

‘Civil Society Hospitality’: Welcoming Initiatives and Pragmatism Targeting Unaccompanied Youth in Malmö



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ABSTRACT

This article presents the notion of ‘civil society hospitality’, addressing welcoming initiatives that open spaces and provide services to unaccompanied youth in Malmö. The article contributes to the literature on bottom-up humanitarianism and focuses on hospitality practices and their limits. Through semi-structured interviews with key civil society actors and attending key events, the article argues that civil society faces limitations in providing services that are embedded in the law and in funding constraints that shift their efforts towards pragmatism with the goal of ‘bringing back in’ those excluded from a changing social democratic welfare model. On the other hand, the bottom-up initiative of creating a welcoming space is also seen as a form of subversion of migration governance. Civil society hospitality in Malmö illustrates how the guest/host divide is reshaped, contested and reaffirmed. By tracing the services offered within the welcoming initiatives of civil society, this article offers insights into how actors attempt to shape a safe open space that contests current migration governance, but also cooperates with state actors.

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During 2019, many civil society actors in Malmö, Sweden were focused on the situation of unaccompanied youth. Cornelia, who had been active in civil society for 5 years, said that the main issue was that the ‘system has been torn down’, and for civil society actors like her, it was about ‘attempting to bring them [those assisted] back in’ the welfare system. For another actor, Bodil, it was also about ‘taking responsibility for them because no one else did’. Within this responsibility, beyond activities and services, great importance was given to creating a welcoming space that, as Bodil explained, could feel like a ‘home’ and where people could come together and ‘hang out’.

In 2019, many unaccompanied young persons faced a rejected asylum claim, were between statuses, or had temporary permits under the Swedish Upper Secondary Act. All three situations implied legal constraints and limited access to social services. These legal and policy changes happened during the summer of 2016, when it was decided that those who were 16 years or older could only get temporary residency permits in Sweden (Jansson-Shevaraz & Lundberg 2019: 1012–1013). At this time, the Migration Office began to identify as adults many young persons who would have been able to stay in Sweden if they were not identified as adults (Ibid.). When they turned 18 or were declared to be 18, they lost the rights they had been entitled to as minors to receive support and assistance (Migrationsverket 2022).

The Swedish Upper Secondary School Act gave a possibility to extend this period temporarily (for up to 13 months) for those attending high school full-time during 2021 (Migrationsverket 2021) but set limitations that have even stricter criteria during 2023. Following a ruling from the Migration Court of Appeal, those who seek to stay in Sweden permanently need to show they can support themselves as employees or self-employed. Employment must be secured before the temporary permit expires (Migrationsverket 2023).

The aim of this article is to unpack civil society hospitality towards unaccompanied youth experiencing this uncertainty in 2019. I define ‘civil society hospitality’ as the creation of an open space, a welcoming place in which to develop bonds, establish a political community and receive social services and legal advice. This focus on civil society hospitality in Malmö is used to productively show how civil society reproduces and contests broader political distinctions between subjects of care, but is also limited by its cooperation with authorities and by funding limitations.

In Sweden, scholars have mainly attempted to problematise assistance to migrants by focusing on social work. For example, Björgren Cuadra (2015) has explored the role of social workers working with undocumented migrants. There is an emerging body of literature that seeks to problematise the upholding of human rights of migrants and refugees by the Swedish state (see, for example, Lundberg 2015). There are also increasingly important contributions being made on social assistance to migrants and refugees (see, for example, Anders 2012; Ascher & Smith 2016; Dahlstedt & Neergard 2016; Nordling 2017 among other), yet there is still much to learn about the role of civil society and international actors that have stepped in to fill gaps in state support for migrants and refugees as a humanitarian and human rights endeavour. This article seeks to address this gap by looking at the scale shift from state to civil society in welcoming practices to unaccompanied youth.

This article is guided by the following question: how are civil society’s welcoming practices on behalf of unaccompanied youth constituted? In it, I begin by situating

civil society hospitality within humanitarian and migration literature that looks at the scale shift from state to civil society, from the bottom up (i.e. from the perspective of civil society). Next, the empirical section provides a reading of hospitality grounded in the outrage and pragmatism manifested in the making of a homely space, nurturing social relationships, funding issues and cooperation and mediation with authorities as central to understanding the potential of civil society hospitality and its limitations. This article is based on 22 in-depth semi-structured interviews with five key civil society actors.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS: CIVIL SOCIETY HOSPITALITY

Immigration issues are a symptom of how profoundly the citizens of a modern European state can disagree about the definitions of hospitality. And whether or not the word is explicitly used, hospitality is now at the center of this political, social, and economic controversy: immigrants, their families, friends and relatives, immigration officers, political leaders, and the most anonymous of citizens are all affected by the way in which the state legitimizes some forms of hospitality while declaring other irresponsible, unrealistic, dangerous or even illegal (Rosello 2001: 6).

