A Diversity of Roles: The Actions Taken by Religious Communities in Sweden during the "Refugee Crisis" in 2015
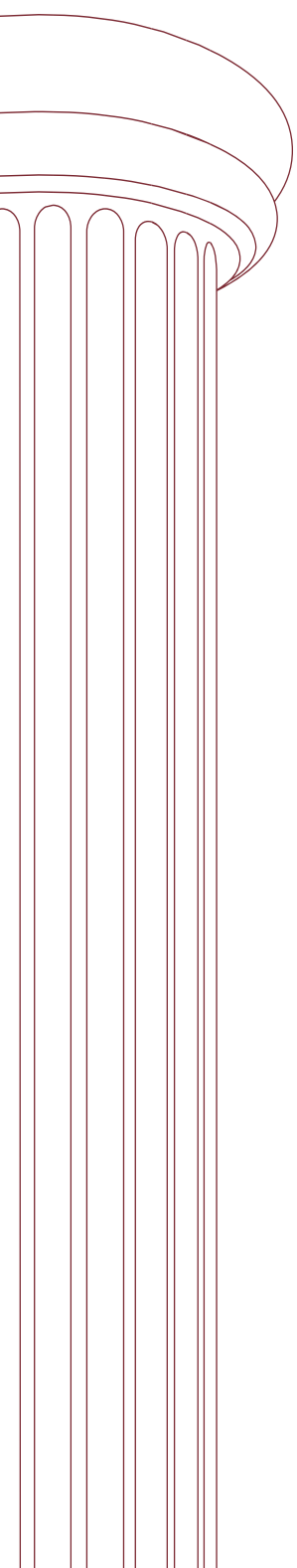
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Content

Abstract

This study investigates the roles local religious communities took and how they balanced their religious and social role, as well as their critical voice in the support of refugees in Sweden during the so-called refugee crisis of 2015. Interviews were held with representatives from Christians and Muslim local congregations in a large Swedish city. Through the exploratory approach, this study can show that the local congregations acted and functioned in a manner strongly connected to how they view their role in society. In other words, the actions taken during a state of emergency by religious communities seems to be a representation of how they view their role in a state of normality. Three ideal types were identified; *Emergency Responders, Community-based Continuers* and *Spiritual Integrators*. The difference in how they combine the religious and social role, as well as the critical voice, clearly illustrates the complexity in presenting religious communities role in civil society in a unified manner.

1. Introduction

Although Sweden is often regarded as one of the most secularized countries in the world, religion, as well as religious communities[1], still play a vital, even if sometimes complex, role. Also, in similarity to many societies around the globe, religion and religious communities are increasingly becoming more visible in the public sphere (Casanova, 1994; Toft, Philpott, Shah & Timothy, 2011; Bäckström, 2015; Davie, 2015). In Sweden, this is due to several concurring factors, e.g. increasing religious pluralism and the Swedish state's continued relationship with religious communities (Bäckström, 2015). Social, demographic and economic changes have endorsed a new interest in religious organisations, especially with regards to social and ethical issues. In accordance with this, the Swedish state is increasingly emphasizing the importance of religious communities for civil society[2], especially in the context of integrative issues and refugee reception. Even if the religious role is still accentuated, their role as social actors is more frequently highlighted, with increased stately financing as a result (Prop. 2015/16:1; Bäckström & Svalfors, 2015)

Whilst the changing expectations would seem to have occurred gradually, for religious communities, the acute situation that in a sense brought the changes into the limelight, were the events during the autumn in 2015. Following the peak of asylum applications in Europe 2015, Sweden became one of the countries who received the highest number of refugees[3] per capita in Europe and as a result the Swedish state came under considerable pressure (Asp, 2017; BBC, 2016). Due to the state's difficulties in coping with the number of refugees coming

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[1] Religious communities (see also faith communities) are in this paper defined as an organisation, culture association or a group of collaborating churches or mosques whose main focus is to organize religious activities including organized worship and give spiritual and pastoral care. A majority of the religious communities in Sweden are national umbrella organisations and federations with underlying communities such as parishes or local islamic associations. However, in this paper, focus will be on local religious congregations from three of the biggest religious families in Sweden; two Muslim congregations, one congregation from the Church of Sweden and two from the free churches.

[2] The concept of civil society often refers to a sphere in society separated from the private sphere, in which family, relatives and friends are included, from the market sphere, where companies act in markets, and from the state sphere in which state and municipal organisations operate. Therefore, civil society constitutes several different types of organisations such as non-profit, non-governmental voluntary organisations, popular movement, religious communities, labour unions, etc. (von Essen 2010). The concept of civil society entered the Swedish language fairly recently and was fiercely debated in the 1990's before it gained acceptance. This debate must be understood in a Scandinavian social democratic narrative where sceptics argued that the concept was ideologically right-wing based, promoting a shift of power from the state towards voluntary organisations, families and religious associations, aspects generally seen as pre-welfare state (Trägårdh, 2008). Although the ideological associations also meant that the concept was received with scepticism among academics, the concept was gradually accepted. This acceptance occurred parallel to a transforming welfare state where welfare provision has been moved from an unthreatened public sector towards a market-inspired sector.

[3] The terms *refugee, migrant* and *asylum seeker* are often used interchangeably in media and have different meanings in different national contexts. In this study, however, the UNHCR definitions will be used and the term refugee will be *"Refugees are people outside their country of origin because of feared persecution, conflict, violence, or other circumstances that have seriously disturbed public order, and who, as a result, require international protection"* (UNHCR, 2015). However, the group that the local congregations support could also be asylum seekers *"whose request for sanctuary has yet to be processed"* (UNHCR, 2015) or migrants, who are a group that *"choose to move not because of a direct threat of persecution or death, but mainly to improve their lives by finding work, or in some cases for education, family reunion, or other reasons"* (UNHCR, 2015).

into the country, as well as the large number of transit refugees merely passing through on their way to Finland or Norway, civil society organisations took a large role in supporting the state in coping with the situation (Asp, 2017; Regeringskansliet, 2015a,b). The Swedish government decided to allocate extra resources to civil society organisations and not least religious communities, as many of them became highly involved in the support of refugees during the so called refugee crisis[4] (Asp, 2017; Hellqvist & Sandberg, 2017)

The fact that religious communities were active in welcoming refugees is in one sense unsurprising. For many refugees, religion is a central and important part of their lives; especially given the traumas they have encountered (Snyder, 2011; Goodall, 2015).It is also unsurprising to see religious communities societally active in times of acute crisis and local or national tragedies. Religious communities have been an important and natural source of support for the Swedish population, not least after for example the tsunami in the Indian ocean in 2004 and the Estonia ferry disaster in 1994, when religious communities played an important role in providing comfort and solace to both those directly affected as well as those indirectly affected (see for example Petterson, 1996). However, in contrast to previous acute situations, the major role in 2015 for religious communities seemed to be a social one, i.e. very similar to many other secular civil society organisations, where providing shelter, food, judicial support, language classes, etc. became central (Regeringskansliet, 2015-b; Asp, 2017).

