21\textsuperscript{st} Century citizenship: human rights, global civil society and the pushing of boundaries

The role of civil society in the refugee crisis: the case of the Swedish Red Cross.

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Abstract

In the last few years, migration towards Europe has intensified as a result of poverty and war in other parts of the world. Now, the European Union finds itself in a “refugee crisis” that has brought about contrasting reactions from within European societies. While many civil society organizations have mobilized for the inclusion of asylum seekers and undocumented migrants, governments have increasingly focused on restricting access and limiting their numbers. This study seeks to understand and explain the role of civil society in the refugee crisis. To this end, citizenship and framing theories are applied to the case of the Swedish Red Cross. Specific “acts of citizenship” carried out by the Red Cross in Sweden, and in Europe more generally, are analyzed. The study’s findings suggest that this civil society organization/movement acts as both a “denationalizing” (Sassen 2002) and a “post-nationalizing” (Bosniak 2006) force as it pushes the boundaries of citizenship from within and beyond the borders of the nation-state. It does this by calling upon international humanitarian and human rights laws and principles and by positioning itself inside and outside the political system at the same time.

Keywords: migration, citizenship, human rights, global civil society, membership, inclusion, acts of citizenship, denationalization, post-nationalization, Red Cross, refugee crisis, case study.
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1. Introduction

In the last few years, a growing number of people have sought refuge in a country other than their own. We know them as the migrants, people escaping from war, from political or religious persecution, and from poverty or famine. The war in Syria alone has pushed five million Syrians to neighboring countries, and about one million towards Europe, in search for a safer place to live (UNHCR 2017). The European Union’s first response was slow but relatively open. Sweden and Germany were among the individual member states that stood out in terms of accepting asylum seekers. However, as the war in Syria intensified, ever more people turned up at Europe’s doorstep. Now, the European Union found itself in a “refugee crisis”, and, as a result, European countries’ migratory policies became increasingly more restrictive. Only in 2016, about half a million non-EU citizens were ordered to leave European territories and about 230,000 were actually deported to their countries of origin outside the EU (Eurostat 2017), others were deported to Turkey or got stuck in limbo. However, inside European countries, and at their borders, civil society was present all along, providing support and trying to protect asylum seekers and undocumented migrants regardless of their nationality and legal status. This support led to the nomination of a group of Greek islanders for the 2016 Nobel Peace Prize, but it has also meant closer monitoring and tighter control of civil society by the national state(s) (Gkliati 2016).

At the core of these tensions lie issues of membership and formalized belonging. The state continues to tie membership and belonging to the nation, even in an increasingly globalized world. By contrast, some groups in civil society seek to expand such notions with a more global vision. By pushing for global solidarities, civil society is challenging both the state’s notion of citizenship as territorially bound and the notion of the nation-state as the key political community (Barker 2015). This creates possibilities for post-national forms of citizenship to be enacted outside the nation-state (Bosniak 2006). At the same time, however, other processes are taking place inside the nation-state, which also push for a transformation of citizenship. Examples include changes in nationality laws that allow for effective nationality instead of just formal nationality and development of legislation that allows national courts to use international legal instruments. Some organizations in civil society are calling upon international human rights laws and principles to challenge and expand the
institution of citizenship and associated rights. This process has been referred to as a “denationalization” of citizenship (Sassen 2002).

1.1 Aim and research question

The aim of this study is to better understand and explain the role of civil society in the refugee crisis. In order to do this, it focuses on the specific case of the Swedish Red Cross and examines whether this civil society organization/movement challenges the state’s notion of citizenship. If so, the aim is further to study how such challenges are mounted, what they may mean in the short and longer term for our notions of citizenship, and how they might uphold the status quo. Thus, this work seeks to answer the following research question: *How can we understand the role of the Swedish Red Cross in the refugee crisis?*

The contribution of this study is both theoretical and empirical. I show how the groundwork of civil society organizations/movements geared towards universal humanitarian assistance in the refugee crisis has far-reaching political implications. By identifying with and providing assistance and protection to those who lack the status of citizenship (and thereby the rights attached to it), civil society organizations/movements are effectively transforming the modern notion of citizenship based on formal belonging to the nation-state to a notion based on shared values and solidarity. By exploring the humanitarian interventions of the Swedish Red Cross precisely as ‘acts of citizenship’, that is as social practices rather than as formal legal categories, this study contributes to the on-going theorizing regarding the interconnectedness of migration, citizenship and human rights. Ultimately, this study is sociologically important because it aims to contribute to the overarching issues of social inclusion and exclusion. In a globalizing world, where mass migration will continue to challenge our conceptions and practices of community, it is imperative to understand and explain the impact that different societal actors have on the inclusion and exclusion of asylum seekers and undocumented migrants.

Humanitarian organizations/movements like the Red Cross provide analytical leverage into the debates about social inclusion and group membership because they are societal actors that act in the intersection of human rights and citizenship rights frameworks. On the one hand, their mission is to protect people regardless of their legal status, race, religion or gender. On
the other hand, they are confronted with increasingly restrictive frameworks of citizenship rights promoted by the nation-state, particularly as they refer to the “rights of others” – namely, migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers (Benhabib 2004: 6). The positioning and negotiations of such organizations/movements, then, bring into critical focus the complexities involved when these frameworks collide and on possible alternatives that may allow for a better harmonization of such frameworks.

The Red Cross is a particularly apt empirical case for study and analysis, since its own mandate is to encourage the development of international humanitarian law and to promote its respect and implementation in national law (ICRC n.d., a). This alone may expose some of the tensions and contradictions that arise when the state’s citizenship regime collides with human rights regimes. It also provides a wedge to examine in more detail how civil society acts as a “denationalizing” force, that is, a force that pushes for the transformation of certain elements of the institution of citizenship from within the nation-state (Sassen 2002). In addition, the Red Cross is key to analyze because it has been at the forefront of the current refugee crisis in various European countries including Sweden. This global presence is possible thanks to the organization/movement’s structure. The organization/movement is in fact constituted by several distinct organizations, which are not legally bound to each other but are united through shared principles, objectives, statues and governing organizations. These include the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Federation of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. This global presence makes the Red Cross a suitable candidate to study as an explicit and implicit post-nationalizing force, that is, a force that can push the boundaries of citizenship beyond the nation-state (Bosniak 2006). Furthermore, as the organization/movement was founded in 1863, it has a long history, which enables the study of changes in policy and strategies regarding the treatment of asylum seekers and undocumented migrants throughout time. In comparison, other civil society organizations/movements are more difficult to study because they are less institutionalized and often less connected to the political system.

Sweden presents a critical context for analyzing how the Red Cross challenges the state notion of citizenship because of the changes that the country is going through with regard to both its migration policies and its attitude towards migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Sweden has been known for its (i) open and tolerant attitudes toward those in need, (ii) for the
post-war expansion of rights for residents, and finally (iii) for the naturalizations of non-citizens (Barker 2017). However, in the last few years, Sweden “has become much more selective in who it allows in and who it excludes” (Barker 2013: 247). The reasons for this new selectivity, and indeed citizenship as “political subjectivity” (that is, the study of how subjects become political by articulating injustices and demanding or claiming their redress), remain understudied (Isin, 2012). Therefore, this study will provide an empirical contribution to this field of study. For these theoretical and empirical reasons, Sweden provides analytical leverage about debates on migration, citizenship and human rights.

We must comment briefly on the institutional nature of the Red Cross and its associated terminology. The Red Cross is often referred to as either an international non-governmental organization (NGO) or an international organization. By contrast, the Red Cross explicitly describes itself as neither, but sees itself as a hybrid (Rona 2004). It was founded as a private association under the Swiss Civil Code, making it akin to NGOs, but since its functions and responsibilities are specified in the Geneva Convention, it is also mandated by international law – and thus, by the international community of States – to undertake certain tasks (Forsythe 2005). This gives the organization a status of its own whereby it enjoys working facilities (privileges and immunities) comparable to those of intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations. At the same time, the Red Cross explicitly describes itself as a “movement” and “not an organization as such” (ICRC n.d., b). It is the largest humanitarian network in the world, supported by 80 million volunteers and constituted, as already mentioned, by several distinct organizations. While each organization has its own legal identity and role, they are all united by seven fundamental principles that give the movement its collective identity.

The lack of agreement as to what constitutes a social movement adds to the complexity. I follow Dieter Rucht (2017) who defines social movements as: “…a network of individuals, groups and organizations that, based on a sense of collective identity, seek to bring about social change (or resist social change) primarily by means of collective public protest” (2017: 45). Against this background, we may agree with the Red Cross’ self-definition as a movement, because it is a network of different organizations with a shared collective identity. In addition, it could be argued that it seeks to bring about social change, because its goals include the assistance and integration of asylum seekers and undocumented migrants to the host societies. In this way, the humanitarian interventions of the Red Cross take on a political
dimension that is partly progressive, partly reactionary, seeing how it resists social change in the form of discriminatory and exclusionary practices, norms and institutions. While some might question the degree to which the Red Cross uses public protest as a means to achieve its goals, this study will argue that the campaign “Tear the law. Not families” can easily be considered as such. Therefore, in order to acknowledge the unique and complex nature of the Red Cross – and the key role that it has played in the history of ‘moral movements’ (Przyrembel 2017) – this study will combine the terms ‘civil society organization’ and ‘social movement’ as ‘civil society organization/movement’. In addition, as the Red Cross acts across borders, and is part of what has been called ‘global civil society’, this term will also be used (Jordan 2011).

In the next section I provide the theoretical framework for the analysis. I outline and explore some of the main scholarly understandings of citizenship and their implications for the rights of non-citizens. I also explain how framing theories can be useful for understanding how the Red Cross sees its own role and mission. In section 3, I explain the choice of methods and data sources. I also provide arguments for the types of included and excluded data. In Section 4, I describe and analyse key “acts of citizenship” enacted by the Red Cross during the 2015-2017 period. I take these acts as illustrations of how some of the Red Cross’ deeds can be interpreted as a challenge to the state’s notion of citizenship. The interpretation of these acts is done against the theoretical framework previously mentioned and against the political context in which they take place. In the final section, I summarise the findings and provide possible implications of this study for our notions of citizenship, for the broader issues of social inclusion and exclusion and for other civil society organizations/movements. I also indicate possible areas of further research.