This article sets out to explore the scalar hospitality shift that occurred from state to civil society in reception practices for unaccompanied youth in Malmö after 2015. It uses Derrida's neologism of hospitality in terms of 'host' (in this case, civil society) and 'guest' (the unaccompanied youth). The so-called refugee crisis of 2015 precipitated a significant reshaping of the Swedish state's politics of protection and control. At the same time, the crisis instigated expressions of hospitality and solidarity from civil society and citizens. This is the key point at which the scale shift studied in this article occurred, as identified by the civil society actors participating in this study.

This was not unique to Sweden: across Europe, increasingly restrictive government policies seemed to clash with expressions of support and deservingness (Boccagni & Guiudici 2021; Gebhardt & Rocchi 2021; Gill 2018; Holmes & Castañeda 2016). During 2019, part of the debate circled around Sweden's limitations as a human rights defender, which became especially visible in the aftermath of 2015. By 2019, rejections of asylum seekers were on the rise, and support from social services and welfare benefits was hindered by the migration law (Jansson-Shevaraz & Lundberg 2019).

Unaccompanied youth were identified as constituting a group with special needs by the civil society actors part of this study. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) states

"unaccompanied children" are those "who have been separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so. Note that some States refer to these children as "unaccompanied minors" in their legislation and policies (UNHCR 2023).

For the European Commission, an unaccompanied minor is someone

who arrives on the territory of an EU Member unaccompanied by the adult responsible for them by law or by the practice of the EU Member State

concerned, and for as long as they are not effectively taken into the care of such a person or who is left unaccompanied after they have entered the territory of the EU Member State (Migration and Home Affairs 2023).

In Malmö, many of these unaccompanied minors had transitioned into adulthood while awaiting their asylum claim, but civil society actors continued to refer to this group as unaccompanied (*ensamkommande*). The vast majority of these young persons were also considered to be asylum seekers, had their asylum claim rejected, were between status or under the Swedish Upper Secondary Act. The main group targeted by civil society will henceforth be referred to as unaccompanied youth (as many have transitioned into adulthood).

This situates civil society and welcoming practices within the boundaries of the polity found between the rights of humanity as a person and the rights that we are entitled to as citizens (Benhabib 2006: 22). It is therefore relevant to consider the setting up of those claiming human rights against those claiming social rights (Ranci re 2004), although in the Swedish case, a residency permit rather than citizenship is the marker to consider. The Swedish Social Services Act mentions entitlement under residency (*bos ttning*) rather than citizenship (Nordling and Persdotter 2021: 158). This has specific implications as entitlement is based on an assessment of residency status (i.e. temporary or permanent).

To understand the encounters between civil society and unaccompanied youth, it is also useful to consider the etymology of hospitality, *hospis/hostis*. Drawing on Benveniste, Fassin shows that ‘hospitality’ denotes strangers both as potential guests and enemies and grounds this in an examination of the management of aliens in France and Europe more broadly. He shows how the French state went from a logic of legal differentiation to one of legitimate discrimination (Fassin 2011: 135–136). In contrast, in countries such as Tanzania, the culture of hospitality is seen as vested in the state and has been used to explain the attractiveness of the country to asylum seekers who have the confidence that they will be welcome and treated humanely and will feel safe (Kamanga 2005: 101–102). In this article, I consider the scale shift from the state to civil society, yet this is not separate from the boundaries of the state, given that civil society operates within these boundaries. In the relationship between hosts and guests/enemies set up by hospitality, solidarity and mutual exchange may exist in the same place as hostility and rejection. Especially relevant to this article is how this tension pushes hospitality practices to be more pragmatic.