Religious communities, in contrast to other civil society actors (even religious organisations and FBOs), are unique given that they already have a specific role in being a place of worship and prayer. This could place religious communities into a conflicting situation with regards to both the internal and external expectation of their role and mission. Apart from the social and religious roles, an important role within religious communities is the activity of being a critical voice. Especially with regards to immigration and asylum, religious communities often seek to challenge what they see as unfair or overly harsh policies (Goodall, 2015). Previous research has shown that parallel to an increased support and help of refugees, religious communities have become intensely more political, bringing them into more conflictual situations with the state (Goodall, 2015). Coupled with changing expectations from the state regarding an increased social role, as well as increased stately financing, the question therefore arises to what degree a critical voice can be upheld.

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[4] The term *"refugee crisis"* has been used extensively in Europe for the refugee situation in the autumn of 2015. However, it is widely discussed and contested and Melissa Fleming, an UNHCR spokesperson, expressed it in terms of, *"This is a crisis for refugees, not a crisis for Europeans"*. Whilst most certainly true, the term has been used as a standard description of the situation both by media, politicians, as well as civil society organisations and will therefore be used in this study, despite the terms problematic nature.

Given the changes that have occurred in the Swedish society, in which civil society organisations have either been given, or have taken, new societal roles and functions, the situation for religious communities is particularly interesting. With three roles (the 'religious', 'social' and 'critical voice' role) to combine, there is currently a lack of research on how they balance and experience these roles. Also, in government documents and official policies, religious communities are often portrayed as one homogenous group. However, with the different roles to combine, it is perhaps more likely that the self-viewed function of religious communities varies considerably. By studying how local religious congregations experienced their role and function during an acute crisis, it is possible to deepen the discussions regarding the changing expectations on religious communities by the Swedish state. Therefore, by using the so-called refugee crisis of 2015 as a case, the aim of this study is to investigate what role religious communities took and how they balanced their religious and social role, as well as their critical voice in the support of refugees.

Given the lack of systematic research regarding religious communities as a group in Sweden, this study has an exploratory approach. Also due to the absence of studies in the field, this study does not attempt to conclusively determine the roles of all Swedish religious communities during the refugee crisis. Rather, it aims to produce an insight into how local congregations from a diverse number of religions and denominations acted and balanced their roles. The obtained knowledge from this study can then hopefully be a foundation for an interpretative framework for understanding how religious communities acted during an acute crisis. The article, therefore, is based on a case study of interviews with representatives from five Christian and Muslim local congregations where focus was on their self-viewed function and role in Swedish society, specifically in the context of the autumn of 2015. The first part of the study will give a background concerning the Swedish context and the role of religious communities within civil society in Sweden. The second part of the study will include the case study.

2. Background

Despite Sweden today being seen as one of the most secular nations in the world, ever since the early Christian period, the church and state have had close ties. During the reformation, these strong ties were strengthened further by the creation of a national church, forcing citizens to follow the same faith and church as the king, i.e. the Swedish Lutheran church (Bäckström, 2015). The strong ties between state and church on a national level, and parish and municipality on a local level, lasted well into the twentieth century. However, during the 19th century, the Church of Sweden was also complemented by Christian free churches, promoting

religious freedom and criticizing the state church for their monopoly (Bäckström, Edgardh, & Petterson, 2004).

With regards to social welfare, the responsibility before the 20th century was predominantly focused on religious charities and other philanthropic organisations. However, from the beginning of the 20th century, the public sector gradually took over much of the responsibilities for social welfare. In contrast to many other countries in Europe, therefore, this meant that churches and other religious organisations were not incorporated as social service providers (Micheletti 1994).

In the Swedish social democratic welfare model (Esping-Andersen, 1990), social rights became central, a direct result of the influence of the large group of popular movements. These social rights were a continuation of civil and political rights and constituted the foundation of the welfare state (Trägårdh & Svedberg, 2012). At the core was the ideology that people should not have to rely on the good will of charity to have their needs met, even though religious actors still kept some of their "avant-garde" role in advocacy and innovations (Fridolfsson & Elander, 2012). Generally, however, voluntary organisations, including religious organisations, which provided welfare and social services, have only had a minor role in Sweden compared to many other European countries, e.g. Germany. Also, contrary to many other western countries, faith-based associations and other non-profit organisations working with social services were historically viewed by the general public as pre-welfare state, relating to social inequality and paternalism (Qvarsell, 1993).

The welfare state in Sweden remained fairly unchallenged up to the 1960 and 70's, with the national economy growing and in a spirit of general optimism. During the 1980's and 1990's however, new, predominantly liberal, ideas emerged regarding the role of market actors, a deregulation of economic systems and an introduction of neo-liberalism, therefore affecting the structure and organisation of the welfare state (Blomqvist 2004; Hartman 2011). During the last decades, Sweden, in similarity to many other European countries, has experienced processes of financial difficulties as well as a restructuring of the welfare state. This has created space for new organisational providers, both market and civil society organisations, within the welfare arena. Sweden has experienced societal transformations in society as a whole, a renegotiated and changing social contract, and the creation of new contractual relationships (Wijkström & Lundström, 2002). Demographic, social and economic change, as well as the growth of a societal exclusion, has also increasingly led to new needs and demands for the welfare state.

With the welfare state increasingly under pressure to maintain a high standard of service, governments at both local and national level are now extensively turning towards religious, as well as other civil society actors, for complementary support. A new arena has therefore been created with increasing dialogue and new potential collaborations between the state and civil society organisation (Harding, 2012; Fridolfsson & Elander, 2012).

With regard to religious actors, there have also been changes related to their relationship to the Swedish state. After centuries of a clearly privileged position as the state church, the Church of Sweden was separated from the state in 2000. This meant that a new legal form was introduced (Religious Community Act, 1998:1593; Law about the Church of Sweden, SFS 1998: 1591), under which other religious communities could become registered faith communities and thereby be considered equal, formally and legally, to the Church of Sweden. Importantly, however, the Church of Sweden still has a "semi-official" status in relation to the state. (Bäckström, 2014). In total, 40 registered faith communities now exist in Sweden with over 750,000 members (SST, 2014) and a new religious landscape has been created with space for a more diverse arena of religious communities to act within. The increased number of registered faith communities has also been affected by immigration and globalization that has led to an increased religious diversity in Sweden and a growing visibility of new forms of religion and religious communities. Not least, immigration and globalization has resulted in an increase and new visibility of Muslim congregations (Borell & Gerdner, 2011). Alongside the increased visibility, there are also tendencies whereby religious organisations are traversing towards more social and ethical involvement rather than merely focusing on religious activities (Bäckström, 2015). By doing so, religion becomes increasingly present in the public sphere as well as religious communities becoming gradually more visible as civil society actors, adopting both a social role in the welfare arena as well as being a critical voice in the public debate (Bäckström, 2015; Fridolfsson & Elander, 2012).