2. Theoretical argument and literature review

2.1 Theories of citizenship

2.1.1 Critical Citizenship Studies (CCS): citizenship as acts

In order to be able to analyze how the Red Cross challenges the Swedish state’s notion of citizenship, it is important to begin by looking at what the term means and how citizenship
Although citizenship is a widely used concept, there is little agreement on how to understand it. One aspect that different conceptualizations have in common, however, is the idea of membership to a political community. The study of citizenship has been approached as status, habitus or acts (Isin 2012: 109). The scholars who approach citizenship as status are concerned with the rules, regulations and laws that pertain to who can or cannot be a citizen in a given political community, envisaged as a nation-state. Thus, it focuses on who is entitled to the rights (and the responsibilities) associated with belonging to such political community. It has been conceptualized in terms of its formal legal status. This is the most common and orthodox approach to citizenship that has been criticized for being static and formal, as social membership often entails a sense of belonging to a society outside of strict legal rules (Isin 2009).

The scholars who approach citizenship as habitus are more concerned with citizenship as practice, that is, how citizens (and non-citizens) exercise the rights that they actually have. Finally, the scholars who approach citizenship as acts - an approach which has grown into the so-called Critical Citizenship Studies (CCS) - are interested in how individuals constitute themselves as political subjects by what they do: their deeds. Although it may be argued that this approach resembles the citizenship as practice approach, the difference lies in that the citizenship as acts approach is mostly interested in how individuals’ or collectivities’ deeds break away from the norms and expectations. This approach enables to focus on how people who do not enjoy citizenship may act as if they did and claim rights not legally theirs. By doing this, they constitute themselves as political subjects. Hence, this approach, which informs also this thesis, reflects on and studies citizenship as “political subjectivity” (Isin 2012: 109).

The understanding of citizenship as membership thus includes elements of status, rights and political participation, which have been expanded and have become more inclusive throughout time (Bosniak 2006). The expansion of citizens’ rights not only to include political rights but also civil, social, cultural and economical rights has been remarkable. In this regard, the role of civil society has been crucial, as we shall see below. In addition, the idea that citizenship can only be practiced in those spheres of life considered public has been challenged and expanded. In other words, political and legal theorists claim that the political does not just take place in the public spheres but also in the so-called private and civil society
spheres such as the neighborhood, the school, the political movement, the union, the family, the workplace, and the market (Bosniak 2006).

Related to these substantive aspects of citizenship, is the question of its sites of enactment. Regardless of their discipline or political inclination, many scholars assume that the practices and institutions of citizenship take place within the political community of the nation-state. It is in fact taken for granted that citizenship in the sense of formal legal status is bound to nation-state membership. In other words, it is the nation-state that grants citizenship status, and thus, determines who the subjects of citizenship are. A division is then established in terms of rights between the members of the nation-state and the non-members or ‘aliens’ (Benhabib 2004). Although these categories are not monolithic, it seems reasonable to state that for the most part whereas citizens are entitled to full rights, non-citizens have either limited or no rights at all. Moreover, the rights of members of the nation-state have to be protected and defended from non-members. The state does this by creating physical borders and legal obstacles to keep non-members out (Barker 2015).

The notion of nation-state bound citizenship is increasingly being challenged – theoretically, by scholars such as Linda Bosniak (2006), and also in practice by a global civil society. In a globalized world, Bosniak argues, state-centre conceptions of citizenship are too narrow and do not reflect the practices that are in fact taking place above and below the state (2006). In a world characterized by among other things the internationalization of communication and information technologies, people are identifying themselves with and participating politically in groups that are not necessarily limited to the geographical boundaries of the national state. These practices occur either at the sub-national level or beyond the borders of the nation-state. Arguably, then, a conceptualization of citizenship that is post-national in nature ought to be considered instead. Moreover, they see the emergence of “global citizenship” as a feasible possibility because, from a rights-based conception of citizenship, the nation-state is not the only source of rights. An alternative source of basic rights can be found in the international human rights legal framework (Bosniak 2006).

By contrast, other authors like Saskia Sassen (2002) argue that citizenship is becoming de-nationalized, that is, the ideas and practices of who belongs to a political community and why are taking on elements of the global and international community within the nation-state. As the meaning of the national has already changed with globalization, the institution of
citizenship has been transformed even when it remains centered in the national state. For instance, there has been an expansion of the legal status of citizenship, that is, of whom the state recognizes as a citizen. There has also been an expansion of citizen rights, which ironically has weakened “the ‘national grip’ on citizenship” (Sassen 2002: 11). This expansion, as sustained by the post-national conception, has partly resulted from the impact that the international human rights regime has had on national laws. But the emergence of such regime has been partly enabled by national states. In addition, the strengthening of civil rights, which allow citizens to make claims against the state, shows how the loosening grip is related to changes within the national state (Sassen 2002). Hence, a denationalization of some aspects of citizenship is already occurring and a post-nationalization of it, that is, a conception of citizenship located outside the frame of the national state, is a possibility. For Sassen, these dynamics need not be exclusionary; they are two “possible trajectories for the institution of citizenship” (2002: 10).

In fact, civil society is making use of the international human rights regime to push for both a denationalization and a post-nationalization of citizenship. The process is particularly apparent in the context of international migration. The international human rights regime has been defined as the “interrelated and overlapping global and regional regimes that encompass human rights treaties as well as customary international law or international “soft law”” (Benhabib 2004: 7). The most important legal documents governing cross border movements are the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (and Protocol added in 1967). The Declaration recognizes the right to freedom of movement across boundaries, the right to enjoy asylum under certain circumstances and the right to a nationality for everyone. However, it does not mention the obligation of states to allow entrance to their territories, to sustain the right to asylum or to provide citizenship to aliens. It may therefore be argued that the contradictions that are seen in practice between the application of universal human rights and the state’s territorial sovereignty are actually built into the most important international law document. Besides the difficulties that these contradictions bring about, what is certain is that states are no longer the ultimate authority with regard to the treatment of subjects within their territories (Benhabib 2004). The international human rights regime is another source of rights and authority. The current refugee crisis can in fact allow us to see how asylum seekers and undocumented migrants - who are subject to the international human rights regime - are treated by the state, and how civil society challenges the state to enforce certain aspects of such regime at the
national level. Additionally, the refugee crisis can enable us to study how global civil society organizations/movements are working to assist asylum seekers and undocumented migrants across borders disregarding the restrictions placed by the nation-state.

2.1.2 Autonomy of Migration (AoM): moving beyond citizenship

In contrast to the Critical Citizenship Studies (CCS) approach (citizenship as acts), the so-called Autonomy of Migration (AoM) approach claims that we need to look ‘beyond citizenship’ altogether in order to explain and understand migration processes. Citizenship is argued to be a “sovereign and exclusionary state instrument regulating belonging” (Ataç et al. 2015: 533). Therefore, it necessarily prevents the imagining of political communities conceived outside the nation-state. Dimitris Papadopoulos and Vassilis S. Tsianos (2013) argue that the institution of citizenship will always function as a “cut” between those who belong and have rights and those who do not, even if it were to be re-conceptualized and expanded (2013: 182). If citizenship is coexistent with borders and with the exercise of sovereign control, an all-inclusive citizenship as envisioned by the CCS approach becomes a contradiction in terms to their AoM counterparts, unless, of course, citizenship is conceived in a borderless world without nation-states (Ataç et al 2015). The suggestion, therefore, is to move away from an emphasis on citizenship and start developing a “new conceptual nomenclature” that focuses on migrants’ mobility, on their struggles and on their human agency (Mezzadra 2015: 134). In other words, migration is seen as a constituent force in the making of social and political life, rather than as a response to political and economic pressures. Migration is “autonomous” because “it has the capacity to develop its own logics, its own motivation, its own trajectories [and] control comes later to respond to, not the other way round” (Papadopoulos & Tsianos 2013: 184). Focus is placed on the mundane organizational practices that allow the movement of people, the mobile commons, and that enable the evasion of control. These include the gathering and exchange of information, the mutual care and the solidarity shared both while on the road and when people settle in a particular place. Papadopolous and Tsianos refer to the world of the mobile commons as a second world, “World 2” in the making (2013: 190). From this perspective, justice cannot be achieved just by assigning citizenship and rights. A change in ordinary existence must occur so that people can move when and where they want and have a livable life (idem).
In short, the AoM approach centers on the lives and movement of people, rather than on citizenship, and argues that this should become the central category for migration policy and academic research. Thus, the AoM is both a research program with its analytical tools and conceptual frameworks, but also a political project connected to migrant rights networks and movements. Hence, there is a close activist-research nexus (Nyers 2015). From the activist standpoint, the AoM seeks to support and facilitate freedom of movement.

The AoM approach has been criticized for overemphasizing mobility and the agency of migrants as being found beyond the script of citizenship and the state (Sharma 2009). In the portrayal of migration as an excessive and autonomous force, they have also been criticized for not fully considering the devastating effects that border regimes can have on people’s lives even after the crossing of physical borders (Stierl 2016). Yet another important criticism involves AoM’s focus on the negative and exclusionary aspects of citizenship to the detriment of its contestatory dimension, that is, citizenship as political subjectivity and the ambiguous relationship with the state that this entails. In other words, the contestatory dimension mostly focuses on the performative aspect of citizenship rather than on the legal and formal dimensions of citizenship (Nyers 2015).