The language of hospitality also sets up a relationship with an ‘Other’, and presents the need to differentiate between those who are being welcomed and those who have the power to welcome. As Friesen puts it, ‘hospitality becomes part of a legal, formally codified system of rights and duties that defines citizenship, membership and exclusion and thus, demarcates the status of strangers, foreigners and aliens’ (2010: 326). This power over the Other has been described by scholars as being between the asylum seeker or refugee, who is dependent on the host, and with the expectation of gratitude from the recipient (Vandervoot 2017: 608). For civil society, the power to welcome comes within a quest to reconcile the human condition as universal while still having to identify a subject in need of care. In this context, civil society’s position as the host clashes with the need to recognise the human condition as universal and the recognition of suffering that comes with it. At the same time, those who are welcomed must also be differentiated from those who are not welcomed.

This article understands hospitality as a scale shifter from the Swedish Migration Agency and social services to civil society. The Government of Sweden has an expansive definition of civil society, including actors as the Swedish Red Cross as well as non-governmental organisations at the grassroots and national level and covering networks, non-profit organisations and registered faith communities. Government policy supports the establishment of such bodies and encourages people to get involved in diverse activities (Government of Sweden 2023). Yet there is no consensus on the definition of civil society in Sweden among academics and the government. One can therefore consider that civil society has diverse visions, missions and politics that may diverge and converge with the government's definition. There is also an important historical tradition of leftist civil society in Malmö (see, for example, Hansen 2020). Despite its limitations, this article finds the government's definition of civil society useful.

Not only in Sweden but across Europe, scholars have noted a scalar shift of hospitality initiatives away from the state, and an emerging 'culture of welcome' has been identified in civil society and citizens (Boccagni & Guidici 2021: 3; Gill 2018; Sandberg & Andersen 2020; Verschraegen & Vandevoordt 2019). This culture of welcome is, on the one hand, embedded within the nation-state project and its crises of welfare systems and xenophobia (Friese 2010: 324). On the other hand, it is rooted in the ethical duties related to universalism that are the bedrock of humanitarian aid and underpin the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Swedish case has its particularities as universalism is also a principle of social services in the country. The Swedish government pins the founding of its welfare state on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Information Sweden 2023). Sweden has long prided itself on its exceptionalism due to its inclusivist approach embedded in a universal approach to welfare state access. Even social work claims it is a human rights profession (Lundberg & Kjellbom 2021). Yet the relationship between social work law and migration law has changed across time, and currently politics has made it possible for legislation on social work to interact deeply with migration law and to hinder the human rights commitment of social workers (Ibid.). These legal shifts have manifested in a scale shift in the welcome afforded to certain groups from state institutions to civil society. In this case, civil society becomes the host and unaccompanied youth the guest.

Derrida (2000) argues that there is an unresolvable tension between a state's unconditional openness to the foreigner and the protectionism of the sovereign from foreigners. Put another way, hospitality practices of welcoming, reception and openness to the foreigner, seen as rights and duties in modern state-building, also come to demarcate social spaces between citizens and non-citizens (Friese 2010: 324). Yet, as will be explored in the empirical discussion, this is scrambled by the scale shift, meaning the host/guest roles are at times shifted and guests become hosts in specific situations.

As noted above, civil society hospitality is bound to the rights and duties of citizenship – in the Swedish case, of permanent residency – which are founded on the tension between universal rights and particular political communities. Within this territorially bounded space, the modern state acts in the name of universal principles, but is limited to a particular political community (Friese 2010: 327). Civil society, embedded within this territorially bounded space, also acts in the name of universal principles, but is limited by the politics of exclusion or inclusion into the political community as demarcated by the state.

By focusing on the scale shift from state to civil society rather than humanitarian agencies or on the home as the main unit of analysis this study contributes to the literature on the ambiguities and struggles of refugee support at the grassroots level and other studies that do not follow the bureaucratic logics of international aid agencies as ‘volunteer humanitarianism’ (Boccagni & Giudici 2021; Feischmidt, Pries & Cantat 2019; Pries 2018; Sandri 2018), ‘vernacular humanitarianism’, which is a term used by Brkovic (2020) to refer to local actors’ responses to need in accordance with sociocultural context, and ‘domestic humanitarianism’ (Boccagni & Giudici 2021), which looks at humanitarian efforts within the scale of the home. Domestic hospitality and acts of charity can be seen as forms of opposition to more restrictive policies and discrimination and as striving towards humanitarian approaches of universality and inclusivity. These acts do not operate as individual acts of charity, but are knitted within webs of mutual expectations and needs (Boccagni & Giudici 2021: 3–4). Vandervoot (2017) shows how Syrian refugees in Belgium who create homeliness through food can be seen as engaging in subversive acts within a hostile environment.