In accordance with this, the social role of religious communities is an aspect that is increasingly being expressed and emphasized by the government, not only in government documents but also with increased funding to religious communities from the state. This development, alongside a growing plurality, has prompted moves towards increased regulation and control of religious communities (Bäckström, 2015). This is not least seen in the ongoing government investigation with the purpose to have stricter controls in funding religious communities that do not follow democratic guidelines and base their work on the values that the Swedish society is based on (Regeringen, 2016).

This growing diversity of religious communities could be viewed as somewhat challenging the secular discourse of Sweden, creating, at times, rather complex relations between the state

and religious actors. For example, in situations where religious communities receive contract funding from the state, there is a complexity in that the state often welcomes their practical contributions, though simultaneously resists the religious impact and values of the religious civil society actors (Snyder, 2011). This complexity, as well as the new contract relations between the state and religious communities, seems likely to play a crucial role in affecting the actions and roles played by religious communities in the civil society arena.

2.1 Roles and Functions of Religious Communities within Civil Society

There have been several attempts in Sweden, during the past decades, to try and classify different roles or ideal types that civil society organisations can have in society (see for example: Lundström & Wijkström, 1996; Blennberger, 1993; Harding, 2012). A common distinction, in a Swedish context, is one of civil society organisations providing advocacy and service. These two roles differ in the aspect of what is communicated (*advocacy*) and what is delivered (*service*). In their advocacy role, civil society organisations often have a lobbying role with the purpose of criticizing or influencing government policies or the actions of market actors. The service role, meanwhile, is amounts to providing a service to the public. Although this role can vary, in regards to the focus of this paper, the service category specifically refers to the organisations' social role. Importantly, the definition of a social role can differ and it is important to distinguishes between organisations that are mainly concerned with self-help and those who perform social services for the public (Lundström & Svedberg, 2003). For example, civil society organisations play an important role in creating social networks and stimulating a sense of community amongst the members of the organisation. The social role can also be services, otherwise delivered by the state, that are either delivered on behalf of the state, or without government funding. Examples include providing services such as healthcare, social care, education, sports and culture.

With regard to religious communities, and contrary to other civil society actors, a third role exists; the religious role. The religious aspects and dimensions of so called "religious" organisations and faith-based organisations has been widely discussed (see for example Bielefeld & Cleveland, 2013). Unruh (2004) has characterized several of the religious elements present in religious organisations. These include organizing religious activities, communicating religious messages, conveying religious values, etc. The religious dimension may be divided into two dimensions in regard to Unruh's elements. The first concerns the practical acts, such as organizing worship and prayer, elements that are also required in order to receive government funding. The second dimension concerns the overall faith identity that involves issues such as conveying religious values.

However, identifying the role of religion in different religious communities is complex as they differ in cultural, historical and theological background meaning that the religious dimension should not be understood in a narrow and static manner. Within many denominations and religions, social responsibility is understood as part of religion and does not need to involve any visible religious dimension. Therefore, even if the social actions of a religious group may, from society's perspective, be understood as secular, they could from a theological perspective be understood as highly religious. In terms of these differences, the scale made by Monsma (2002) can be helpful, as it differentiates between models where religious elements are integrated and those where they are separated from the religious organisation's social work, i.e. faith-based/integrated or faith-based/segmented.

An important aspect of the religious dimension is the observed transference of organisations' faith identity during the last decade, in which religious communities have moved from an estrangement to an engagement of faith identity (Clarke and Jennings, 2008). Given this possible increase in engagement of faith identity, coupled with the increased social role related to the expectations from the state, the question arises how religious communities in Sweden today balance their religious, social and critical role. Is it possible, for example, to be an active social actor with strong relations with the state, simultaneously to be active in advocacy, and to allow the religious values to permeate throughout the organisation? If not, are certain denominations, perhaps due to their historical roles, more inclined to lean towards one role, whilst others choose a different role?

2.2 The Case Study

During 2015, Sweden was the OECD country with the highest number of asylum seekers per capita following a large influx of refugees during the latter half of the year. Whilst many other European countries also experienced large numbers of refugees, Sweden, largely due to the generous asylum rules regarding family reunion for refugees from Syria, had a particularly dramatic increase of asylum seekers and transit refugees (Asp, 2017). This increase in asylum seekers placed government agencies in Sweden under considerable pressure, ultimately leading to an acute reversal in government policies in November 2015 with stricter border controls in January 2016, in order to limit the influx. By doing so, Swedish migration politics reversed from being one of the more generous in Europe, to applying an "EU minimum" (Regeringskansliet, 2015- c).

With government agencies under considerable pressure and difficulties to cope with asylum seekers and transit refugees, religious communities and other religious actors, alongside other civil society actors, came to play an essential role in providing aid as well as welcoming

refugees throughout Sweden (Asp, 2017; Hellqvist & Sandberg, 2017). Particularly with regards to transit refugees, civil society actors were many times the only supporting actors as the government was unsure how to handle the situation, given that the transit refugees were in Sweden illegally.

With the considerable involvement of existing civil society actors, as well as new movements, such as *Refugee Welcome*, the Swedish government decided to allocate extra resources to civil society organisations, in order to support their work in supporting refugees (Regeringskansliet, 2015-a). The Swedish government saw that civil society actors played a crucial, and in many cases essential, role in supporting government agencies (Regeringskansliet, 2015-a). Amongst these civil society actors, religious communities were viewed as being central actors that took on supporting refugees with shelter and answering other acute needs (Asp, 2017). However, whilst receiving funds, religious communities were also clearly visible in the public debate, criticizing immigration politics.

Although the autumn of 2015 was an extraordinary situation, it was not the first time religious communities were involved in supporting refugees. Rather, this has been an important role for centuries given that religion has a significant role in the life of many displaced people's lives. For many, churches and mosques are a safe haven and for many, religion and the religious communities can provide strength in difficult times as well as a help in integrating into new societies (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2011; Snyder, 2011).

3. Materials and Method

In line with the overriding aim of this article, to investigate what role local religious communities took and how they balanced their religious, social and critical role in the support of refugees during 2015, an interview study was conducted. Using semi-structured qualitative interviews, representatives from five different Christians and Muslim local congregations in a large city in Sweden were interviewed. Interviews were held in Swedish and an exploratory approach was assumed.