In our current geo-political configuration, there is a certain truth to the AoM criticism of citizenship as being exclusionary. However, I maintain that it does not follow that citizenship (as an analytical or even a political category) must only or mainly serve to perpetuate social exclusion, as AoM theorists argue. On the contrary, as Bosniak (2006) and Sassen (2002) have shown, the institution of citizenship has expanded throughout history. Thus, we may reasonably envision further opportunities for transformation through it. In fact, I would argue that citizenship has never been exhaustively “captured by the state” (Nyers 2015: 32). Consequently, it must be seen not only as an instrument of governance and exclusionary rule, but also, as “an important identity through which progressive struggles get enacted and performed” (2015: 34). Therefore, my emphasis on “acts of citizenship”, whereby the Red Cross ‘extends’ rights to asylum seekers and undocumented migrants (who then constitute themselves as political subjects before being legally recognized by the state authorities) provides a useful approach to understanding the political paradoxes and complexities of contemporary migration struggles (Isin 2008, 2012).
2.2 Framing theories

Given that current literature on globalization and citizenship (e.g. Sassen 2002, Bosniak 2006) does not sufficiently address the question of the role of civil society organizations/movements in the transformation of the institution of citizenship, social movement theory must also be integrated. Framing theories in particular will help interpret and understand how members of the Red Cross see their role and what they are trying to achieve and how.

The concept of “framing” has been extensively used to study social movements and collective action both theoretically and empirically. Scholars have referred to framing processes as one of the three most important processes for understanding the nature and operations of social movements (the other two processes are political opportunity and resource mobilization). In framing theories, movement actors are considered signifying agents, that is, creators of meanings and ideas (Benford & Snow 2000). This contrasts with former perspectives that saw social movements as mere carriers of ideas produced by others such as the government or the media. Social movement scholars thus conceptualize the production of ideas and meanings made by social movement actors by using the verb “framing” (Gamson et al 1982). This entails “an active, processual phenomenon that implies agency and contention at the level of reality construction” (Benford & Snow 2000: 614). In other words, social movements carry out work that evolves and that generates knowledge and interpretations that may not only be different to the prevailing ones, but also may contest or challenge them. The result of this framing work is called “collective action frames”. These frames help give meaning to events, organize experience and guide action.

Collective action frames are constituted by the “core framing tasks” of the social movement as well as by the discursive processes surrounding them. Hence, for our case, it is imperative to analyze both what members of the Red Cross say, what they do, and how they interpret both. The core framing tasks have been divided into: “diagnostic framing”, “prognostic framing”, and “motivational framing” (Benford & Snow 2000). Diagnostic framing tasks involve the identification of a problematic condition or situation that needs to be changed, and the identification and attribution of blame or responsibility. Diagnostic frames that are found across social movements are for example “injustice frames”, whereby social movements identify the victims of an injustice and subsequently seek to magnify their victimization
(Gamson et al 1982). Diagnostic framing tasks can be contentious processes, however, as not everyone within or across social movements will agree with what the problem is and who is responsible. For our purposes, we can use the diagnostic frame concept to interpret the Red Cross’ identification of the main problem(s) concerning the refugee crisis.

Prognostic framing tasks involve finding a solution to a specific problem and the elaboration of a plan of action with its attached strategies. For the most part, this is an empirical question. However, there are studies that suggest that there is a correspondence between diagnostic and prognostic frames, that is, the solutions and strategies tend to be constrained by the problem and by the cause(s) of the problem identified. As we shall see in the analysis section, one of the problems identified by the Swedish Red Cross is that the proposed amendments to the Swedish Asylum law would limit the right to family reunification and thus risk tearing families apart. As a response, the Red Cross set up a public campaign against the law and in solidarity with asylum seekers.

Finally, motivational framing provides the rationale for collective action, including the construction of vocabularies of motive (Benford & Snow 2000). These vocabularies give participants the motives for engaging and participating in collective action and contribute to the construction of a collective identity. For instance, as we shall see, the staff of the Swedish Red Cross places great importance in being a “non-political” organization/movement because, for them, this as an enabling factor to engage everywhere in the world and provide what they consider ‘non-political’ humanitarian assistance.

The development of collective action frames is also realized through discursive, strategic and contested processes. Discursive processes refer to oral and written communication in relation to the activities of the movement. One such process involves the alignment and articulation of events and experiences so that they provide a particular angle, vision or interpretation of the reality or situation that is being addressed. Another process involves highlighting certain issues or beliefs of that reality so that they become a symbol of the movement or of the situation as a whole (Benford & Snow 2000). For our purposes, it would be important to see whether there is an alignment among members of the Red Cross with regard to what they consider to be the main issues and experiences of the Red Cross in the refugee crisis.
Other issues that are relevant to this study are strategic processes, which are framing processes that are goal oriented. This study will focus mostly on: (a) frame bridging, which entails the linking of two or more frames that are ideologically similar regarding a given issue but are structurally disconnected; (b) frame amplification of existing values and beliefs; and (c) frame transformation, which refers to changing old meanings and creating new ones (Benford & Snow 2000). These processes will yield an answer to how the Red Cross works vis-à-vis other civil society organizations/movements and the state. Finally, contested processes refer to the disputes within and between civil society organizations/movements in relation to, for example, diagnostic and prognostic frames or about how reality should be presented to maximize mobilization. Here it is important to pay attention to how other organizations/movements see the work of the Red Cross.

Certain factors may either constrain or facilitate framing processes. Framing processes are dynamic but take place in a particular context (Benford & Snow 2000). Political and cultural opportunity structures are factors that are particularly relevant for the purposes of this study. In other words, it is important to look at how changes in the institutional structure and/or informal relations of the political system affect the Red Cross’ mobilization. In the same vein one has to take into consideration the organization/movement’s cultural “toolkit” of beliefs, values, ideologies, narratives and myths, as these will constitute the base from which new collective action frames are fashioned, and are lenses through which framings are interpreted and evaluated (Swidler 1986).

A study of civil society organizations/movements should also look at their shortcomings or weaknesses, particularly in contexts of increasingly complex humanitarian crises like the current refugee crisis. The efficacy of international interventions to alleviate human suffering has in fact been under scrutiny for many years now. Traditional humanitarianism organizations and movements, e.g., the Red Cross, have been criticized for their focus on short-term relief at the expense of long-term solutions. In addition, critics have pointed to a lack of political awareness that often results in a prolongation or exacerbation of crises (Hendrickson 1998). Although there seems to be a consensus between the traditional approach and its critics that humanitarian assistance should continue to be the moral imperative of relief agencies and donor governments, critics have been asking for an approach to humanitarian crises that departs from a “consistent political strategy” (Väyrynen 1999). In this way, humanitarian engagement will cease to be a substitute for policy, and the root causes
of crises could consequently be addressed. In the absence of strategic policy, humanitarian relief has been channeled through an ever-increasing plethora of national and international civil society organizations and multilateral agencies. These organizations and agencies have often operated in an uncoordinated manner, duplicating efforts and wasting resources in the process (Weiss 2013). As agencies compete for donor resources, accountability issues have become more salient. It is feared that organizations and agencies, willingly or unwillingly, begin to act in the vested interests of the donors. What is more, the growing number of uncoordinated agencies on the ground has made them a target for manipulation by conflict stakeholders and aggressors, such as local warlords. A final point that relates to the specific case of the Red Cross is the clash over values in general and the principle of impartiality in particular. Today’s wars and conflicts see actors that do not respect the legal rights of their opponents. In such contexts, clinging on to a traditional approach to humanitarian aid may lead to unintended and negative consequences (Väyrynen 1999). In these ways, existing power asymmetries are maintained, and crises may be prolonged rather than mitigated (idem).

3. Methodology

3.1 Case study approach

In order to examine whether the Red Cross challenges the Swedish state’s notion of citizenship by acting as a denationalizing and/or a post-nationalizing force, I need an approach that enables me to thoroughly analyze both the organization/movement and the context in which it operates. I have chosen the case study approach because it is an appropriate and effective method to answer the research question. A case study is “an intensive analysis of an individual unit (as a person or community) stressing developmental factors in relation to environment” (Flyvbjerg 2011: 301). A case study should also be bounded by time and place (Creswell 2013). Therefore, I am focussing on Sweden in the 2015-2017 period. The year 2015 marks a turning point in the refugee crisis as many civil society organizations and movements intensify their support to asylum seekers arriving in Sweden (and in Europe more generally) and the government begins to address the issue more directly. A common challenge for researchers using the case study approach is to be clear about what their case is a case of. Therefore, to be clear, in this study, the Swedish Red Cross serves as an instrumental case to understand a specific issue (Creswell 2013). As an
instrumental case study, it helps to assess whether civil society’s role in the refugee crisis can be interpreted as being a “denationalizing” and/or “post-nationalizing” force, thereby contributing to a transformation of the notion of citizenship based on formal belonging to a notion based on shared values and humanity.

3.2 Data collection

To build an in-depth understanding of the case and issue at hand, I draw on multiple forms of qualitative data (Yin 2009). The main sources of data consist of official documents, media accounts and institutional documents, discussed in more detail below. A complementary source of data consists of qualitative interviews. The interviews are complementary because I am seeking to understand what the Red Cross does in practice (their deeds) and whether this can be interpreted as a denationalizing or post-nationalizing force. My research notes/memo-writing also constitute a source of important data. Having different data sources enables me to triangulate the data and corroborate the information and facts. All data was archived in computer files according to the type of data source. This way, the reliability of the case can be significantly increased (Yin 2009). The files were named: “legal framework”, “background information on refugee crisis”, “potential acts of citizenship”, and “about the Red Cross”.