In this case study, everyday practices extend beyond the private sphere and are practiced by civil society. I examine how civil society hospitality shows both acts of subversion and the limits of this contentious politics. It is also noted that some of the services civil society distributes are limited by state practices. Civil society hospitality brings to the forefront the contestation and limitations set by a codified system of rights when welcoming strangers. Within this context, delineating clearly between contentious and non-contentious forms of civil society engagement is challenging and blurs the emergence of the complex phenomenon of civil society hospitality as it manifests through engaging with humanitarian work as an expression of solidarity. Finally, I consider how the use of hospitality as an analytical tool has been in anthropology seen as constituting the first relationship of a political community with others (Boudou 2012).

In short, civil society hospitality is not constitutive of a sterile transaction. In Sweden, it struggles with a new relationship between the migration regime, the welfare system and humanitarian work, but also creates possibilities for everyday modes of welcoming that make room for community building and contention.

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The city of Malmö is one of the municipalities that has been most occupied with the reception of asylum seekers in Scandinavia and has been seen as the gateway to Sweden (Lidén & Nyhlén 2016). My engagement with civil society in Malmö began after the refugee crisis of 2015 had left the public spotlight. By 2019, when my research began, civil society was denouncing the situation as critical and showing no sign of improvement. Politics was shifting on the refugee issue, and many volunteers, including ordinary people who had been present in 2015, were no longer around.

This study is based on qualitative, semi-structured interviews with 22 civil society participants working in five different civil society organisations. I mapped out the field of study during 2018 and concretized all interviews from February to August 2019. Interviewees were selected based on snowball sampling with the pivotal help of one gatekeeper. Additionally, I attended meetings between social services and key civil society actors based on discussions with the target group.

The civil society actors discussed in this article have important organisational and structural differences. They operate under different hierarchical and funding constraints. Yet, all had participated in projects funded by the government and the municipality of Malmö, and all were working with unaccompanied youth at the time. While civil society organisations depended more on governmental funding, national organisations also had important funding from private donations. The staff of the grassroots organisations were split between temporarily employed staff (a volatile group heavily dependent on funding) and volunteers. The national-level civil society actor had more permanent staff as well as staff dependent on funding and volunteers. Moreover, most civil society actors in this study do not have open spaces for unaccompanied youth to hang out. During 2019, out of the five civil society organizations contacted for this study, only one had an open space for hanging out on a daily basis, and the others had a weekly time destined for cooking and hanging out.

The interviews were geared towards understanding how civil society represents welcoming initiatives. The collection of secondary data complemented the findings that emerged from the interviews and helped to first cross-check that the information shared has been made public through websites, reports and/or media outlets. The interviews also helped to grasp the nuances of everyday practices. I was very careful to focus on activities available to the public. By focusing on five civil society organisations in Malmö, this article traces how civil society actors engaged in hospitality as both an act of subversion and one constrained by the need to cooperate with the authorities. During the analysis, I transcribed and coded the interviews and did a second review of secondary data (aforementioned) to cross-check the findings of this study one final time.

I am a female scholar from the Global South, and most persons interviewed were from the Global North. This positions the research in a different debate on power than in the more common situation of scholars in the Global North conducting fieldwork in the Global South. I am aware that preconceptions, subjectivities and hierarchies based on being a researcher, woman and from the Global South do not operate in a vacuum, nor do my informants' roles as caretakers and volunteers from the Global North. I was never an 'insider' in this field and had a strict focus always on public information. This is a limitation of this research and points towards avenues for future research, such as, for example, what happens and what is discussed outside of the public debate between individuals. Not only was this beyond the goals of this project, but focusing on what is shared in public is also of paramount importance for understanding how issues are represented.

All participants have been given pseudonyms, were well informed of the main goals of this research, and gave full consent to using interview material for writing academic publications. It is worth emphasising that the focus of this study is on the role of civil society rather than individual experiences.