3.1 Material

The five congregations were purposefully selected based on a number of selection criteria. Firstly, a majority of previous studies have studied specific denominations and religions, such as merely the Church of Sweden or Muslim congregations. Given the increasing number of different denominations in Sweden, congregations from several denominations were included in this study in order to pay attention to their different identities. This was seen as particularly important, given that in government documents religious communities are often described as one homogenous group, despite indications of considerable differences between them. Secondly, Muslim congregations were purposefully included in the study. In terms of religious communities in Sweden, they are a large and growing group, and it has been highlighted in previous research that when studying Islam in Sweden, this should be studied in the context of religion and religious communities as a whole, in order to downscale the view of Muslim communities as different, thereby increasing alienation (Larsson, 2013). Thirdly, many studies and reports regarding social work from religious communities have merely included congregations that are active in providing social support meaning that there is a considerable risk of a biased description of religious communities (Fridolfsson & Elander, 2012). Therefore, no selection was made based on a prerequisite knowledge of how the organisations acted during the events of 2015. Instead, local congregations belonging to three of the largest religious families in Sweden, Muslim congregations, the Church of Sweden and free churches, were chosen. Lastly, the congregations chosen were local congregations in one of the larger cities in Sweden that received most refugees during the crisis (Asp, 2017). The increase of newly arrived refugees affected local communities and congregations considerably and although the whole of Sweden was affected, certain cities were affected to a larger degree.

Combined, therefore, five local religious communities from three religious families in one larger Swedish city were chosen to be included in this study. All religious congregations that were asked to participate agreed to take part. Below is a short description of each of the five local congregations.

A large Islamic culture centre – a large local Muslim congregation based in a purpose-built mosque. The mosque has a variety of activities ranging from daily prayers and religious rituals to plenty of social activities, open-days for the public and education programs. Although mostly Sunni, the mosque is open to all, regardless of religious background. It is connected to one of the Islamic umbrella organisations. (Respondents M1 and M2)

A medium-sized Islamic culture centre – a medium-sized Muslim congregation, located in a large rented office building. The organisation is Sunni, performing religious rites, prayers,

worship, etc. Currently, the largest project is raising funds for building a new purpose-built mosque. Is connected to one of the Islamic federations. (Respondent M3)

A Pentecostal congregation – a congregation connected to the Swedish Pentecostal movement. Predominantly involved in organizing worship, youth clubs, bible groups, etc. Collaborates with other Pentecostal congregations and with a long history as a movement in Sweden involved in social support. (Respondent P1)

A Church of Sweden congregation – a part of Church of Sweden, the largest church in Sweden, that was previously a part of the state. This local congregation is focused on worship and preforming religious rituals. They are also active in organising several different social projects. (Respondents S1 and S2)

An Independent Free church congregation – a very multicultural, charismatic independent church. Organises daily worship services, prayer groups, lunches for homeless people, missionary work, etc. Contrary to the other congregations, they do not receive any funding from the state. (Respondent I1)

3.2 Method

Seven semi-structured qualitative interviews were held with leaders and centrally placed representatives and employees of the organisations. One of the Christian and one of the Muslim communities were larger than the others and in those two communities; two people from each organisation were interviewed. In order to ascertain that the interviewee, to the best of their ability, represented the organisation, only representatives centrally placed in the organisation and who had worked there for more than five years, were included.

Contact with the organisations was originally made through both e-mail and phone when the purpose of the study was described. Meetings were then held with the organisations to further answer any questions, particularly surrounding the difficulties of anonymity that could arise. Written consent was collected from the interviewees. Due to the interviewees being seen as representatives of the organisations, representing the organisations opinions and experiences, rather than their own, no factors such as age, gender and profession were included in the analysis. The purpose of the study was not to generalise but rather to find possible variations in the experiences of the organisations.

Using a semi-structured approach, variations between the different interviews was possible. Whilst some themes and common questions were asked in every interview, given the different perspectives and ideas raised by the different individuals, interviews varied although were

centred around the aim of the study. In order to obtain as much information and detail as possible, interviews were conducted in a conversational manner, also resulting in differing lengths and focus from 40 minutes to 70 minutes.

The interviews were analyzed using content analysis, a method in which both manifest and latent content can be revealed (Nelson, Robert & Woods, 2014). The interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded after each interview had been carried out. After transcription, the texts were read through several times in order to obtain a general impression and broad understanding of the text. The material was then read in depth and theme and categories, according to the aim of the study, were identified. In order to validate the findings, the themes and categories identified were discussed with a fellow researcher. Illuminating quotes are presented in the results to clarify how the empiric data supports the analysis.

3.3 Ethical considerations

This study has followed the ethical guidelines as stipulated within the chosen method. Amongst others, the four main criteria, as specified by the Swedish Research Council; information, agreement, confidentiality and usability have been followed (Swedish Research Council).

All participants in this study were asked to participate personally by the author of this study. All participants were informed regarding their rights to withdraw their participation at any time before or during the interviews. They were also informed regarding their anonymity and in regard to this aspect; the information about each organisation and the organisation's activities is limited.

3.4 Method Discussion

As mentioned previously, there is a lack of systematic research regarding religious communities as a group in Sweden. Therefore, there are very few indications of how different congregations balance their roles during an acute crisis. With this in mind, this study, rather than attempting to conclusively determine the roles of all Swedish religious communities during the refugee crisis, aims to produce an insight into how local congregations from a diverse number of religions and denominations acted and balanced their roles. For this reason, religious congregations from different denominations and religions were purposefully chosen, meaning that although the sample was small, it is relatively representative. However, despite this, it cannot be determined that differing results might be obtained if more individuals were interviewed, more congregations were included or if the study was repeated in other parts of Sweden.

Most importantly, the size of the sample limits the analyses that may be accomplished. The internal diversity within each denomination can vary considerably, especially within the church of Sweden and this must be considered in regards to the results presented. However, given the lack of research within this area, there is a need to compare denominations and give indications for future research in the field. Therefore, despite this study being based on a relatively small sample, it could also be argued that given the purposeful selection and the exploratory approach of the study, the interviewed representatives can be seen as not only representing their organisation but also indicating the direction within the religious denomination. Therefore, whilst not producing a comprehensive, national description, the results from this study can be viewed as a foundation for an interpretative framework for understanding how religious communities act during an acute crisis.

4. Results and Analysis

In the analysis of the interviews, an important, common theme permeated throughout. All of respondents, regardless of denomination, highlighted the central role the congregations play in society, especially in the integration and supporting of newly arrived refugees. They all report, although in very different ways, that religious communities are a vital part of civil society, especially in integrating, welcoming and showing hospitality to newcomers. All local congregations examined wish to take part in working for the common good in society, albeit in very different ways. The events of 2015 also highlighted the representatives' belief that given the difficulties experienced by the state, religious communities will assume a greater role in civil society. This change was generally viewed with optimism by all organisations, further highlighting their ambition to take on a larger societal role.