3.2.1 Collecting data through official documents

In order to reach a proper understanding of the main legal frameworks under which the Swedish government and the Red Cross must operate, especially as it pertains to the rights of the non-citizen “others”, that is, asylum seekers and the undocumented, I begin by doing an online collection of official documents such as international and national laws and policies on migration (particularly on asylum), human rights and citizenship. Examples of such laws include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Geneva Conventions (e.g. The Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees) and the Swedish Aliens Act. To have a more complete picture of the current state of affairs regarding the situation of asylum seekers vis-à-vis the Swedish state and the Swedish state’s view on the role played by civil society during the refugee crisis, I also gather and analyze pertinent documents to the case, relevant statistics and reports produced by governmental offices (e.g. Ministry of Justice) and by the Swedish Migration Board. These include: (i) a factsheet called “Sweden’s migration and asylum policy” produced by the Ministry of Justice in 2017 that explains the changes made to
the Swedish migration and asylum policy during 2016; (ii) monthly statistics on the numbers of asylum seekers and asylum granting by the Migration Board; (iii) the 2017 report called “To receive people on the run. Sweden autumn 2015” also produced by the Ministry of Justice, which describes the role of the various stakeholders that attended to asylum seekers during a key point in time. Again, these documents help me understand the context in which the Red Cross must operate and also to assess whether what it does can be interpreted as the Red Cross acting as a denationalizing or post-nationalizing force.

3.2.2 Collecting data through media accounts

After collecting information on the legal frameworks, I identify and select media accounts according to specific inclusionary and exclusionary criteria. The inclusionary criteria refer mainly to the reliability and trustworthiness of the sources and to the representativeness of the data. It is important that the sources are as well-known as possible and that the articles are representative of the issues under study. The media accounts include: (1) online national and international newspaper articles (so as to ensure objectivity) and national radio articles about the refugee crisis; (2) online articles produced by the Swedish Red Cross about their work and current online activities being carried out by the organization/movement; and (3) national and international news articles about the Red Cross’ work or institutional positioning vis-à-vis certain events. I excluded social media as sources of information because the information does not follow a process of verification as in the formal media and may therefore be too partisan and lack objectivity. A more detailed explanation of the selection process and the reasons for choosing the various sources follows below.

(1) The online national and international newspaper and radio articles (which I search by using words such as “refugee crisis”, “migrants crisis”, “Sweden”, “asylum seekers”, etc, in English and in Swedish) provide me with the general background to the refugee crisis both in Sweden and in Europe. This way I can identify the key contextual events around which to build the case study’s narrative and analysis. To select the key current events, I follow Engin Isin’s definition whereby events “are actions that become recognizable (visible, articulable) only when the site, scale and duration of these actions produce a rupture in the given order” (2012: 131). In other words, something happens in a site or place that has a strategic value for struggles over rights and a specific reach, scope and duration, which changes the given state of affairs. Examples of the current events that I identify include the death of the Syrian
toddler, Alan Kurdi (featured in Smith 2015, Kingsley & Timur 2015); the arrival of asylum seekers to Stockholm central station (featured in Ennart & Svanberg 2015); the Stockholm march and public speech given by Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven in solidarity with asylum seekers (featured in Gimling 2015, Vindögat 2015); the Swedish government’s U-turn in its asylum policy (featured in Crouch 2015); and the EU-Turkey migration/deportation deal (featured in Reynolds 2016, Sveriges Radio 2016).

(2) The online articles produced by the Red Cross (e.g. Jansson 2016, Red Cross EU office 2016), which are available in the Red Cross’ websites under the newsroom, resource centre, and/or “what we do/our work” sections, together with the online activities of the Red Cross (e.g. the campaign “Tear the law. Not families”) enable me to study the response of the Red Cross to some of these current events and to identify specific responses that can be considered as “acts of citizenship” enacted by the organization/movement (Isin 2008, 2012). To identify potential “acts of citizenship” by the Red Cross I also guide myself by Isin’s description of acts as being creative, inventive, autonomous, but above all, political in nature because they claim rights and justice.

(3) The national and international online news articles about the Red Cross enable me to see (a) if and how the work of the Red Cross in relation to some of the events identified is being featured in the news, and (b) the self-reflections by high-level members of the Red Cross about the nature, limitations and potentialities of their work. In this way, I retrieve an online interview with a staff member of the Swedish Red Cross about the changes to the Asylum law, which complements the face-to-face interviews that I carry out with middle-level staff members (featured in Arnsäter 2016). I also retrieve a couple of interviews (although I decide to use the most informative one) with the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross about how today’s global conflicts are transforming humanitarian work and what this implies for the work of the Red Cross (featured in Jones 2015).

3.2.3 Collecting data through institutional documents

I collect institutional documents so as to have a clearer understanding of what the Red Cross seeks to achieve and how. A sample drawn from the Red Cross’ website provides me with rich and plentiful material regarding the organization/movement’s mission, fundamental principles, activities (e.g. medical assistance for asylum seekers and the undocumented) and
policies (e.g. the Red Cross’ Migration policy). I also find useful documents with explanations that help clarify and understand, for instance, the differences and similarities between human rights law and humanitarian law and the faculties or rights that the Red Cross enjoys under these frameworks.

3.2.4 Collecting data through semi-structured qualitative interviews

I complement and triangulate the abundant information that I find through official documents, national and international media accounts and institutional documents with qualitative interviews with middle-management staff members of the Swedish Red Cross (see Appendix 1: interview guide). My intention is to gain a deeper understanding of how they see their role and what they are trying to do and how. More specifically, through the interviews, I want to gain insights into: (i) how the Red Cross works in Sweden and globally; (ii) what they consider to be the Red Cross’ role and contribution; (iii) what the Red Cross is doing in relation to the refugee crisis and how they understand the character of such deeds; (iv) what they consider as key events in the crisis; (v) how they understand the Red Cross’ relationship with the State and with other civil society organizations/movements.

I choose face-to-face, in-depth, semi-structured interviews because this method allows me to build a good rapport with the interviewees and, given that the interview guide is not a straitjacket, the interviewees enjoy a considerable amount of freedom to elaborate on their answers, and thus, give their points of view. In addition, these types of interviews enable me to see the meaning-making linkages that the interviewees engage in and to explore the different forms of informal communication used. Furthermore, I can ask for clarifications and explanations whenever needed (Holstein & Gubrium 1995).

The main criteria considered for selecting interviewees was their role within the Red Cross and their ability to communicate in English. I was interested in interviewing staff members both at the policy level and at middle-level management responsible for activities related to asylum seekers. The chief reasons for these criteria relate to the purpose of this study (i.e. to understand the role of the Red Cross in the refugee crisis) and to the inability of the researcher to speak Swedish fluently. The strategy that I used to find the interviewees was to visit a local Red Cross office, explain the purpose of my study and ask if there was a possibility to interview someone who met such criteria. I was received by an administrator who took my
contact details and promised to get in touch as soon as possible. Eventually, my strategy resulted in two interviews with staff at the middle-level management. This exhausted the possibilities, as the Red Cross office was a medium to small size office and they only had two people in charge of programmes related to the topic of interest. The interviewees were offered the option of conducting the interview either at a nearby café or at their office. Both interviewees opted for the second option and found a quiet and private room to meet. The interviews took about an hour each and they were both recorded and later fully transcribed. They were conducted according to the Swedish Research Council guidelines on ethics (Gustafsson et al. 2006), which I further explain in section 3.5 below.

This first interview provided me with very detailed and rich information. Worth highlighting is the information about the Red Cross’ “Tear the law. Not families” campaign which I then decided to include in the analysis as an illustration of an act of citizenship/protest which seeks to stop the changes to a national law by resorting to international laws and principles (coded thematically as a denationalizing force). This interviewee also helped me set up a second interview with the other middle management staff member in charge of managing, among other things, the volunteers work with asylum seekers and undocumented. During this second interview not only did I get further information but I could also follow up on some of the issues raised in the first interview so as to have at least two points of view. In addition, this interviewee provided me with the contact details to a third possible interviewee at the policy level in the Red Cross’ central office in Stockholm. I sent an email explaining the purpose of my study and requesting an interview but I did not receive an answer. I followed up with another email and a telephone call but, unfortunately, I still did not manage to get in touch with this potential interviewee. Hence, I decided to use an interview available online with the President of the Red Cross to see how the Red Cross works at the policy level especially with regard to being non-political which was an issue that came out quite strongly in the face-to-face interviews. The Red Cross staff is extremely busy and I was fortunate to have conducted two interviews for this study.

3.3 Data analysis

To analyse the empirical data I use two main methodological procedures: memo writing and thematic analysis. Memo writing helps me find connections, associations and contradictions
in the data and also between the data and the theories, and hence, to theorize (Swedberg 2012). More specifically, memo writing helps me understand whether and how the Red Cross acts as a denationalizing or post-nationalizing force. In the interview material, these terms were operationalized as acts carried out inside Sweden or in Europe more generally (that is, outside Sweden). The thematic analysis enables me to identify, analyze and report patterns and themes within the data. This method is especially useful to see how the members of the Red Cross see their role and what they are trying to achieve and how.

3.3.1. Analyzing official documents

To analyze the official documents (laws and policies, statistics and reports) I read them as carefully and critically as possible so as to try to identify whether there are: (a) contradictions between the international human rights legal framework and national laws and policies regarding the rights of asylum seekers and the undocumented; (b) disparities between the explanation given by the government with regard to the changes to the Swedish Asylum law and the understanding of the Red Cross of such changes; (c) contradictions or similarities between the positions of the government and of the Red Cross as to how the asylum seekers’ situation unfolded during the autumn 2015, which was a key moment in the refugee crisis in Sweden and more generally in Europe; and (d) differences between the monthly statistics from the Migration Board regarding the number of asylum seekers that are granted asylum in Sweden and the perception of the Red Cross on the issue.