CIVIL SOCIETY HOSPITALITY IN MALMÖ

During, before and after 2019, in a more restrictive legal landscape for asylum seekers, civil society actors in Malmö felt compelled to open their doors to unaccompanied youth. As Miranda explained when I asked how this target group was reached: 'They literally came knocking on our door'. There were also staff who had closely worked

with social services and were aware of how cuts were affecting this group, especially. Staff also conducted fieldwork to identify and find this group. Civil society actors found themselves having to adjust to the situation, but this, as with other crisis-like moments, was not a static situation. They expressed the need to learn and rapidly adjust. This is not unique to the situation in Malmö, and scholars such as Ticktin (2011) have pointed to the morphing nature of humanitarianism. In this case, as Miranda put it, it was about 'being flexible and stepping in, where no one else does'.

In this context of acute need, two main hospitality initiatives will be explored: one driven by outrage at the situation of unaccompanied youth, and the second, more pragmatic approach to the crisis-like situation of many of the young persons who approached these civil society actors in 2019. These hospitality initiatives will be grounded by first looking at the outrage behind the opening of a 'humanitarian' welcoming space and the politics of food. This will be followed by an exploration of how these civil society organisations represented their welcoming practices in relation to the legal landscape and the relations established with the authorities, and the role of funding in taking more pragmatic solutions. Derrida's (2000) notion of hospitality is considered in the scale shift from state to civil society. This informs the analysis of the guest/host binary. The main conceptual framework considered is of civil society as host and unaccompanied youth as guest, yet, as will be detailed below, this binary was shuffled at times.

AN ALARMING SITUATION AND THE SCALE SHIFT

While in other countries, mediated images of migrant suffering were used to mobilise outrage, in Malmö, the outrage of civil society came from first-hand knowledge of the acute situation of young persons and was mobilised mainly between and among civil society actors and in their mediation with the authorities. In response, an open space was designed to fill identified needs of young people, such as linking them to social services and legal advice and fulfilling their everyday ad hoc needs. Other services were also available, such as help with homework, hobbies, recreational activities and outings. Equally, though, the space was set up to give young people a place to hang out, eat and cook together.

Making such a space available for unaccompanied youth was seen as a priority by the grassroots organisation. This space went against the hostile environment created by national migration governance in the country. The open space was also meant to create a sense of community and a safe space for those who faced rejection from the welfare system. Such everyday contestations of migration governance and the creation of a politics of inclusion within civil society spaces were seen as a crucial need in the everyday lives of unaccompanied youth by two out of the five civil society organisations part of this research. Although different in scope, they resonate with sanctuary initiatives in Malmö to provide access to public spaces to irregular migrants. For example, from 2013, the Malmö Cultural Committee guaranteed access to libraries to all those residing in Sweden, including those who were unauthorised. This reasoning was based on international public law that defines spaces as libraries, schools and universities as open spaces for all (Lundberg & Dalquist 2018).

As Gunnar, an experienced civil society actor, noted, 'something had to be done' in response to the reform of migration laws that curtailed successful asylum claims. His views were shared by other civil society actors. In November 2015, under the Aliens Act (*Utlänningslag*) chapter 5, children could only get temporary residency

(Lundberg & Jansson-Keshavaraz 2019). The many laws that restricted the possibility of gaining permanent status in Sweden were seen as creating a vacuum in reception, which was filled by civil society spaces.

The vision of the grassroots organisation she worked for, Bodil said, was to create 'a sense of home away from home'. This organisation held an open house after lunch for people to come and cook, play video games, study and receive other forms of support and advice from staff. Another organisation held *fika* (with bread, cheese, butter, tea and coffee available) daily, with a shared dinner every Friday. The kitchen was always available for use. There was also a pool table and computers available if needed. Miranda said:

There was the need for a place where you could seek different kinds of support and a place where you felt at home, where they were allowed to participate and influence, were allowed to express what they liked, were allowed to build relationships, get close to each other . . . there was often a longing, a desire to get close maybe to people in Sweden and a longing to take power over relationships. For those that had gotten closer to usually (a Swede) it was about losing access (but also fluctuation of personnel): a social secretary, oh quits, a housing staff quits, a legal guardian quits, then this one left, the other one gone and so on. At X organisation (the grassroots civil society organisation), you would be given the power to take over their relations with volunteers. Create the conditions so that people could meet. This is a place for migrants in Sweden.

