rozabaygi@hotmail.com

9.2 Appendix II: Interview guide semi-structured interview

Introduction

- Informing about the topic and the purpose of the interview.
- Can you begin with presenting yourself and your engagement in the migration question?
- When did your engagement start?
- What is the reason behind your engagement?

About undocumented migrants

- How would you describe the situation of undocumented migrants in Sweden today?
- How do you think that the politics affect the support for undocumented migrants?
- How would you describe the access undocumented migrants have to welfare services?
- Do you have experience of having contact with professionals within the welfare field together with someone who is undocumented? How would you describe that experience?
- Who would you describe as the one taking responsibility for undocumented migrants today?
- In what ways can you/your organisation help undocumented migrants?
- Are there places where undocumented migrants feel less/more safe?

Strengths and limitations

- When do you feel that you can help someone with your support? Can you describe one such situation?
- When do you feel limited in your engagement? Can you describe one such situation?
- What resources do you/your organisation have in supporting undocumented migrants? (e. g. material resources, contacts etc.)
- How would you describe the differences between the civil society and welfare state in supporting undocumented migrants?

Finishing the interview

- How do you think that the engagement and mobilisation for undocumented migrants among civil society will evolve in the future?
- Do you have anything you want to add?
- Thanking for their participation

9.3 Appendix III: Interview guide focus group interview

Introduction

- Informing about the topic and the purpose of the interview
- Asking everyone to shortly present themselves and describe in what ways they are engaged in the migration question

Questions to depart from

- When and where did your engagement start?
- What was the reason behind your engagement?
- Would you describe your engagement as political?
- What is the motivation to continue your engagement?
- What is your relation to meeting resistance?
- How do you handle resistance?
- How would you describe Malmö as a city when it comes to this question?
- What is your opinion on the welfare state when it comes to this? (Such as handling asylum seekers and undocumented migrants)
-

Finishing the interview

- Asking if anyone wants to share or say anything more
- Thanking for their participation in the interview.