3.3.2 Analyzing media accounts

*Online national and international newspapers and national radio articles*

Having identified the events (as per Isin’s definition of such) that marked the refugee crisis in Sweden and in Europe, I tried to see what were the most important aspects to highlight for each one of these events. While all events meant a rupture with the given order, the locus of significance might vary in the individual cases: in some, it is the place of the event, in others the scale, in others again the duration. In addition, I tried to analyse how the events unfolded chronologically and how the discourses of the various stakeholders about them changed throughout the refugee crisis.
Online articles produced by the Swedish Red Cross and online activities

Following Isin’s definition of “acts of citizenship”, I made a first selection of about twenty potential acts of citizenship by the Red Cross. I then classified them in five categories according to the type of acts of citizenship that the Red Cross seems to enact. Thus, a first classification included: (1) Saving lives at sea (2) Identifying people after death (3) Providing medical assistance (4) Acting against deportation (5) Developing humanitarian laws and principles and promoting human rights laws and principles. Out of these categories, I decided to exclude the “identifying people after death category” because this topic has been recently studied by Rygel in his study called “Dying to live: migrant deaths and citizenship politics along European borders: transgressions, disruptions, and mobilizations” (2016). Although Rygel does not focus on the role of the Red Cross in particular, he shows how the work done by other solidarity networks in identifying asylum seekers bodies after death is an illustration of the way in which they transform the modern notion of citizenship as the asylum seekers become bearers of rights (thanks to their identification) in death. In addition, after conducting the interviews, I decided to include another category which I called “acting against the 2016 changes to the Swedish asylum law”.

As I used an abductive approach to data analysis, which involves “a recursive process of double-fitting data and theories”, that is, moving back and forth between the empirical data and the main theories used (Timmermans & Tavory 2012: 179), and as I sought to find out whether the Red Cross acts as a denationalizing and/or as a post-national force, I further classified these categories as “denationalization” and/or “post-nationalization”. In other words, after identifying the acts of citizenship by the Red Cross, I evaluated whether these acts were enacted inside (denationalization) and/or outside (post-nationalization) Sweden. In addition, I then chose one act per category and further classified them according to my interpretation of what the act is an act of (e.g. disobedience, protest, solidarity). The table below shows the final classification.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Act 1</th>
<th>Provision of medical assistance</th>
<th>Defiance/disobedience</th>
<th>Denationalization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Act 2</td>
<td>Campaign “Tear the law. Not families”</td>
<td>Protest</td>
<td>Denationalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act 3</td>
<td>Saving migrants lives in the Mediterranean</td>
<td>Solidarity</td>
<td>Post-nationalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act 4</td>
<td>Criticism of EU-Turkey deal</td>
<td>Solidarity</td>
<td>Post-nationalization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Online national and international news articles about the Red Cross

As the news articles about the Red Cross consist of interviews with staff members of the Red Cross, I analyse them in the same way that I analysed the face-to-face interviews (see below).

3.3.3 Analyzing institutional documents

In order to analyze the institutional documents (e.g. mission and principles, activities, policies), I read them carefully trying to understand and make connections between the institutional nature of the Red Cross, the values that it upholds and how these are reflected (or not) in the activities that the Red Cross carries out. A couple of issues stand out to me, namely, the position of the Red Cross within the international humanitarian system and the neutrality principle as one of its guiding principles. As for the latter, I ask myself: is it really possible to be neutral (i.e. non-political) in many of the conflict situations in which the Red Cross finds itself today? Is humanitarian assistance really neutral? How does it work in practice? Hence, I decide to include these issues in the interview guide so as to further explore how the staff members of the Red Cross understand the organization/movement’s role and the neutrality principle and how these understandings impact their daily work.

3.3.4 Analyzing semi-structured interviews

To analyze the face-to-face, semi-structured interviews (and the interviews found in the news with staff members), I followed the steps suggested by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2006): (1) I familiarized myself with each data item or interview by listening (or reading) to them repeatedly and by taking notes; (2) I transcribed the interviews as literally as possible and took notes on the expressions and tone of voice of the participants in order to be able to interpret the meanings that they ascribe to their experiences in a more truthful manner; (3) I assigned codes to data chunks in each interview. In so doing, I used “in-vivo” coding as well as descriptive and process coding; (4) I read the entire data set thoroughly looking for patterns across the data items; (5) I grouped codes into possible themes and sub-themes and I drew a mind-map; (6) I reviewed the data chunks across all data items to see whether the main
themes identified really can be supported; (7) I used the literature to further develop, problematize and substantiate my findings. The main themes identified were inclusion/integration, complicity versus independence and the importance of being neutral or non-political. Inclusion/integration relates to how the staff members see the role of the Red Cross. The issue of complicity versus independence emerged in the context of the Red Cross’ relationship with the Swedish government. And the neutrality/non-political issue relates to the principles of the Red Cross and how this guides and affects their work. As for the latter, although I had included the issue as part of the interview guide, it became clear that this was a topic of major importance to them because they mentioned it before I could ask the question.

3.4 Data limitations, trustworthiness and credibility

The research strategy that I chose for this analysis has its limitations. It is limited in its scope (as it only covers the case of one civil society organization/movement) and in the interview sampling (as it excludes interviews with asylum seekers and face-to-face interviews with authorities). These limitations are due to the nature of Masters theses that have to be feasible within certain time constraints, but also to the purpose of this study, which is to understand and explain a phenomenon/issue (that is, how civil society pushes the boundaries of citizenship) through the study of what a particular organization/movement does. Hence, the most important thing is to analyze what the Red Cross does and secondary to this is how its staff members and other stakeholders understand what they do. Although I am aware about the problem of generalization from one case with particular characteristics to others, this is, again, an instrumental case study that serves to explore and illustrate the issue of whether and how civil society may be seen as pushing the boundaries of citizenship by acting as a “denationalizing” or “post-nationalizing” force. Still, understanding how the Red Cross does it, can shed some light for other organizations/movements that also seek to affect social change. In addition, from a research perspective, this study could inspire future analysis of other organizations to see whether and how they act as a denationalizing or a post-nationalizing force. Another limitation of this study concerns the use of the English language to communicate with the interviewees given that English is neither the researcher’s nor the interviewees’ mother tongue. However, while a few times what was said needed clarification from one of the parties, for the most part it might have been an advantage as a very good rapport was quickly established. In fact, the interviewees seem to feel comfortable enough so
as to share sensitive information that they might not have shared having the researcher been also Swedish.

In qualitative research it is important that the researcher also reflects about all possible sources of biases. In this case I believe the main biases concern my own philosophical assumptions and interpretative framework, that is, the theories used to interpret the data. One could say that I rely on “social justice theories”, which seek to bring about change or address a social injustice (Creswell 2013: 23). Thus, I am prone to side with those who suffer the injustice. Aware of this, I tried to be as objective as possible by collecting multiple forms of data and by bringing to the fore both the “voices” of civil society and of the authorities (in the form of public speeches, reports written by them, etc). To ensure the credibility of the data, I tried to mostly use well-known national and international online sources and to triangulate all the sources.

3.5 Ethical considerations

The ethical considerations of this study mostly concern the interviews. As the refugee crisis is a politically sensitive issue, and staff members of the Red Cross firmly uphold the non-political nature of the organization/movement and of the work they do, it was important to approach them with particular care. Otherwise, the interviewees might have been unwilling to share the unwritten strategies that they use in order to counter the State’s restrictions regarding the rights of asylum seekers and the undocumented. They might have also withheld information about questionable actions of the government or of civil society, which may be relevant to this study. This withholding of information could have been exacerbated by the power-imbalance that often exists between the interviewees and the interviewer. Thus, to ensure that the interviewees felt comfortable and to build trust between us, I conducted myself with humility and respect and we signed a consent form that explained the purpose of the study and clearly stated that the participants could withdraw from the study at any time (Creswell 2013). Yet another ethical issue concerning the interviews was how to ensure the anonymity of the interviewees given that they were only two and that they belonged to a small local branch of the Red Cross in Sweden. I thus decided to refer to them as “the interviewees” and to avoid specifying the name of the local branch.
Finally, there are also ethical implications related to the storage of the data. In order to avoid harming individuals both in the present and in the future, I am keeping the recordings and transcripts from the interviews and my research notes/memo-writing in a safe place (Gustafsson et al. 2006). The rest of the empirical data does not present ethical concerns because they are available for public consumption.

4. Results

In order to understand the role of the Swedish Red Cross in the refugee crisis, I look at how socially significant events unfold during the 2015-2017 period. In addition, I describe and analyse what I consider to be key acts of citizenship by the organization/movement during the same timeframe to see how it pushes the boundaries of citizenship. I also analyse and provide possible explanations to why and how the Red Cross may be able to enact such acts.

4.1 The role of the Swedish Red Cross in the refugee crisis

4.1.1. Denationalization: acts of citizenship inside Sweden

The war in Syria had been going on for more than four years when on September 3, 2015, the picture of Alan Kurdi, a Syrian toddler found dead on a beach off the coast of Turkey, featured in the world news and caused a massive outrage throughout Europe (Smith 2015, Kingsley & Timur 2015). This tragic event meant a rupture to the widespread indifference to the death of asylum seekers and undocumented migrants crossing the Mediterranean and became a symbol of the refugee crisis. Civil society intensified its mobilization around asylum seekers, and politicians began to address their situation more directly. In Sweden, for instance, on September 6, 2015, Prime Minister Stefan Löfven gave a compassionate speech at a Stockholm march in support for asylum seekers (Gimling 2015). In his speech, Löfven reflected on the situation of millions of people who have dreams and hopes, “like you and me”, but are obliged to seek refuge as a consequence of war and terror and risk their lives in doing so. Mentioning the death of Alan Kurdi, he called on his fellow citizens and said: “We must act now. Sweden will continue to take its responsibility” (Regeringskansliet 2015). Moreover, in a press conference on the same day, Löfven said: “…we must take approximately 1 million refugees [asylum seekers] before the end of 2015. These are times
when our hearts must be the most open – these are times when we must let a million people, an entire Stockholm, enter and get asylum (sc. in our country)” (Vindögat 2015).