Opening a space was identified by two civil society organisations as valued by unaccompanied youth as it gave an opportunity to meet others, create a network and share experiences and knowledge on how to navigate their situations. Along with hospitality practices and the establishment of social relations, in these spaces, the guest/host binary was contested when the support of the initial host (state actors) had vanished. Here, the guest was, at times, the host. The migrant could host the migrant: some volunteers and staff also held temporary residency. The guest/host binary was also seen in mundane but important activities such as sharing meals in both civil society organisations. As noted by Vardervoot (2017), 'the politics of food', meaning the power implications of the act of sharing food, are an important part of contesting hostile migration governance.

At the second civil society actor, the space was open for scheduled activities. Here, again, importance was given to preparing dinner, which was often food from the home country cooked by unaccompanied youth. In both spaces, this was an important moment for civil society to imbue with new life a sense of community and inclusion. In other, similar contexts, the act of sharing food and having the option to cook has also been noted as highly meaningful (see Vardervoot 2017). Cooking and sharing food have been identified as a practice that promotes dignity and a sense of autonomy (Boccagni & Guidici 2021: 795) when granted to refugees. In Belgium, the meaning of food, hospitality and refugees has been explored through micro-political struggles between the host and being hosted, giving new meaning to the collective self (Vandervoot 2017). For civil society organisations in Malmö, the politics of food was created in the face of the injustice and exclusion perceived in how the government was managing migration and impacting access to social services, and with the goal of creating safe, inclusive spaces for community building that contested a hostile order, as noted in the quote above. These first encounters between, in this

case, civil society and unaccompanied youth have been identified anthropologically as pivotal in the building of a political community (Boudou 2012), and as stated by Miranda, the purpose was to have a space where people could meet under their own conditions.

For another civil society actor, Laura, who had helped migrants and refugees for over a decade, 'here we (the civil society actor) saw that it is important that these persons have a place where they can go and think it feels pretty good to be here, we are safe in this situation'. Yet establishing a safe welcoming space had limitations – threat, funding, what could be offered – and was embedded within a nation-state that had shifted from reception to rejection and expulsion of asylum seekers and migrants. In this case, the represented need to open a safe space for unaccompanied youth is about demarcating a social space between citizens and non-citizens with a variety of temporary legal or uncertain legal statuses (see also Friese 2010: 324).

In the case of threat, civil society actors were somewhat vulnerable to the authorities. In 2017, the Swedish border police raided a church that had opened its space for conviviality and apprehended six families (Svenska Kyrkan 2017). Such raids on spaces of sanctuary are not exceptional to Sweden. In 1996, French riot police stormed Saint Bernard Church in Paris, where around two hundred undocumented migrants from Africa were taking refuge. They broke down church doors with axes and tear gassed women and babies (Ticktin 2011: 31–32). In both Sweden (see, for example, SVT 2017), there was outrage in the media about how migrants were treated but little objection to restrictive laws and policies. This event in Sweden not only affected the church and its sense of safety and the welcoming initiatives it offered, but also other actors, who became more aware of the threat. Nevertheless, the two civil society actors that had opened a space for migrants expressed that a threat from authorities was not an important concern or issue at the time for their organisation in 2019.

FROM OUTRAGE TO PRAGMATISM

The crisis-like situation, filled with uncertainty, made these organisations reassess their priorities. There were many other overarching needs that had to do with uncertain legal status, such as poverty and destitution, constant uncertainty due to lacking permanent status and the need to create a safe space of possibilities and support. Derrida's (2000) notion of 'hospitality' is here present in the paradox of taking care of non-citizens with clearly demarcated limitations on temporality and how the space is used, under which schedules and which resources can be made available. Below, I will consider how, in this situation, outrage transitioned into pragmatism.

The transition from outrage to pragmatism had much to do with two factors. The first was the acute situation faced by unaccompanied youth. The second related to the quest to reconcile the human condition of unaccompanied youth as universal while still having to identify the subject in need of care. For example, there was burning outrage and anger about the mental health of unaccompanied youth, the unreported suicides, and how these were linked to the uncertain situation experienced by these young persons. In fact, Mittendorfer-Rutz, Hagström and Hollander (2020) found the suicide rate among unaccompanied youth/minors to be 51.4 per 100,000, compared to 6.8 per 100,000 in the host population. This issue was discussed in dialogues between civil society and the authorities. Civil society actors offered psychosocial

support in every way possible, Miranda explained: ‘the time to sit on the sofa and talk’ to a ‘safe adult’. The need was seen as ‘enormous’ and not visible in the political debate.