Although all religious communities examined argue that they have a vital role to play in supporting and integrating newcomers, as well as reporting that they have a large role to play in society, their approach differs. Whilst some religious communities see themselves as a resource to society, grounded in religion, others view themselves mainly as a place of community building, mission and an alternative voice. These differences and diversity in how religious communities relate to the secular state also seemed to govern how their role transpired during the refugee crisis. Perhaps because of this, the role and actions religious communities took in the acute situation of 2015 largely seem to depend upon how they see their role and function in society in general. I.e., there appears to exist a strong overlap between how they view their role in a state of normality and their role in a state of emergency, rather than adopting a different balancing of roles during acute situations. This also seemed to

have effects on the collaboration with the surrounding society and other civil society actors as well as their relationship to the state.

Table 1. Ideal type groups of religious communities in relation to their actions during the refugee crisis of 2015

	Emergency Responder	Community-based Continuer	Spiritual Integrators
Social role	*Social actions were vital. Took a large social role during the refugee crisis, clearly identifying themselves as an integral part of the surrounding society, thereby acting similarly to other non-religious civil society organisations. Collaborated with a large number of organisations across society and engaged large numbers of volunteers.*	*Their support to newcomers was intensified during the autumn of 2015 in partnership with other similar congregations. The social role was strongly connected to a sense of community in which worship and prayers were important tools in helping and integrating individuals.*	*Had a limited social role and were largely uninvolved during the refugee crisis. Supported newly arrived by inviting them to prayer and worship. Focused on inspiring members to do good deeds in society.*
Religious role	*Whilst religion was a foundation for the organisation, religious activities were largely separated during social activities. Many of the volunteers had no previous connections to the congregations.*	*Religion was highly integrated in all work for the organisation, regardless of activities. Volunteers were part of the congregation and partnerships were mainly with congregations of the same background.*	*Religion was highly integrated in all activities, with the aim of changing people's hearts and deepening their faith.*
Advocacy	*They argued that actions speak louder than words and some of the respondents were very wary of criticising government policies. They were generally positive to collaborating with the surrounding society and respected the decisions of the state.*	*Tis group challenged asylum policies regularly and were active in the public debate. They saw problems of combining their religious values with society's values. In this aspect, they saw themselves as an alternative religious voice in society.*	*Were somewhat critical to asylum policies. Mainly they wanted to take a greater role in the public debate based on their religious values that they argued stood in contrast to the values of the surrounding society.*

As the table shows, the resulting analysis from the interviews indicate three possible ideal type groupings of religious communities; *Emergency Responders*, *Community-based Continuers* and *Spiritual Integrators*. All three groups differ in their attitudes towards their societal, religious and advocacy role, as exemplified in their actions and experiences during the refugee crisis of 2015. With regard to the three roles, these are summarized and compared for each group in the table below in order to facilitate comparisons between the groups (table 1). Following the table, each group is presented in detail.

4.1 Emergency responder

The first group, were quick to respond to the acute situation of 2015, focusing on giving emergency support to transit refugees and social help in supporting and integrating newcomers. Critically, however, not only did the included organisations react quickly during the refugee crisis, but this is not different to their activities during times of normality. Being a societal actor appears to be central role for them; a large part of their work is social and their social activities are often separated from their religious activities.

"I would say that 95% is not religious. Perhaps 5 or 10% is religious, the rest is social help, helping schools, children, family, etc. That is our strength." (M1)

Whilst this type of claim could indicate that these organisations are merely social civil society actors, it is important to note that worship and praying is the foundation and inspiration of everything they do.

"Nothing we do attracts as many visitors as our services, so that's central. That also has a strong social grounding which is very healing. We could of course just be a place for social help but during worship and prayers, that's when the magic happens!" (S1)

One of the interviewees also pointed out that religion is at the core of their organisation. However, their religious identity is formative which could explain their large focus on social engagement.

"We are religious and above all we are a religious organisation. However, our view and interpretation of religion is wider, more flexible. Our activities are religious, cultural and social." (M2)

In this societal role, thereby further enhancing the focus on social rather than religious role, a sense of inclusion is obvious. There is a clear disregard of the religious denomination amongst those who need help or those who volunteer with them; all are welcome. This meant hundreds

of volunteers were engaged, including many that had no connection to them before the autumn of 2015.

"if you look at the volunteers, there are three separate groups. First, those who were already involved in the congregation, like the choir that took part in making up the beds at night. Then there was a group that went from one reception unit to another, to see where their help was needed the most. Then the third group, that was also the most exciting! In this last group, there were people who said "I haven't been to church for 30 years, but now it's become a relevant place for me again!" (S1)

Their social work during the crisis drew people from all over society to come and work with them. The focus was not placed on what religious values differentiates them as a religious actor from the rest of society, but rather on what united them with the rest of society.

"I think some groups are different from others but I'm quite sure that we human beings are considerably more alike than different, regardless of religion or background. There are human values and these values unify people." (M2)

This social, inclusive attitude was clear in their response to the influx of newcomers during the autumn of 2015, when both the mosque and church supported hundreds of transit refugees and organised plenty of social activities for newcomers and asylum seekers. For the large mosque it was natural to get involved, not least since they see themselves as being a societal crisis resource at all times.

"If there is a crisis, we just open the door and welcome people in. There's a roof over their heads, toilets, water, and more. You can survive one night, two nights and more during a crisis. It's easy! We have a big building and we just open up! This can work at any time. During a crisis or an emergency, mosques can change!" (M2)

For the congregations in this group, social activities, cooperation and partnerships with a large number of civil society organisations, as well as with local council and different government agencies, were already in place prior to the refugee crisis. These collaborative networks merely continued and were intensified during the autumn of 2015. The large mosque, for example, had a long history of actively supporting refugees and asylum seekers. When comparing themselves to other civil society organisations, as well as the state, the respondents mentioned several advantages. Most notably, a unique flexibility to act quickly compared to others, as well as language, religious and cultural skills that help in welcoming newcomers.

"We're a big organisation but we don't have to wait for decisions to be taken. In some situations, we can just act and that's an advantage, not having to wait. You just make a decision and keep going." (M1)

The local church of Sweden congregation lacked the same experience in relation to refugees and therefore chose to collaborate actively with other organisations, in particular Muslim organisations, given their competence in culture and language, skills that their church was lacking. The congregation received some internal criticism regarding the partnership for collaborating in this unconventional manor, and for opening the church for refugees, rather than for worship. However, generally, the partnership was strongly supported, not least through social media through which a recruitment of volunteers took place. All in all, the church took a very active social role during the events of 2015.

Although, for both the Muslim and Christian congregations, the societal role taken during the refugee crisis was largely a continuation of their role in times of normality, the crisis affected the organisations, albeit in different ways. For the Church of Sweden, collaborating with other partners and recruiting volunteers meant that many experienced a renewal of the organisation. The representatives experienced that the church became relevant again in a modern context. For the larger mosque, not all effects were positive. However, the active and prominent social role meant that the mosque was centrally placed in the media spotlight, and its work suddenly became visible to society. This has encouraged it to try to show the Swedish society what they do more openly.