Sweden did act when the government allowed all migrants to seek asylum once they arrived at the country’s borders. In the months following Löfven’s speech, Stockholm’s central station (T-Centralen) became a microcosm of society at work: civil society and public officials could be seen working side by side to receive the hundreds of asylum seekers that arrived day after day (Ennart & Svanberg 2015). The Red Cross was one of the civil society organizations/movements present from the start. Through its many volunteers, the Red Cross provided assistance with basic needs, with assessing the asylum seekers’ need of medical attention, with helping them with the migration authorities and with providing general information (interviewee). The Red Cross also took on a coordinating role of many other civil society volunteers as the situation turned chaotic with many volunteers trying to help (Ennart & Svanberg 2015). During the autumn of 2015, Stockholm’s central station became the “site of enactment” of various “acts of citizenship” (Isin 2012) by civil society, which, in the particular case of the Red Cross, has continued to enact ever since.

In fact, according to the Red Cross’ website, the organization/movement has continued to provide some of these and other services to all migrants regardless of their legal status. This means that the Swedish Red Cross assists asylum seekers and the undocumented or ‘paperless’, that is, people who are residing in the country without the proper documentation, alike (Government Offices of Sweden, n.d.). In fact, when explaining their medical assistance services, the website states that “At the Red Cross’ nursing facilities, we give medical assistance, advice and support to the undocumented and other migrants that fall outside the protection of society” (Rödakorset n.d., a). This is in line with the International Red Cross’ policy on migration, which defines migrants as people belonging to any of the following categories: labour migrants, stateless migrants, migrants deemed irregular by public authorities, migrants displaced within their own country, refugees and asylum-seekers (IFRC 2009). Under Swedish migration law, however, these categories have different rights attached, if any at all. For example, while asylum seekers are entitled to rights such as subsidised acute medical care, the paperless are not (Sveriges Riksdag 2008). For the State, paperless adults belong to the category where people do not have the “right to have rights” (Arendt 1951: 297).

Thus, the Red Cross’ acts of providing the paperless or undocumented with medical
assistance as well as other types of support, such as legal advice and language training, could be considered as acts of “defiance” or as acts of “disobedience” vis-à-vis the state (Isin 2012). I would argue, however, that these acts do not only involve elements of defiance and disobedience, but also (and somehow contradictory) an element of complicity. Defiance and disobedience occur when the Red Cross claims rights for all migrants out of a sense of shared humanity rather than on bounded notions of citizenship. In other words, the Red Cross challenges the authority of the nation-state to determine who belongs and where, and, consequently, who has the right to assistance and protection and who does not (Barker 2015).

As one of the staff members of the Red Cross proudly told me: “…newcomers, asylum seekers, hidden people, everyone is welcomed. We don’t care about the specific status. We are just open. We ask nothing and we register nothing. Integration is the main activity we are working on”.

However, as stated in the recently published governmental report “To receive people on the run. Sweden autumn 2015”, the state has been relying on civil society to provide basic services to specific groups (Justice Department, 2017). This reliance has involved payments made from the state to civil society organizations. According to the report, the Red Cross received 34 million Swedish crowns during 2015. This relationship between the state and the Red Cross was confirmed in the interviews with staff members who, when asked about how the government saw their work with the paperless, one of them said: “…the government knows what we do and we don’t keep it a secret. We always say that we are working with paperless (…), the government does not want the development of a parallel society”. Another staff member added:

“The challenges are that they don’t have so many rights. They can’t get their needs covered by the state. But the police and the state know that we have paperless migrants and refugees. But they never come here to take them. We always have had some kind of silent agreement that they will not approach them and try to take them from the Red Cross. But there are no guarantees either”.

Hence, this reveals the ambivalent role of the state both towards the paperless or undocumented and towards civil society organizations/movements. On the one hand, the state enacts laws that deprive the paperless of all rights but, on the other hand, it cannot afford to implement such laws without relying on the palliative intervention of civil society. Otherwise,
the social consequences would be intolerable for a society that has become unused to seeing
poverty and misery in the streets (Barker 2017).

This also shows the potential conflicts of interest that civil society organizations/movements
may sometimes face vis-à-vis the government. While civil society organizations/movements
like the Red Cross seek to remain independent so as to achieve their goals of providing
assistance to all people in need regardless of their nationality or legal status, they also rely on
the financial resources given by the very institutions that they seek to be independent from.
Therefore, if we take this complicity element into account, these types of acts by the Red
Cross may be characterised as acts of “measured or restrained” defiance or disobedience.
Another possibility is to understand them as one of the Red Cross’ staff members interviewed
does, that is, as acts of “social solidarity”. This staff member believes that what they do are
acts of social solidarity because “at the Red Cross we are trying to help society; to help people
to integrate to society”. I would add that these acts, no matter their definition, are acts of
citizenship because they illustrate how citizens claim social rights and justice for the non-
citizen “other” (Isin 2012) who suffers from distributive injustice, misrecognition and lacks a
political voice (Fraser 2010).

These acts lay bare the divergent treatment that specific groups of migrants receive from civil
society on the one hand, and from the state, on the other. While the Red Cross focuses on
their inclusion and integration, the state focuses on their exclusion. Following Saskia Sassen’s
(2002) concept of “denationalizing forces”, I would say that by including those who are not
supposed to be included (that is, by extending some of the social rights associated with
citizenship to non-citizens), the Red Cross is in fact acting as a denationalizing force. As
Vanessa Barker (2015) explains in her study of border protest movements in Sweden like No-
One is Illegal (an organization that acts against deportations) and Rosengrenska (an
organization that provides medical assistance), these are forces, which, by calling upon
universal human rights norms and principles such as solidarity and humanity, change national
politics and policies.

This denationalizing force can be further illustrated by another “act of citizenship” enacted by
the Swedish Red Cross: the campaign “Tear the law. Not families”. By the end of November
2015, Prime Minister Stefan Löfven’s plans of giving asylum to 1 million asylum seekers
before the turn of 2015 had changed. Together with Åsa Romsen (Green party), Löfven
delivered a public speech and explained that Sweden needed a “respite” from the thousands of asylum seekers that were knocking at its door (Crouch 2015). In what can be considered a U-turn in Sweden’s open-door policy, Löfven announced the soon-to-be implemented restrictions on both the number of people that could claim asylum in Sweden and on the rights that such asylum seekers would be entitled to, once the amendments to the country’s asylum regime came into force. The imposition of ID checks at the borders and in all modes of public transport were also announced (idem). In July 2016, the law amendments became a reality and the Swedish Asylum Regime considerably more restrictive. The most significant changes to the asylum law include: (a) residency permits will now be temporary and will only be granted to those considered eligible (with the exception of the refugees accepted under the quota system), (b) family reunification will be limited and (c) the right to assistance will be removed from those childless adults who have received a refusal-of-entry or expulsion order that has become final and non-appealable (Ministry of Justice, February 2017).

The Red Cross, as well as other civil society organizations/movements, took a hard stand on these reforms. According to one of the interviewees, the Red Cross was against these amendments because “we considered these changes to be against human rights, against the Refugee Convention and the Children’s Convention [Convention on the rights of the Child]”. Thus, the Swedish Red Cross began a campaign against the law, which could be considered an act of protest. The following statement can be read in the Red Cross’ website: “Sweden’s parliament has decided on a temporary law that forcefully limits the possibilities to family reunification. We say: Tear the law. Not families” (Röda korset n.d., b). The campaign consists of spreading information in an accessible and clear manner so that the general public can understand the changes and their consequences. For instance, in a very brief document called “The law in two minutes”, the Red Cross explains that the reforms imply that asylum seekers are no longer given permanent residency but, if consider a refugee (that would be a person who risks being persecuted), they are given a 3-year temporary residency, which can eventually become permanent if the person has a job and can demonstrate that she can support herself. If the person is assessed to be in need of alternative protection (those who are fleeing from war or conflict), they are granted asylum for a 13-month period. Only the individuals who have been granted refugee status will have the right to family reunification (Rödakorset n.d., c).

While the statistics from the Migration Board show that asylum granting is quite high in
Sweden (around 60 per cent of applications were approved in 2016 and around 50 per cent during the first six months of 2017) (Migrationsverket 2016, 2017), the Red Cross argues that family reunification has become much harder. For as long as the law is in force, people are having to either live in Sweden without their families or are being pushed to make the risky journey together with their children, instead of sending an adult first. “The children are now being punished” – says a Red Cross staff member (Arnsäter 2016). This type of factual information is complemented with public seminars and videos where experts explain the actual scope of the reforms. The campaign also tries to appeal to our shared humanity by collecting and disseminating refugees’ life stories.

Thus, this act of protest by the Red Cross is seeking to stop the changes to a national law by resorting to international humanitarian and human rights principles and laws. This is a clear example of the Red Cross acting as a denationalizing force. The Red Cross is claiming to put people back at the centre by respecting their rights to be granted asylum, to family reunification and to the protection of children. This way, they argue, people could start their new lives in Sweden and integrate into society. By contrast, the state is focusing on limiting such rights and finds in the EU asylum law the right legal framework to do so. As it is explained in a fact sheet issued this year by the Ministry of Justice about Sweden’s migration and asylum policy: “On 20 July 2016, a temporary law was introduced, adapting Sweden’s asylum rules to the minimum levels under the EU law” (Ministry of Justice, February 2017).

This not only shows that there are important differences in the interpretation of international humanitarian and human rights laws and principles between the Red Cross and the Swedish state, but also between the Red Cross and the European Union. While, the Red Cross focuses on the principle of universality of rights, Sweden and other European countries are focusing on the exclusivity of rights for only some - for those who are deemed eligible. This eligibility, however, is not always based on clear and uncontroversial criteria. Host countries base their eligibility criteria on, for example, an assessment of the situation (“push factors”) in the countries of origin and on cultural, social or religious grounds (Castles et al. 2014). These criteria are linked to the idea of the nation-state whereby people who belong to the nation-state are meant to share values and cultural practices that may be threatened by, and thus, ought to be protected from, those who do not belong and who have (or are perceived to have) different values and practices. This sense of membership to a nation is thus further reinforced by the establishment of both physical borders and legal barriers (Barker 2015). This tendency
to keep non-members outside the nation-state is increasing in Sweden and in other European countries even though they are all signatories of the laws that make up both the international human rights and humanitarian legal frameworks, which again, are universalistic and inclusive in nature.