Other ad hoc acute needs emerged: housing, food, permanent status, victimisation, exploitation, health and so on. The goals of organisations shifted greatly compared to 2015. The ‘target group had completely different needs than when the organisation was founded. It suddenly was about surviving the day, finding money, finding a place to live’, explained Miranda. This shift was also noted by most other actors participating in this study. To meet these needs, and despite their outrage, civil society actors took a neutral stance and began cooperating with the authorities, seeking to improve the situation. This shift to pragmatism was found in the strong focus of all actors to ‘bring back in’ these young persons. This often meant getting young people back into the system and able to access social services.

Civil society actors identified needs through contact with their target group through fieldwork, knowledge from prior work at social services or were approached by unaccompanied youth themselves. Young persons were especially identified as vulnerable if they had lost contact with a social worker, trustee or financial and housing support. As Miranda explained

At that time, it had been pointed out from different actors/angles that a place was needed where, above all, the group of unaccompanied minors who had turned eighteen, who had moved out into their own accommodation then had everything cut. Staff from their accommodation had disappeared, guardians disappeared, etc. So there was, in this situation of continuous needs, there was no natural place to get support, there was a target group that we had a focus on.

The need to offer these services was identified in 2019. A few years earlier, in 2015, ‘everyone [had] wanted to help’, multiple civil society actors said. But government and civilian support retreated, and civil society actors united behind a shared sentiment that the Swedish state’s migration governance was not only unjust but had critically negative effects. For example, a report by the Swedish Red Cross called the situation humanitarian (Swedish Red Cross 2019). In this context, civil society hospitality was defined by the very boundaries it attempted to overcome. Asserting a common humanity in light of compromised access to social services was geared at ‘bringing them back in’ to the system, for example, by finding ways for unaccompanied youth to access social services, get permanent status or have their asylum case considered. The offer of social services and legal advice demarcated the new situation for civil society hospitality within the scale shift of reception from the state to civil society (see also Leo Sandberg & Panican 2022). In the name of universal principles, civil society was identified as limited by a politics of exclusion or inclusion to the political community (in this case bound to status) on who could have access to social rights.

The process of ‘bringing them back in’ was linked to practical confrontations with not being able to reform the law, nor affect the implementation of guidelines by social services, and accessing the funding needed to meet the most acute needs faced by unaccompanied youth, such as housing. Here, the boundaries of the polity and welcoming practices are visibly situated in human rights and the rights granted by citizenship or permanent residency (Benhabib 2006: 22). Therefore, even if the civil society actors participating in this study shared a sense that there was much to be

done in response to the politics that had triggered the changes in migration laws and how these had affected social services, their priorities were splintered between buffering a crisis-like scenario and dealing with it as an issue of human rights.

In this context, civil society hospitality connected its responses to the acute needs manifested in the poverty, destitution, exploitation, mental health issues and other concerns endured by this group. This scale shift from social services to civil society created a common feeling among staff and volunteers that the relationship with government and municipal authorities was one-sided, with civil society functioning as the information providers.

Nevertheless, they did not opt out of this uneven relationship. Cooperation and open dialogue with the authorities were seen as necessary to 'bring them back in' to the welfare system. The distribution of legal and social service advice also implied mediation with authorities or accompanying them to appointments with authorities. Legal staff often experienced overwhelming frustration at the limitations of the asylum system and the growing links being created between migration and social work law. This was one of the main issues of compromised access depending on the status of the applicant, as outlined by Lundberg and Kjellborn (2021). Yet civil society actors referred to the issue of the reforms in migration law rather than overarching issues with how the welfare system in Sweden was constituted.

Funding also contributed to the shift from outrage to pragmatism. Grassroots organisations, especially, experienced a lack of funding. Financial resources emerged for earmarked projects that were not long-term in an ad hoc manner and often were geared not towards meeting basic needs but awareness-raising activities. This funding often helped temporarily alleviate, for example, housing issues for some. It came at times from the government, and in the face of crisis, pragmatism overcame the need to contest the authorities. Lack of funding was often a driver of cooperation rather than contestation.

Trying to access funding implied reifying hierarchies of who was worthy of the help, a strategy that has often been identified in civil society and humanitarian work (see also Humphris & Yarris 2022). When I attended one of their dialogues with social services representatives, I observed civil society actors presenting the needs of unaccompanied youth and social services listening. In this context, civil society could not escape reifying hierarchies of suffering and making a specific subject in need of care. At one of these events, the dialogue was frustrated and consensus emerged in a form of post-politics where most did not talk and everyone agreed the problem needed to be eliminated, but without concrete direction on how. The resolution of most of these issues was seen as the responsibility of politicians, and there were no politicians in this meeting. These five civil society actors also joined umbrella organisations with others to keep the dialogue with authorities open and ongoing.