"In 2015 we became visible in the media. Before 2015 we hadn't shown society what we do. So now we regularly organize open house meetings, where we show visitors the activities we do. We want people to see what role we are taking in society and that's fantastic!" (M1)

On the other hand, along with the more visible role, the experience resulted in more suspicion from media, politicians and society at large, predominantly with claims that the religious community was trying to infiltrate society and was an extremist Islamic organisation. Both claims affected the organisation and their members very negatively.

"When you start being visible in the media, they say, "ah, they're trying to get their religion into our society"" (M1)

As with almost all respondents in this study, the respondents in this group want to improve Swedish society. However, contrary to the other two groups, in this group, all respondents highlighted the importance of being part of society, working together with the state, local councils and other civil society actors. One respondent argued that although these

organisations were clearly based on their faith, in many ways the religious aspect of these religious communities was hidden, therefore differing very little from other civil society actors.

"When we talk about what we do, they [other civil society actors] are surprised that it isn't just religious activities that we do, but rather the same work as them. This is a change, but this is also normal, it just hasn't been visible." (M1)

Perhaps due to the strong identification as a societal actor, working alongside other actors and the local council, there seems to be an unwillingness to criticize immigration policies, etc. Although individual actors did criticize the changed asylum rules by signing or organising petitions, there was, compared to the other two groups, an unwillingness to get involved in public debates. Rather, they preferred to let their actions speak for themselves, to mean that change could not be accomplished by writing articles. Rather than criticising, the respondents highlighted the importance of respecting the Swedish state and current laws, focusing on supporting those present in Sweden.

"We help those who are here and try not to get involved in those who aren't. We've signed a few petitions regarding the rights to asylum and that's important. But we have to follow the law and accept what the government and parliament decide." (M2)

In summing up, this group clearly took a very active social role during the events of 2015, acting as an emergency responder similar to many other civil society organisations and in partnership with others. Whilst action during the refugee crisis was comprehensive, it was in fact merely intensifying the social role the organisation was accustomed to take in normal times. Its religious activities were often separated from its social work both in a state of emergency and normality, making it easy to collaborate with other organisations and engage volunteers from outside the congregation. However, even if not always visible, religion remained an important foundation and a fundamental part of their work. With regard to their advocacy role, there is some visibility in the signing of petitions, but this group is clearly the least critical group towards the state and surrounding society. This seems to coincide with the view of it being closely integrated in society. For the Church of Sweden, this is unsurprising given the long history as the state church. The Islamic culture centre, that lacks this history, is nevertheless keen to highlight its wish to be an integrated part of society working alongside society, and to ensure that it is not mistaken for a more conservative and extremist part of Islam.

4.2 Community-based Continuers

This second group was also active during the events of 2015. But compared to the *Emergency Responders*, the manner in which this was accomplished was clearly different. During the refugee crisis, *Emergency Responders* collaborated with other civil society organisations, regardless of whether these were secular or religious, and regardless of denomination. With *Community-based Continuers*, however, collaboration was centred on partnerships with similar religious organisations and in projects that were already established. Although the social role increased in intensity during the refugee crisis, the central role was clearly integration through the organisation's community and through worship. This is perhaps most clearly illustrated by the fact that church services were translated into several different languages. By doing so, newly arrived refugees were not only welcomed and integrated into the community, but also given comfort in coping with their experiences.

"During the autumn of 2015, a Syrian man who had arrived in Sweden on a Saturday evening could take part in the service on the Sunday. I just think that's amazing! He could be part of worship, the congregation, and could be comforted. He'd lost his whole family and was all alone. That still touches me." (P1)

Throughout, the importance of religion in integration, as well as in the support of newly-arrived refugees, is clear for *Community-based Continuers*. Due to the importance of religion amongst many refugees, this group reported that they speak the same "religious language", thereby facilitating the process of integration into Swedish society.

"I think the Church, and this is my point, has a big role because we speak the same language as them [the refugees]. They understand us and we understand them, and we can explain that not everyone in Sweden thinks this way." (P1)

With regards to the refugee crisis, the social role of the *Community-based Continuers* was based on the same principles. Their traditional view was to be actively engaged in societal issues, especially with regard to those most marginalized by society. During the refugee crisis, the refugees were most in need, and the *Community-based Continuers* saw a gap that needed to be filled.

"Historically, we've taken a huge responsibility. Not because we haven't trusted the state but because there's always been a need, a gap, that has led to people losing out. It's that gap that we can fill. Not just historically, but now and with the refugee crisis" (P1)

This principle of filling a gap left by the state, is similar to the attitudes and responses given by *Emergency Responders.* Like *Emergency Responders, Community-based Continuers* declared that they had no personal agenda. Rather, they see themselves as supportive to the state.

"How are all of these people going to be integrated? I don't think the state and the municipality can cope by themselves and that's when we have to step in. We need to get people integrated in society and into work. I would say we have the same agenda as the state. We want to help people get a job rather than living on hand-outs. That indeed is what the bible tells us: that we have to work, do what's right and be a blessing for the country and the place you live in." (P1)

However, as mentioned above, the two groups differ in terms of how the religious role interconnects with the social role. This was clearly visible while supporting newcomers, when talking about faith-related issues during social work was seen as natural and important, for example in saying a prayer when visiting a reception unit that they supported. Also, in the approach to the societal role, the importance of a central religious message was clear among *Community-based Continuers*, not least due to the fact that a large part of the social work was performed in close touch with, or with the blessing of national councils of the same denomination.

A central aspect in the support of refugees as well as others in need of help and support, is the driving force of wanting to help. In the interviews, it was clear that both members of the congregation and members of the general public expected the congregation to take on an active role. For example, clothes were left outside the church which were then distributed by the congregation to those in need. A central aspect, therefore, was of not waiting to be asked by society, but rather actively taking a societal role, purposefully placing the congregation in the forefront of a changing society.

"We haven't been given a responsibility from the municipality! We've taken a responsibility! I haven't experienced the municipality having actively given us any responsibility. Sweden is a very socialist country, it's not the responsibility of civil society to do things. Rather it's the responsibility of the municipality. You shouldn't help the poor, because that's the responsibility of the state. In many ways that's a good thing but it also leads to things like loneliness." (P1)

Whilst clearly supportive of the state, there appears to be no conflict to simultaneously being critical towards the state and their policies. In the Pentecostal tradition, it would seem that there rather is an expectation to combine a societal role with a critical voice. During and after the refugee crisis, the congregation, in line with their national councils, heavily criticised the state

regarding the change of asylum rules. Together with others within the same denomination, several articles were written standing up against the changing refugee politics, arguing for generous asylum rules but also taking a stand against all form of Islamic extremism. Taking an active view on these issues was seen as natural, particularly with regard to their religious backbone. In other words, in their role as a critical voice too, religion is central, governing the choices made by the organisation.