4.1.2 Post-nationalization: acts of citizenship outside Sweden

Hence, in order to explain the role of the Red Cross in the refugee crisis, we cannot limit the analysis to the national level but need to include the European and global levels. In fact, as the refugee crisis is felt around Europe, the Swedish Red Cross becomes as engaged in enacting acts of solidarity inside as outside Sweden. One such act is saving migrants’ lives in the Mediterranean sea. In the fall of 2016, the Swedish Red Cross sent medical volunteers and three million Swedish crowns to support the International Red Cross’ “floating ambulance” called “Responder” (which means “to respond” or “to take responsibility” in Spanish). These medical volunteers helped save thousands of migrants from drowning in the area between Italy and North Africa (Jansson 2016). They worked day and night assisting the wounded and the sick regardless of their nationality or legal status. This act of solidarity enacted in a “site of strategic value for the struggle for rights” -the Mediterranean sea- (Isin 2012: 133), illustrates how the Swedish Red Cross clearly acts as a post-nationalizing force (Bosniak 2006). That is, the Swedish Red Cross is claiming the rights to life and to medical assistance for asylum seekers and undocumented migrants beyond the borders of the national state, and by doing this; it is challenging the state’s notion of citizenship (and its associated rights) bounded to a territory.

Thus, the Red Cross is part of a global civil society that is increasingly pushing the boundaries of citizenship from one based on the nation-state to one based on human rights. This can be further illustrated by another act of global solidarity beyond the borders of the nation-state: the Red Cross’ stand against the EU-Turkey migration deal. In April 2016, the vice-President of the Red Cross and President of the Italian Red Cross, Francesco Rocca, severely criticised and questioned the European Union’s controversial repatriation agreement with Turkey (Valero 2016). This deal did not only go against the fundamental principle of non-refoulement (that is, under international law countries are forbidden from returning asylum seekers to countries where they would likely face persecution) but it was also being signed with a country that had not fully ratified the Geneva Convention (idem). These words
of indignation came out a week after the publication of a letter by the Presidents/Secretary Generals of 23 National Societies of the Red Cross (including the Secretary General of the Swedish Red Cross), where they had also condemned such deal (Red Cross EU office 2016). The signatories of the letter argued that the EU-Turkey migration deal “reflects a lack of empathy and humanity” and that it risks undermining international and European refugee and human rights laws with serious humanitarian implications on the ground. Moreover, they said:

“In our experience, deterrence policies and border closures have had a limited effect in reducing the vulnerabilities of people facing despair. Instead, indiscriminate border controls and the criminalization of irregular movement tend to expose the most vulnerable, in particular women and children, to ever greater risks including family separation, sexual abuse, trafficking, violence, and death. As we have repeatedly seen, when a border closes, new routes quickly emerge” (idem).

Here, the Red Cross is seeking to protect the most vulnerable “others”, or “aliens”, by calling on governments to change policies aimed at stopping them from coming to Europe (Benhabib 2004). These policies are not only counterproductive, as people are still coming (because they do not have other options) and suffering all sorts of difficulties on their way, but also go against international and European humanitarian and human rights laws. By signing an agreement with a country that has not ratified the Geneva Conventions, the European Union is being complicit to what in the future may as well be considered a crime against humanity. The Red Cross and its network of national societies (including the Swedish national society) are taking on the role of protecting the most vulnerable by resorting to global principles of humanity. In addition, this mobilization to express solidarity may be seen as a transgressive form of modern citizenship expressed in a “tearing down of borders” (Rygel, 2016: 557). In other words, the Red Cross is transgressing the logic of citizenship because it is challenging the current practices and ideas of bordering.

The Red Cross has helped to expand the rights to assistance and protection for an increasing number of people by developing international humanitarian laws and by promoting international human rights laws. This entire process, rather than the discrete set of events of which the process is made, should also be considered as an act of solidarity. As such, it is the last one to be analysed in this study. The Red Cross began its humanitarian work in international armed conflicts by protecting and assisting the wounded and the sick on the field
(Convention I); the wounded, sick and shipwrecked members of the armed forces at sea (Convention II) and the prisoners of war (Convention III). Later on, it helped to protect civilians under war (Convention IV), and it expanded the notion of civilian persons to include: internally displaced persons, women, children, refugees, stateless persons, journalists and other categories of individuals (Convention IV and Protocol I). Additionally, Protocol II of 1977 deals with the protection of victims of non-international armed conflicts. This body of law is binding to both state and non-state actors who are signatories of the Conventions and Additional Protocols. The Red Cross has not only developed the law, but has also assisted states to implement it so that they can meet their obligations. In addition, at all times, but especially under armed conflicts, the Red Cross promotes international human rights laws such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. Under these laws, everyone has the right to seek and enjoy asylum in countries other than their own (article 14, Universal Declaration of Human Rights) and to non-refoulement, that is, a refugee should not be returned to a country where her or his life or freedom are threatened on account of his or her race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership to a particular group (article 33, Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees).

On the one hand, in actively promoting and assisting governments to incorporate and implement international humanitarian and human rights laws, thereby making them to adapt national laws, the Red Cross clearly becomes a denationalizing force. On the other hand, by developing international humanitarian laws and promoting human rights principles, the Red Cross may also be seen as a post-nationalizing force, claiming rights for everyone, everywhere. Thereby, the Red Cross effectively helps to expand current notions of membership. Implicitly, it centres the idea of belonging on the global community, not the nation-state.

4.2 Factors that enable the Red Cross to enact acts of citizenship

4.2.1 Privileged position in the international humanitarian system

Now, when looking at the main factors that enable the Red Cross to enact such acts of solidarity, disobedience/defiance and protest, we ought to acknowledge the privileged position that the Red Cross has in relation to the State when compared with other civil society
organizations and movements. In fact, the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols entrust the Red Cross with the role of custodian of international humanitarian law. This not only gives the Red Cross a great deal of recognition and influence, but also the right of initiative, which in its turn, enables the Red Cross “to offer its services or to undertake any action which deems necessary to ensure the faithful application of international humanitarian law” (ICRC 2003). The Convention of the Rights of the Child, for instance, is a treaty that includes provisions from both bodies of law, International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law. Hence, the Red Cross has right of initiative with regard to the application of children’s rights. This suggests that the Red Cross’ focus on the rights of the child during the “Tear the law. Not families” campaign was a strategic decision in order to have leverage vis-à-vis the Swedish state.

4.2.2 Mission and Principles

Other factors that enable the Red Cross to enact these acts of citizenship are its mission and its fundamental principles. The mission statement reads:

“The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is an impartial, neutral and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence and to provide them with assistance. The ICRC also endeavours to prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles” (ICRC 2010).

The seven fundamental principles are: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality. These principles guide the work of the organization/movement because they provide an “ethical, operational and institutional framework” (ICRC n.d., c). They also serve to “unite the components of the Movement - the ICRC, the National Societies and the International Federation - and are key to its distinct identity” (idem). Moreover, “adherence to these principles ensures the humanitarian nature of the Movement’s work and brings consistency to the broad range of activities it undertakes around the world” (idem).

Two issues standout when reading the mission and principles of the organization/movement and when listening to their interpretation by staff members. One is the weight and importance
given especially to the principles of impartiality, neutrality and independence, and the other, is the emphasis put on the humanitarian nature of the work they do. These are of course interrelated and are constantly being referred to by staff members in ways that help reinforce one another. However, there seems to be a tension within the organization/movement between the theoretical understanding of these principles and their implementation. Moreover, from outside the organization/movement, other actors seem to question the Red Cross’ understanding of the nature of their work.

4.2.3 Institutional framing vis-à-vis the political system

The social movement work on “framing” can help us interpret and analyze the dilemma or tension between humanitarian work and politics. There seems to be confusion and a lack of alignment within the Red Cross about what constitutes a political act and whether or not what they do is political. At the middle level of staff the terms impartiality, neutrality and independence are used interchangeably and as indicative of “non-political”. And, for them, non-political means: “not pushing”, “not lobbying”, “not demonstrating”. Moreover, they frame what they do as “opinion building” not politics. They see their work as merely humanitarian and they equalized this with being non-political. As one of the interviewees told me:

“We don’t do anything that could be interpreted in a political way or that anyone could use in a political way. We don’t get involved with other organisations that are quite established today like the Refugees Welcome or No-one is Illegal. It is very important for us to stay politically detached. Because we are politically detached, it is easier for us to work in countries and areas where nobody else works at all. We believe that in assisting people we don’t have to be political”.

Framing concepts then enable us to see how staff members of the Red Cross try to interpret and follow the organization/movement’s mandate and principles by using vocabularies that give rationale and motivation for their collective actions and contribute to their collective identity (Benford & Snow 2000). This emphasis in the non-political nature of the organization/movement is mostly based on their interpretation of the Red Cross’ principle of neutrality, which states that the Red Cross “may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature” (IFRC n.d., b). Thus,
by referring to this principle, the staff’s theoretical explanation is that “in assisting people we don’t have to be political”. In operational terms, their explanation is that by being non-political “it is easier for us to work in countries and areas where nobody else works at all”. Hence, the non-political discourse can be seen as part of their motivations and identity construction (motivational framing).

At the policy or managerial level, however, this non-political understanding seems to differ. Although it was not possible to access an informant at such a level, interviews available online with the President of the ICRC seem to indicate that there is an ongoing reflection about the issue, and possibly, an inclination to start reversing this non-political approach and discourse. A process of frame transformation may be taking place whereby old meanings are being changed for new ones (Benford & Snow 2000). The President of the ICRC, Peter Maurer, acknowledges that conflicts have expanded, deepened and transformed and that, therefore, the Red Cross cannot continue to respond in the same way as before. To put it in his own words: “[…] we are challenged in how we define humanitarian action today and how we relate to long-term needs” (Jones 2015). And then, referring to new potential types of involvement he says:

“We will certainly have to do a sober assessment in order to retain what is critical for our basic operation. I wouldn’t immediately give up and say, ‘[t]his is just too political and we will never do it, or we will never have a partnership with someone who does it’” (idem).