Given how precarious the situation was for unaccompanied youth, civil society actors were closely involved in their everyday lives in ways that went far beyond their funded activities. There was often a resigned acceptance that no economic support would be provided by social services and that the organisations would have to provide ad hoc solutions to housing and meeting basic needs: sponsors, places to live, money for food. Despite the outrage they expressed at the situation, actors were aware of their limitations, and the crisis-like conditions turned this outrage into a search for pragmatic solutions. As Miranda candidly said about unaccompanied youth:

You might leave your family behind, have a terrible journey behind you that you haven't processed, but back then it was often easier to have hope (in Sweden for unaccompanied youth). (To have hope) in the future, to have a better life, it is (these feelings) not as widespread (in civil society and the target group) today because of the legislation.

This resonates with Humphris and Yarris's (2022) findings on volunteer work, of a shift in sentiment from 'we must do something' to 'we just cannot help'. Yet, in this case, rather than an evolution across time that provoked a change of sentiment, civil society attributed it to the legal reforms in Sweden after 2015. There was a common feeling that things needed to go back to 'how they were'. Yet, Swedish exceptionalism in relation to openness to refugees has been contested by scholars such as Schierup and Ålund (2011) before the 2015 crisis. The notion of going back to 'how things were' is not straightforward, and there is no consensus over how 'openness to refugees' has materialized both between practitioners and academics across time in Sweden.

In short, the hospitality practices explored in this article cast light on how civil society functions without a clear path within the arenas of humanitarian work, charity and activism. From welcoming as a form of subversion of the state to welcoming as a form of cooperation with state authorities, as mediators with the state and accepting funding from the municipality or the Swedish government, organisations denounced the situation of the target group with caution. Civil society hospitality was thus characterised both by subversive acts grounded in outrage and a more pragmatic approach to addressing the acute needs that emerged from the crisis-like situation. An important part of this was about 'trying to get them (unaccompanied youth) back into the welfare system'. This solution, which was proposed by civil society hospitality itself, requires further problematisation in future research.

CONCLUSION: HOSPITALITY PRACTICALITIES

The significance of civil society hospitality lies in the creation of an open welcoming space and inclusive social relationships that can be understood as fuelled by outrage as a form of subversion of national migration governance. Feelings of anger and injustice have been identified as affective responses provoked by the state (Humphris & Yarris 2022). Yet, in the face of crisis, civil society hospitality is also defined by practical limitations set by the migration law, including access to social services (Lundberg & Kjellbom 2021). This finding contributes to the literature on migrant support practices (Boccagni & Guidici 2021; Della Porta & Steinhilper 2021) and the tendency for volunteer humanitarianism to become less explicitly political (Humphris & Yarris 2022).

My main argument in this article is that the everyday practices of civil society hospitality in making welcoming spaces contrast with the practicalities of decision-making, such as the need for funding and cooperation with the authorities to even attempt to alleviate the suffering of those assisted. Having a place for eating and hanging out is seen as crucial in creating a sense of community for those assisted, not only as a home away from home, but as a space of contentious politics that contests migration governance. This is not exceptional to Malmö and has been documented in other contexts, such as Italy and Belgium (see Boccagni & Giudici, 2021; Vandervoot 2017). Hospitable practices functioned as a form of contentious politics that went against excluding migration laws that obstructed social protections. Yet, civil society hospitality was restricted by

its inability to change migration and social work laws, and efforts were often geared towards practical solutions such as trying to access funding and engaging in ‘quiet’ (as one key informant described it) dialogue with politicians.

Despite material limitations and the need to reform the law, and even if they did not directly contest governmental categorisations, the scale shift to civil society created a subversive mesosphere between home and nation-state. This was not only a sanctuary but a community and institutional gateway. Such forms of welcome, even if outside the domestic sphere, created intimate relationships across time for many and were seen as of great value to those in need of welcoming spaces by civil society. Civil society hospitality throws light on the missing links between the everyday lives of people and government implementation of the law, yet it is also seen to be constrained by it.

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The author has no competing interests to declare.

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