"It's about having generous laws regarding asylum seekers. It's about welcoming people. It's about the excessive fear of other people. That's what it's about. That's the message of love." (P1)

Although this central role of religion is of upmost importance for this group, it is also clear that there are problems combining this with its social role. Whilst the respondents observed that civil society actors were increasingly accorded a greater role in society, this in a sense resulted in limiting their freedom in their societal role. Specifically, they experienced that while state expectations in religious communities rose, there were also indications that their faith and religious values were not welcome.

"We react when they want to change us, our opinions! They want us to change how we work, that we should do things their way. But we have been given a role from the bible. Even if you don't want to see it as religious, our way of working is based on the experience of thousands of years." (P1)

For this group, therefore, there exists a complex paradox given that their willingness to support marginalized groups is based heavily on their religious identity and values. When these religious values differ from society at large, it was argued that these differences could potentially generate considerable conflicts with an increased supporting role.

In summing up, this group mainly intensified their ongoing work in partnering with other congregations within the same denomination. At a local level, their main focus was to welcome newcomers through their services, an approach traditionally used. Their social role was largely based on welcoming people in to their community in worship and prayer groups as they argue that they share the same religious language and values of many newcomers. Their religious activities are therefore integrated in all their social activities, and remain at the core of their work. This group has openly challenged the changing asylum policies and see themselves as an alternative voice. This is problematic in that they want to take a greater role in civil society while simultaneously arguing that there is a narrowing space for them to act given that they are religious actors with visible religious values.

4.3 Spiritual Integrators

Spiritual Integrators differ considerably from the two other groups. While *Emergency Responders* seem to use religion/spirituality as a foundation, and *Community-based Continuers* seem to use religion as a central compass, *Spiritual Integrators* seem to use religion as a tool for improving society.

Like the other groups, the respondents within this group see themselves having a critical role in integrating newly arrived asylum seekers into Swedish society. However, in terms of "how" successful integration might happen, this group takes a very different stand. Specifically, integration is seen to evolve by *spiritual integration.* By attending praying or worship, the respondents argue, refugees and new citizens will integrate into Swedish society and become better citizens. Particularly the respondents from the Mosque argued that through the Mosque is it possible for newly arrived people to find social and cultural attachment, to mean to connect with the his or her roots.

"I imagine that people who meditate, who can find themselves, can also find an inner peace and meaning in life and can then give back and function better in society. It reminds me of a quote from a French philosopher who said "if you don't want to build juvenile detention centres, build Mosques". That's how it is if everything works. Integration. Having roots." (M3)

In other words, for this group, the religious role takes absolute priority, more than any social or critical commitment. A similar attitude was seen with respondents from the Independent church, in that the central, prioritized role was to work to change people's lives from the inside. While this in turn lead to social activities such as supporting the homeless, even bible classes, and other activities of this kind were seen as a tool to reach this goal, rather than being the goal in itself.

"We work with what is most difficult; changing people's hearts. All of society is blindly searching for their basic values" (I1)

In similarity to the previous two groups, this group's role and reaction during the refugee crisis mirrors the attitudes and roles apparent during a state of normality. Although a willingness to take on an active social role was mentioned, lack of funding as well as a wish to highlight their religious views, resulted in organisations performing few and specific social actions. However, while the organisations in this group did little in response to refugees in the autumn of 2015, members' groups were active, with moral support from the organisation.

"Those who come here are involved [in helping refugees] in their work or through other organisations, but they are rooted in their Christian values. They come here to get inspired, to gain strength, in order to continue their work." (I1)

Although they gave moral support, it would seem that these organisations rather watched specific acute help being given by other organisations who had this as their central role. For example, no refugees were allowed to sleep in the Mosque due to security issues. Also, rather than giving out donated clothes directly to refugees, these clothes were sent to other secular charity organisations. These examples highlight the self-experienced role of predominantly being a religious actor, albeit with societal connections and knowledge. This attitude is also true in times of normality when the Mosque is a place where individuals seek help, support, and advice. While happy to help in pointing people in the right direction, these organisations are clear that solving the issues at hand is not their responsibility.

"Many of the refugees don't trust the Swedish authorities, they're used to authorities being corrupt. So they come to us and ask us about all kinds of things and we tell them, if you need help you can apply for that with the social services. But they're always welcome to come and ask." (M3)

By adopting this stance these organisations have few collaborative partners and remain relatively isolated from the state and society at large. While the refugee crisis highlighted the needs of individuals as well as the demands on religious civil society organisations to step in and take a larger share of responsibility, the way in which this responsibility is taken on, was different from how *Emergency Responders* and *Community-based Continuers* went about it. Rather than providing assistance from a societal perspective, one of these organisations has now started missionary work (e.g. through concerts and charity work) in less well-off suburbs. Expanding in this manner, however, highlights the paradox of being a civil society organisation when religious identity is central to all other activities. Any expansion of its societal role, whether related to supporting refugees or to starting schools, will be grounded in its religious identity and values. This does not keep them from wanting to assume a more prominent role as a civil society actor and in the public arena. However, these organisations experience that their attempts at societal expansion or participation in public debates are increasingly met with considerably more resistance, and in the case of the Muslim community, with islamophobia.

"In Sweden you can talk about everything except religion! In the future we hope that Mosques will have an opportunity to debate and discuss using our arguments. We're not there yet but when the opportunity arises, it will be interesting". (M3)

Very similar views were seen among respondents from the Independent church, clearly showing the observed differences in values and the feeling of restrictions to their civil rights by society.

"We like to talk about the narrowing of society's corridors. In these corridors lie accepted values and points of view, and these are increasingly becoming fewer. If you step outside the corridor, you're quickly labelled as an idiot in the societal debate. At least that's what we experience" (I1)

In summing up, this group differs most from the two other groups in terms of what role they took during the acute situation of 2015, given that their social support to newcomers was very limited. However, this group not only argues that its adherents play a vital role both by inspiring their members to become good human beings and therefore performing good deeds in society, e.g. by welcoming newcomers, but also that their religious activities help to integrate newcomers into society by becoming good citizens. The religious role is highly integrated in all their work in regards to integration and they highlight their importance as an alternative voice, standing up for religious values in society and applying advocacy in doing so. However, in similarity to the *Community-based Continuers*, they claim that there is a narrowing space for them in proclaiming their religious values in public.

5. Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate the role religious communities took during the refugee crisis of 2015 and how they balanced their religious, social and critical role in the support of refugees. Based on the interviews conducted with representatives of different religious congregations, a number of important results have been presented. One of the most central findings in this study is the diversity in how religious communities reacted to the refugee crisis. While the visibility of religious communities greatly increased during the autumn of 2015 and some were quick to respond, some chose to merely continue practicing their traditional role of being a place of worship and organising religious activities. Crucially, although clear differences in the role and actions taken by the local congregations were evident, these were not random. Rather, it would seem that the actions taken during a state of emergency were largely governed by how an organisation perceives itself in normal times.

In line with previous research regarding the new visible role of religious organisations in civil society in Sweden and Europe, and regardless of how the different local congregations acted, most of the respondents reported that they aspired to take on a more active role in civil society.

This included increasing their social activities and acknowledging that they had a vital role to play in integrating newly arrived immigrants. Crucially, this active social role was seemingly taken on by self-appointment, rather than being given by the state. Perhaps it was due to this that the form of role taken differed considerably between the different congregations in the study. The role and function played by the different religious communities, seems to be highly dependent on how they view their role in a larger society, as integrated, as more separated from society, as a promotor of their own religious values, or of "society's values". It also seems to depend upon religious identity. In other words, the results from this study regarding the social role and function of religious communities during the refugee crisis seem to represent the views on their roles in civil society in a general sense.

With regard to how they view their relationship between state and religion, the *Emergency Responders*, describe themselves as a central part of society, while although religion is at the core of their social role, visibility is limited. Collaboration with both the state and other civil society organisations is common and the aim is clearly to be integrated into Swedish society. Interestingly, while this could be merely coincidental, the *Emergency Responders* are decidedly less critical of the state than the other two groups. In the two more critical groups a feeling of being pressured by the state is apparent, the state being described as "anti-religious"*,* thereby obviously making collaboration more challenging. They are more open in criticizing the state both in terms of refugee policies and more generally. Integration with society at large seems to be less important compared to them than to *Emergency Responders*; rather than reducing the visibility of their religious identity and values, these are highlighted as being different from the surrounding secular society. Perhaps it is for this reason that cooperation exists almost solely with other similar religious organisations. This result is interesting for several reasons, as the relationship between religion and the state is changing. It would seem that the increasing regulation on religion by the Swedish state greatly affects some of the religious communities. There is a general fear that the space for them in society in terms of ability and freedom to express religious values is shrinking, as this seems to challenge the supposed secular homogeneity of Swedish society. Despite these difficulties, all representatives in all interviewed congregations agreed that religious communities have an important role to play in society. No one took the view that religious communities should become more separated from society; on the contrary, everybody saw themselves as an important part of civil society. However, the underlying conflict, with growing tension between some organisations and the state, is apparent; this needs to be studied further.

Although the results of this study are limited, the different forms of religious identity, visible between the groups, could be described as some of the congregations having a more liberal, and others a more conservative view on religion. Monsma's (2002) scale may help to

differentiate between cases where religious elements are integrated and those where they are separated from the religious organisation's social work. In simple terms, the more liberal the form, the simpler it would seem for an organisation to merely have a foundation in religion and to separate religious activities when one is in a social context and role. Likewise, with a conservative religious form, disregarding religious activity, even temporarily, seems to be viewed as unnatural and religion is a highly integrated part in all activities. An interesting finding, although the empirical evidence in this paper is limited, is that this seems to transgress specific faiths. Importantly, however, the religious dimension should not be understood as narrow and static when discussed in this manner but rather understood in a broader sense, in terms of social, political and spiritual dimensions of religion. For some, therefore, this would mean that the religious dimension is to mission and transform people's hearts and debate societal issues with religious values. For others the religious dimension is the core and the foundation for social or political action.

Although the religious communities in the study differ considerably in how they express their mission and identity, given their differences in regards to their history and religious background, this is largely unsurprising. Instead, the historical context of the organisations most likely plays a substantial role in their actions and how they view their role. The Church of Sweden, for example, has a strong historical bond to the state, given that separation only occurred relatively recently. Therefore, it is perhaps not surprising that the organisation still finds it difficult to criticize the state. Similarly, the Free Churches in Sweden have historically seen charity and missionary as two sides of the same coin, as was clearly to be seen during the refugee crisis. Perhaps most importantly, the Free Churches were founded independently from the state and still clearly identify with this independent role.

Combined, therefore, this study shows the complexity in discussing different roles of religious communities in a unified manner. Depending upon several different inherent organisational factors, or even the organisation's basic values, religious communities seem to have viewed their role very differently during the refugee crisis. While some worked alongside and in a similar manner to other civil society actors, thereby receiving the media spotlight and becoming visible, others preferred to focus on their religious role and therefore stayed out of the spotlight. However, it can be argued that these groups attempted to attract the media through their critical role. Due to the importance of the media in increasing visibility, it may be that only the social role of the *Emergency Responders* was seen by many outside the religious communities, including the state; therefore, this work came to define how religious communities acted during the refugee crisis. While no quantification can be attempted from the results of this study, they do suggest that the media-highlighted role of the *Emergency Responders* may only represent a smaller part of all the work accomplished by religious communities during the autumn of

2015. This suggest that there is need to continue the study of the different faces of religiously motivated action in civil society.

As highlighted previously, in regard to the approach to their roles, there appears to be little to distinguish Muslim and Christian organisations. Other factors, irrespective of particular religious beliefs, seem to play a larger role. However, some important factors distinguished Muslim from Christian organisations, with regard to the refugee crisis. From a language, culture and religious perspective, and given that a large majority of the received refugees were from Muslim dominated countries, Muslim organisations took a particularly important role. However, despite being grouped differently (one organisation was categorized as an *Emergency Responder* and the other as a *Spiritual Integrator*), both experienced an increase in islamophobia regardless of whether very little social work was done and the focus was placed on religion, or whether religion was set aside and focus was on the social role. This is interesting from several different aspects. Primarily, however, it highlights the fact that it would indicate that the form or role taken by a Muslim congregation has a limited effect on public response. Is there is a lose-lose situation for Muslim religious communities? Are they criticized for trying to infiltrate society if they do get societally involved, and criticised for placing themselves outside of society if they choose not to get involved? This needs to be studied further.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the results show that local congregations in Sweden, during the refugee crisis of 2015, acted and functioned in a manner strongly connected to how they view their role in society. I.e., action taken during a state of emergency by religious communities seems to reflect how they view their long-term role. Contrary to views argued earlier, therefore, this study shows a considerable diversity in content and balancing of roles during the refugee crisis, highlighted in three ideal types. The differences in how they combine the roles clearly illustrate the flaws in presenting religious communities as one homogenous group. While this study does not attempt to claim that all religious communities in Sweden may be categorized as argued in this study, the results do provide an interpretative framework. This framework indicates key potential conflicts that may constitute an analytical point of departure for further research on the roles of religious communities in late modern societies.

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