In the same interview, Mr Maurer even considers the possibility of working with other organisations to tackle some of the deep-rooted causes of conflict, which have been considered too political by the Red Cross until now (idem).

From my point of view, and following Engin Isin’s approach to citizenship as acts, the Red Cross constitutes itself as a ‘political subject’ by the mere fact of articulating injustices and demanding or claiming their redress (2012: 109). The acts of citizenship analysed in this thesis show how this works in practice. The Red Cross is not detached from the political but quite the opposite. In situations of conflict and crisis, the Red Cross has taken many political stands. To begin with, it has identified the victims of an injustice (diagnostic framing) and has taken their side by claiming rights on their behalf vis-à-vis the governments. The strategies used have been manifold as exemplified, again, by the various acts analysed in this study.
(prognostic framing). We saw, for instance, how the Red Cross set up the campaign “Tear the law. Not families” against the government’s reform proposal of the asylum law. Both the means and the expected outcome of this campaign are political in nature. Similarly, the solidarity acts against the EU-Turkey agreement showed a Red Cross that openly and strongly criticised a decision by the governments of the EU to return asylum seekers to Turkey. In these statements, the Red Cross is “[…] interrogating and exposing the paradoxes of enclosed and enclosing citizenship” (Isin 2012: 9).

The interplay between humanitarian action and politics has been the subject of much debate. Many consider the non-political discourse of humanitarian organisations/movements like the Red Cross as a sign of pure naivété, which “impedes the kind of effective response that their mandate dictate and their oratory espouses” (Minar 1999). I would argue that the Red Cross has positioned itself in an in-between place whereby it is inside and outside the political realm at the same time. It is inside for two main reasons: one, it is a key component of the international system that implements international humanitarian laws and principles. Two, it works closely with governments to support them in the implementation of such laws and principles. It is outside when it knowingly and skilfully swims the political waters so as to not get caught in the political games and pressures of specific political actors and in order to succeed in delivering humanitarian aid (although, there is a fine line here). This strategy of being ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ the political enables the organization/movement to play a key, non-threatening role and, therefore, to have access to places, people and resources that other civil society organisations do not have. I would say that this approach is strategic and enables the Red Cross to simultaneously influence politics and deliver on its mission.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Theoretical implications

In our increasingly globalized world, new ways of theorizing and practising citizenship are gaining force. This study corroborates the results of previous research, which shows that the notion of citizenship tied to a territory, whereby people belong to the political community demarcated by its borders, is being challenged by a global civil society that identifies, makes alliances and mutual obligations with others who share a common sense of humanity instead
(Barker 2015). The notion of citizenship based on formal belonging to a nation-state is being expanded by what people do, especially when they claim rights that they may not legally have, both below and above the state. This is a strong case for a Critical Citizenship Studies perspective, which argues that citizenship ought to be conceived in ways that reflect the changing realities in which we live. Today, these realities are not least characterised by mass migration, ethnic, cultural and religious diversity, and cross-country identification and political participation. The re-conceptualization of formal belonging could be done under a variety of terms, such as “global citizenship”, “world citizenship”, “transnational citizenship” or “cosmopolitan citizenship”. Alternatively, as per the Autonomy of Migration perspective, a conception that moves ‘beyond citizenship’ may be that of a “universal legal personhood”, which would stipulate a universal right to legal protection, regardless of country of origin, citizenship or residency (Bosniak 2006). Either way, this study shows that the relationship between a person’s origin, her current situation and her enjoyment of local and global rights needs to be further theorized.

5.2 Empirical and advocacy implications

The acts of solidarity, disobedience/defiance and protest enacted by the Swedish Red Cross in the context of the refugee crisis confirm that there is a contestatory dimension to citizenship through which civil society organizations/movements may help asylum seekers and undocumented migrants to become subjects of rights before being legally recognized by the state. In addition, the case of the Red Cross illustrates how the role of civil society can be understood as both a denationalizing and a post-national force that contributes to the transformation and expansion of the boundaries of citizenship from within and outside the borders of the nation-state. It also shows that this can be done by calling upon international laws and principles – such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees – and holding signatory governments accountable to them. In other words, the Red Cross has had a transformative role not only in challenging our notions of modern citizenship but, by enforcing international humanitarian and human rights principles and laws, it has pushed for social change more generally. By holding governments accountable to democratic principles and rights for all, it contributes to achieving more social inclusion and social justice within and across countries. This role is particularly relevant today as the refugee crisis seems to have worked as a catalyst for
building more barriers and borders in the form of walls to keep non-citizens out, especially in Europe and in the United States.

The Red Cross enjoys certain specific characteristics, which allow the organization/movement to undertake its “acts of citizenship”. However, other civil society organizations and movements may benefit from the insights gained in this study with regard to how the Red Cross works. For instance, other civil society organizations and movements might consider actively placing themselves in an in-between space, that is, inside and outside the political realm, so as to become more effective in achieving change. Often, civil society organizations and movements have opted not to engage with or propose specific demands to the political system. This has resulted in a loss of political opportunities and even in a diffusion of such organizations and movements (Barker 2015). The articulation of concrete and possibly joint demands by many global civil society organizations and movements, such as a demand for a “global citizenship” or a “universal legal personhood”, could not only help the cause of protecting migrants, but also strengthen the position of civil society organizations/movements vis-à-vis the state (Bosniak 2006). In addition, civil society organizations could try to push for a better harmonization of citizenship and human rights frameworks. As it stands today, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes the freedom of movement across boundaries and the right to asylum under certain circumstances, but it does not oblige states to allow entrance to their territories, to sustain the right to asylum or to provide citizenship to aliens (Benhabib 2004). As long as the assignment of rights continues to be associated with the institution of citizenship, the contradiction that exists in the most important international law between universal rights and sovereignty ought to be addressed.

5.3 Future research

In the context of current scholarly debate, it seems important to try to bridge the divide between the Critical Citizenship Studies (CCS) and the Autonomy of Migration (AoM) approaches. After all, these approaches are focusing on two aspects of reality that coexist, but that do not necessarily contradict each other. Migration should continue to be studied, theoretically and empirically, through both current citizenship and control practices and politics, and through the mundane organizational practices that allow the movement of people and that focus on migrants’ struggles and human agency.
A continuation of the line of inquiry of this study would include the acts of citizenship enacted by asylum seekers and undocumented migrants themselves rather than by civil society organisations/movements that act on their behalf. Comparative research within and across countries is another desideratum. This would contribute to a deeper understanding of how civil society works for the inclusion of asylum seekers and undocumented migrants, and thus, further to transform citizenship from the “margins” (Rygel 2016). In this context, another important task would be the further theorizing on how to harmonize human and humanitarian law frameworks and citizenship frameworks. Returning, finally, to the Swedish scene, we need more detailed studies of the impact that the changes to the Swedish Asylum law has had for (a) civil society organisations that work with asylum seekers, (b) the ability of asylum seekers and the undocumented to claim rights that they may not have, and (c) family reunification.

6. Summary

The aim of this study has been to better understand and explain the role of civil society in the refugee crisis in Sweden. In order to do this, it has focused on the specific case of the Swedish Red Cross and has examined how this civil society organization/movement challenges the state’s notion of citizenship by what it does and how it does it. By enacting what has been referred to as “acts of citizenship”- which are acts characterised by being autonomous, disruptive and, above all, political in nature - the Red Cross pushes the boundaries of the institution of citizenship as we know it. In other words, the Red Cross is claiming (and extending) rights for those who do not have them, that is, the non-citizens. In practice, this means that the Red Cross is contributing to the expansion of citizenship to become more inclusive. Acts of solidarity with asylum seekers and undocumented migrants (such as providing assistance with medical needs) or acts of protest against certain state policies that deprive them of more rights (such as the changes proposed to the Swedish asylum law), or the development and implementation of international humanitarian and human rights laws, are but some examples of how the Red Cross contributes, intentionally or not, to the transformation of citizenship. The Red Cross is part of a global civil society that enacts these types of acts both within and beyond the borders of the nation-state. Therefore, it can be considered both a denationalizing and post-nationalizing force. Despite the particular factors that enable the Red Cross to enact such acts, like its mission and privileged position as
custodian of the international humanitarian law, other civil society organizations and movements may benefit from the insights that we have learned in this study, which, in its turn, may positively contribute to the impact that civil society can have for the inclusion of asylum seekers and undocumented migrants.
7. References


Appendix 1: Interview guide

Interviews with Red Cross

1. How would you explain the role of the Red Cross in crisis situations such as the current refugee crisis?

2. How does the Red Cross work as a movement with different organizations within it?

3. What would you say are the most important acts that the Red Cross is carrying out with regards to the refugee crisis in Sweden and more generally in Europe?

4. How do you understand the character of these acts? Do you think it is possible to characterize these acts as solidarity? Or something else?

5. Regarding the refugee crisis, can you recall any specific action by the Red Cross that has had strong repercussions?

6. Would you say that the role of the Red Cross is political or non-political? Is it really possible to be non-political in contexts like the refugee crisis?

7. The Red Cross’ website says that the Red Cross helps refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants. Who qualifies as “other migrants”? Are the challenges or difficulties to help “other migrants” different than to support refugees and asylum seekers?

8. How does the Red Cross work vis-à-vis the government? What are the main challenges?

9. How does the Red Cross work vis-à-vis other civil society organizations and movements?

10. In most crises situations there are a big array of NGOs and civil society movements that want to help. However, many times they have been criticized for creating chaos and, hence, prolonging crises. What do you think? What are the main issues here?